

Sinfully Sweet Wines Served with (or instead of) dessert.



With Valentine's Day approaching, many of us have love – and chocolate – on the brain. But be warned: pairing most wines with chocolate is about as successful as finding true love on a blind date. Odds are, it won't work out.

Chocolate is powerful, rich and velvety and because of its sugar content it tends to ruin even the most sophisticated flavors in wines. To make it a truly memorable Valentine's Day, select a dessert wine to go with your favorite chocolate.

The first rule of pairing sweets to wine is one that often gets broken. The wine has to be sweeter than the dessert. Trust me, if you don't pay attention to this, your wine will taste bitter, flat and stripped of fruit flavors (the flavors we like most in wine).

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Rule number two, chocolate needs a powerful and sweet dessert wine.

My never fail suggestion is to try a Port. A 10-year-old Tawny Port from a well-known Port house such as Taylor-Fladgate or Graham's is a good choice. You could also go for the ultimate splurge with a great vintage Port, just make sure that it's at least 10 years old, as these wines need age to soften their edges a little.

Another favorite – Yalumba, Museum Reserve Antique Tawny Port. This "sticky" as they call dessert wines in Australia, is made in the way a Tawny Port is made in Portugal, wines from different harvests are blended and the average age is 15 years. It has a beautiful caramel color with fine dried fruit, caramel and chocolate aromas and flavors with accents of nuts and exotic spices.

The Bonny Doon Framboise is a good choice when you're preparing the meal yourself. It is a delightfully sweet, fortified raspberry wine bursting with raspberry flavor. Use it as an ingredient in your dessert – whether to flavor the chocolate or as a base for a sauce – and then serve a glass with the final creation. It will bring all the spectacular flavors together. ♦

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Comments & suggestions to

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