

Goodfoodline

RASHMI UDAY SINGH



YOUR ATTENTION, please! What follows is the single most enjoyable introduction to wine that you could ever read. It's honest, to the point and (here's the best part) it has been shared with us by an internationally well-known twosome. Since I have been receiving a lot of queries on the subject, I dedicate today's column to beginners of wine drinking.

Ch'ng Poh Tiong is the publisher of South-east Asia's oldest wine magazine *The Wine Review*, the regional chairman of UK *Decanter* magazine's World Wine Awards, a judge of wine round the world and an international speaker on the subject.

Rajiv Singhal is passionate about training and knowledge dissemination of wine. Not only is he a founding member and former honorary secretary of the Wine Society in Delhi, but also represents Sopexa (the Marketing and Promotion Board for Food & Beverage from France) in India. Apart from running his independent consulting 'Ritu Overseas,' he has also been organising French wine training series and several wine and cheese promotions across the country.

So you can imagine my delight when I attended a French wine and food pairing session conducted by the duo. It was witty and down-to-earth, took the mystery and intimidation out of wine-drinking and quite clearly pointed out that wine drinking is all about 'yum and yuck.' If you like it, it is yummy and if you don't, it is 'yucky.' Over to Ch'ng Poh Tiong...

Q: What's all the hype about the mystique and mystery of wine? A: I have never come across a snobbish bottle of wine. Only wine snobs who masquerade as wine lovers. It's a con job because these people do not take wine seriously. On the contrary, it's only themselves that they take seriously. Sure,

wine is special and interesting. But it is never excluding. Wine has always been made for family and friends to gather around, to have a good time.

How should one begin with wine?

In the very first place, don't drink wine unless you enjoy it. Don't drink it if you don't like the taste but because it's the "in" thing to do. Unless, of course, you are masochist. If, on the other hand, you enjoy wine and want to learn more, there's no substitute to investing in a good, reliable book (Hugh Johnson, Jancis Robinson and Steven Spurrier) or subscribing to a magazine (It's too presumptuous to suggest my own — *The Wine Review* and *Decanter* from the U.K. are great.)

Are there any rough and ready guidelines for food pairing?

When and if you are thirsty and I was to offer you mango or lime juice, which would you choose? Lime juice would be the drink of choice because it is refreshing, dry and acidic. Mango juice, on the other hand, is sweet, flabby, rich and thick. My analogy here is to suggest to you that a dry, acidic, crisp white wine is more refreshing than a full-bodied, over-oaked white Chardonnay. And that refreshing white wine will better pair with deep-fried foods such as pakoras and dim sums, while the oaky white Chardonnay pairs well with Salmon and Japanese food.

What about storing wine?

It's a big problem in a hot climate. If you cannot re-create a special cellar or get a customised wine fridge, store all your wines in the domestic fridge. Enjoy them straight out of the fridge. Warm up the red to room temperature.

Some don'ts?

Don't tell a guest how much the wine cost unless you want to show off how crass you are. Don't 'Bottoms Up' with wine. Do not add ice or water to any wine.



It's either
"yum" or
"yuck."
Some tips
on wine
drinking
for
beginners