

Ep 39 Chocolate and Wine pairing

 Fri, 12/18 10:17PM  31:56

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

wine, chocolate, grapes, dark chocolate, grape variety, sweet wines, dessert wine, wines, riesling, muscat, milk chocolate, sweet, super, residual sugar, called, sweetness, sugar, winery, find, bottle



SPEAKERS

Janina Doyle



Janina Doyle 00:07

Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me just cannot get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier, so stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving wonderful world of wine. And wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you.



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Janina Doyle 00:31

Merry Christmas, everyone. And for those of you that don't like Christmas, well, bah humbug. Just a few more sleeps till Santa comes, so I assume you're all stocked up with your chocolate yulelog, your mince pies and panettones. So whilst we're talking about sugar comas, I thought this would be the perfect time to answer a question from Eden Spivak who conveniently lives in Belgium, the land of chocolate, and she says there is a street where she lives that is so long and filled with chocolate shops that she cannot hold her breath for the whole street long, so by the time she gets to the end, she needs chocolate. And so, what is the ideal wine to pair with these goodies? And so, the true professional that I am, I have consumed before recording this podcast a kilo worth of white chocolate, milk, dark and with all the flavourings, just to make sure. You have to make sure of these things. You can't just go based on science and what it says in the story books. So I have to make a shout out to amazing award winning chocolatiers Solkiki who are down in Devon in the UK, who sent me some incredible chocolates to help me in this very intensive and scientific chocolate and wine pairing journey. And for all those of you outside of the UK, they do sell abroad so you just need to go to their website. It's <https://www.solkiki.co.uk/> So that's Kiki with Ks. So Kiki. These guys do direct trade which is basically higher than fair trade. Everything is super, super sustainable and all the bars are vegan just to top it off. Now imagine, salted caramel, dutch apple crumble, tangy raspberry white, salty peanut tahitian nougat, I mean the list goes on. These chocolates are divine. You can also order these small little bars you can do like a tasting session and really understand the subtleties. So if you're in the mood for some chocolate love, go to their website and use the code Lovesolkiki10 and you'll get 10% off and free UK postage. Okay, so let's get to the wines. Do you think that dry still red wine is better for chocolate? Or would you prefer to go for dessert wines, sticky wines? Well, let's actually look at chocolate in general and what it is.



Janina Doyle 02:56

So first of all, chocolate is an aphrodisiac. So that gets a big thumbs up. It's also full of antioxidants, which incidentally, so is red wine. I found with one study that cacao and dark chocolate actually had more antioxidant activity, polyphenols and flavonols than any other fruits that were tested. And that was including blueberries and acai berries. So, one study is good enough for me - boom! However, we are talking about dark chocolate with a high cocoa content. And these dark chocolates are super nutritious. They are said to have many health benefits and lower your risk of heart disease. But of course, side note that is not going to happen with white chocolate. Keep in mind with milk chocolate, and then with white chocolate, they've got way more sugar in them more fat, more of the cream, more of the milk. But what that does do is it changes the texture of the chocolate and of course the sweetness, which means we can play around with lots of different wines. So I want to talk to you first about dry still wines.



Janina Doyle 04:08

Firstly, when talking about red wines with chocolate, it really is a personal experience. What you pick up in terms of bitterness might be very different from the next person. But remember, if a wine is completely dry, and the chocolate has a decent amount of sugar in it, it really can kill the wine so you have to be careful. But on the darker scale of chocolate, remember it has tannins in it, so tannins are that feeling of dryness around your gums. Just like red wine has tannins, so that is what gives you that kind of bitterness. And so if you can find a red wine with just a little bit of residual sugar, so a slightly sweeter version, something a little bit more fruit driven. These typically can go very nicely with dark chocolate. Certainly, for me the best pairings that I had were dark chocolate with some violets. I had some dark chocolate with lavender, which was just simply divine. I had that with a Malbec. Now Malbec for me is always a fantastic choice. With Malbec, the tannins are much softer than many other red wines, which means you get a smoother mouthfeel. So that's more fitting to go with the chocolate. Often with Malbecs, as well, there's a bit more of a sweetness of fruit, and they tend to have some floral notes. So you'll find that's going to match with things like the lavender. So also dark chocolate with dried strawberries or dried raspberries can work really well with Malbec. Play around, go and get a whole load of chocolate with different dried fruits in there and see what works. Now another wine that I found worked really well with dark chocolate was a Rioja Reserva and typically a traditional style of Rioja where it's aged in American barrels and a decent amount of new oak. So it's got that real licoricey, leathery, smoky sweet spices to it. And I found that that went really nicely with some chocolate with nuts in it, it made the dark chocolate on its own seem a little bit fruitier. And my absolute favourite was a chocolate with coconut. And that just went perfectly with that oaky note. Two other really good grape varieties to try would be a Zinfandel from California, which is really bold and really

super ripe and quite jammy, that is perfect with some dark chocolate. And how about a new world Shiraz again, quite luscious, bold, big, dark black berry fruit. Now these are just four red grape varieties that I think pair really well with dark chocolate, but they're not the only ones. So remember that top tip of residual sugar, try and find a wine that has a little bit of extra sweetness. And if you don't know if it's going to, a good idea would be picking a wine from a place that has a hotter climate. So in California, in Lodi, where you can get a lot of the Zinfandels, that's pretty warm. Shiraz from Barossa Valley, very warm. Try a Primitivo from down in Puglia. Primitivo is the same grape variety as Zinfandel. So just think hot climate, the grapes are going to have more sugar in them, in the first place. So that will hopefully leave you with a wine with a tiny little bit of sweetness. Now I want to point out that when I tried these red wines with milk chocolate, and with white chocolate, it just didn't work for me. It made the wine go very thin and far more bitter, so I wouldn't suggest doing that. However, if you are nervous about pairing wine with chocolate, another tip would be cold chocolate is easier to pair than warm chocolate. So stick with your chocolate bars as opposed to your chocolate puddings.



Janina Doyle 07:52

Now there are a few white wines that pair pretty nicely with chocolate. One of them would be a Riesling, and specifically off dry so therefore it has that residual sugar that we're looking for. Now if you're not sure if your Riesling is going to have any sweetness, have a look at the back label and see what percentage of alcohol it is. Now this is the trick. If you take a grape full of sugar and you ferment it all the way through to dryness. In theory, you should have something like with a white wine, at least 11% maybe 12.5% This is the normal amount for a white wine. If you see 7% on the back of a Riesling bottle, the chances are it's pretty sweet. If you see 9% that's going to be medium sweet, or just below. 10% is going to be a little bit off dry and then of course 11%, 11.5% - the theory is, it should be then, a dry wine. So pay attention to the percentage of alcohol to help you pair. Now an off-dry Riesling can handle milk chocolate and white chocolate much better. And some chilli in your chocolate or even some chilli chocolate cookies is amazing with off dry Riesling. Other grape varieties that you could think about would be Viognier or a Pinot Gris. Pinot Gris, again, is very aromatic and it has these kind of honeyed notes so it could handle maybe some milk chocolate with caramel inside. And typically Viognier has all these orange notes, nectarine notes, and it's much more textural. They tend to not have so much acidity so it's quite a round, oily, fat style of wine so it can go with those creamy milk chocolates and creamy whites. If you can find yourself a spicy, Gewürztraminer that has some sweetness, that would be perfect with an orange and ginger spiced bar of chocolate. Okay, so that's my thoughts and opinions on still wines red and white. Let's now have a little look at the pudding wines or sweet wines, dessert wines, stickies, however you want to call them.



Janina Doyle 10:03

Now for those of you who follow me regularly, you will know that there's no such thing as a podcast without a wine tasting. So I decided to pick just the sweet wines that I opened up for my experiment, shall we say and talk about them on this podcast so you can just understand how different they can all be and how they're made because there's actually so many different ways to make sweet wine. Now, the first dessert wine I'm going to try is from a Spanish winery that is super recognisable. Have you heard of Torres? They're definitely one of the UK's leading Spanish brands. Apparently they account for about 7% of the Spanish exports into the UK. You might recognise the Viña Sol, Viña Esmeralda and the Sange de Toro. They're based in Catalonia but they're now making wines from Toro, from Jumilla and Ribera del Duero. It's completely family owned and Miguel Torres is a figure that is super famous because he's also come across to Chile and done remarkable things especially down in the south. They were the first foreign wine company to set up shop in Chile. And they've done amazing things with the Pais grape variety, which is the original grape variety that came to Chile. Now the Torres family are industry leaders for fighting climate change. They set up a partnership with the Jackson family winery that's in America, for the International wineries for climate change. And with that they're regularly running conferences and they have the Torres and Earth programme that has been running since 2008. Now the wine I have is a Moscatel. It's called Florales. And like many of the wines that they make, they're very good value. This is just simply £8.99 for 50cl. Now sweet wine tends to be more expensive because of how it's made. And I will touch on that in a bit. But this is so inexpensive. And for anybody who's in the UK, you can get this in Waitrose, so super easy to get your hands on it. Now there's hundreds of different Vitis vinifera grape varieties in the Muscat family, and a lot of them are actually used in table grapes that you might be eating. So Moscatel de Alejandría which is the grape variety used in this sweet wine, you can also have as a normal table grape. Muscat grape varieties are used in so many different dessert wines, in the Vins Doux Naturels in France, you find a different type of Muscat used in Moscato d'asti which is an Italian beautiful, slightly fizzy wine. Even in Rutherglen Muscat, which is another sweet wine in Australia. Muscat is known for giving these very grapey aromas and they're often quite floral and beautifully aromatic.



Janina Doyle 12:47

Right It's time - it's absolutely that grapeiness. It's grapes with toffee, with honey. And then a beautifully freshly squeezed nectarine. There's also a really strong aroma of rose flowers. It's super luscious, really rich, very, very orangey on the palate, not super high acidity, but it still has a real freshness to it. But it's got this real like oiliness like rose oil in there. So if you don't like overly aromatic wines, it's not for you. But if you like something that's really in your face, alive, this is a delicious dessert wine for you. Now, this specific dessert wine

didn't pair perfectly with dark chocolate, it just completely overpowered it. So I would not recommend this one with dark chocolate. However, with your milk and white chocolates yes, now, I'm not tasting them now because I recognise it's probably gonna be quite annoying if you just hear me chomping away constantly trying to do the chocolate tasting now but yesterday I wrote it all in a book. Now it went best with a milk chocolate that happened to have some Mandarin and ginger in it. Now, I did not have with me a Terry's chocolate orange. Sadly, that would be awesome with this Moscatel. And to be honest, because of the richness and fatness of this dessert wine, I think it could handle a warm chocolate fondant with that creamy oozing orange middle centre. Try and find one of them, that would be so seductive. Now, how is this wine made? This wine is made like the Vins Doux Naturels in the south of France. Many are made from Grenache grape variety, which is your Maury and your Banyuls. But if you're interested in a Muscatel, Muscat grape, like this one that I've just tried, you have Muscat de Saint Jean de Minervois, Muscat de Lunel, Muscat De Miraval and the largest of all of them, which is Muscat de Rivesaltes. Remember there is a transcription so for all the spellings if you want to check out all these different regions you'll find the transcription link in the show notes. Now Vins Doux Naturels, which you'll often see abbreviated to VDN, basically stands for naturally sweet wines. Now to make a VDN, you stop the fermentation when there's still sugar by adding in a neutral grape spirit. How much alcohol the wine will have at the end is completely based on the rules per appellation. They typically sit at a minimum level of 15%. And in fact, my Moscatel from Spain is a 15%, alcohol wine. The fact that these are lightly fortified, you basically get this really beautiful fruitiness, it doesn't feel like it's full of alcohol in any way. And they tend to be very good value. So of all of the sweet wines. These are approachable, and generally affordable.



Janina Doyle 15:49

Right now let's go to the next dessert wine, which is from New Zealand, and it happens to be the most awarded dessert wine out of New Zealand. This is by a winery called Seifried. And they are family owned and they've been around since 1973. Now that doesn't seem that old but they were the first commercial winery to be planting in a place called Nelson. Now you may have heard of Marlborough. Marlborough is right at the top of the South Island. Well, so is Nelson. Nelson is just to the left hand side and it has 2400 hours of sunshine. But funny enough back in the 1970s there were apples and Kiwis being grown there but everyone was saying don't plant grapes. It's going to be too cold. Go and plant on the northern Island. But anyway, they went ahead and did it. This was Herman who started the business and he fell in love, I think on a ski slope with Agnes and the Riesling dessert wine that I'm going to try now is called Sweet Agnes for obvious reasons, I'm sure you can work out. Now I adore Riesling, dry, sweet medium, everything in between is such a pretty and aromatic grape variety. It's also very floral. Oh it just smells so fresh on the

nose. Very spicy. So you've got lots of kind of honey marmalade and peach and even lime, like a lime zest. But then with the spices, you get this kind of cardamon and grated ginger, even a hint of mango. It's got a typical kerosene. So kind of like the slightly smoky petroly note that you often get with Riesling. So that's on the palate, but it works really beautifully, almost like slightly slaty and mineraly. But with loads of fruit. Yeah, it's just all mango, honey, peach with a real lovely searing mouthwatering acidity, which Riesling always has that gorgeous acidity. Now this specifically is not ideal for chocolate. However, it worked very well with the milk chocolate and especially if you can get some milk chocolate with chilli. But you know on a side note, if I was going to pick any dessert with this sweet wine, I'd go with something like a Passionfruit Pavlova, something that's actually quite fresh. Something's very very fruity. This wine is not rich and powerful. It really does have that really light freshness to it. Now you can get this a 37.5cl bottle for £16.99 from Waitrose as well. It's a very different style. This does have a little bit more finesse. But should the other one we poured for me I would be perfectly happy with. Now this one in terms of production is Late Harvest. Now again, I told you why sweet wine is a little bit more expensive. So what happens is, instead of picking the grapes at say, the end of September, maybe even early October, they will wait and leave the grapes on the vine for much longer. Fingers crossed as well that the weather doesn't go bad and they don't start to rot. It doesn't rain and it doesn't dilute the grape variety. So there's always a risk with leaving grapes on the vine. Now all being well, what happens is you get a good enough sunshine and the autumn behaves itself and the grape starts to dehydrate so it becomes a little bit more like a raisin. So what happens with that natural dehydration is the sugars become far more concentrated and therefore, of course you've lost some of your potential juice. So sweet wine costs more money, but the joy is we get something delicious in the glass and this is absolutely stunning. So go and check out the Seifried Sweet Agnes Riesling. This happens to be the 2018 vintage.



Janina Doyle 19:27

Now onto the third dessert wine and we are moving up to Canada. Now how many of you have tasted wines from Canada? They are very well known for making some incredible ice wines. Now ice wine is a dessert wine that I simply adore and the method of this is fabulous. So whereas we talked about late harvest, leaving the grapes on the vine for longer This is exactly that, but well into the winter and to the point that the grapes actually freeze. So the temperature needs to get below minus eight degrees Celsius. Of course the same conditions apply. You need great sunshine, not rain, you don't want the grapes to rot. Now fingers crossed, you have this perfectly ripe grapes. They're now frozen inside, you handpick them, and then you press them whilst they're frozen. And this concentrates all this really rich, pure, very high acid, high sugar deliciousness. No, because your yields are so low due to the fact that the majority of what should be juice is frozen,

you actually need 10 times more grapes to produce just one bottle compared to a normal dry still wine. So that gives you an idea of why it costs so much. Also, you're find with sweet wines, they are all hand picked. Certainly all the top dessert wines are, because you need to make sure that they have the perfect ripeness. And perhaps we haven't even touched on a certain type of rot, which is a good rot it's called noble rot, which is also known as Botrytis cinerea. And this is what gives those really marmalade orange flavours of Sauternes in Bordeaux, France and Tokaji in Hungary for example. Now if you want to know more about what is Botrytis cinerea and the dessert wines of Tokaji in Hungary, go across to my Patreon Episode [Patreon.com/EatSleepWineRepeat](https://www.patreon.com/EatSleepWineRepeat) and you'll find it there should you want to be part of the team. Right now back to ice wine. It's also known as Eiswein in Germany who make fantastic versions. They are the two largest producers of ice wine and in terms of Canada, 75% comes out of Ontario. Now inside Ontario there are two regional Appellations. One's called Niagara Escarpment and the other is Niagara-on-the-lake. This is where my ice wine comes from. Now if you see on a bottle of Canadian wine VQA, this is a Niagara-on-the-lake VQA. That stands for Vintners Quality Alliance. So a VQA is very similar to a DOC, in Italy, a DO in Spain, an AOC in France. It's basically an appellation system which is there to guarantee top quality and authenticity of where it came from. Now this is an amazing place to make ice wine because most of the viticulture areas around the Niagara River and what that actually does it acts as a moderating factor for frost, so less risk of them coming in late spring and in early autumn giving the grapes this long growing season so they can get really ripe and stay perfectly healthy. Now I've got myself a bottle of Pillitteri Estates winery, and I actually was shocked. I found it in Lidl's supermarket, a 37.5cl bottle for £13.99. So I had to grab it. This is their ice wine made from Vidal grape variety and it's 2018. Vidal is a hybrid grape variety, its very hardy, it's quite tough, and that's why it can handle those cold winters whilst it freezes. So it's typically grown in Canada. Now when I say it's a hybrid, it's a crossing of Trebbianom which is also known as Ugni Blanc and then with a non Vitis vinifera plant, which is Siebel 4986 are also known as Rayon d'or. Now it can be made as a table wine, a dry wine but it works perfectly for ice wine and that is where it's typically used because it can handle being frozen because it is hardy, it has this really high acidity, which is pretty important with sweet wines because that acidity balances the sweetness. Now Pillitteri Estates winery when you buy the ice wine it comes in a little box and it's just covered with awards. They claim to have well over 800 awards and I can see why. Now this one straightaway is so different to the others. It's got beautiful tropical exotic fruits kind of lychee, pineapple, mango. There is that lovely kind of juicy peachiness as well but that purity crystalline style of fruit really hits you on the nose. Hmmm. This one is incredibly unctuous. This appears certainly the sweetest for my palate. I can't tell you the residual sugar in any of these. But the palette is just all honey and apricot. For me always has this like liquid gold feel. Is that a thing? I don't know if that's even a thing. It's a thing for me. Now this one, just like the Riesling before went best with the milk chocolate, although actually a perfect

pairing is strong cheeses and cheese cakes. If you want an ice wine to go perfectly with chocolate. actually look for the great variety Cabernet Franc. That is a match made in heaven.



Janina Doyle 25:01

Okay. And now on to the last wine that I'm going to taste and it is a PX. A Pedro Ximénez. So this is a Spanish grape variety down in the region Jerez. You will however find the majority of Pedro Ximénez is grown in a region called Montilla-Moriles. And Montilla-Moriles is about 150 kilometres north east of Jerez. Now Jerez is famous for Sherry. Now Sherry in general which ever style because there is so many, dry, medium or sweet, but they are all fantastic value no matter what you go for. And this is no different. So this one is a full 750ml bottle. This is Barbadillo, and would you believe it costs £15.75 and you can get it on Amazon Prime next day delivery. Now Barbadillo are family owned. They're based in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, which is right on the southwestern tip of Spain. Now unlike some of the other producers I've tasted, these guys have been around since the 1800s. Picking up awards all along the way. Check out their Palo Cortado Reliquia, which has got 100 points. Or in fact, their Manzanilla. They've received world's best Manzanilla before by Wine Spectator. These guys make a lot of sherry and they make very, very top quality Sherry. So let's talk Pedro Ximénez. Pedro Ximénez always has these flavours of raisins and prunes. And that is all based on how it is made. So they go through this traditional process known as "sunning" and what that means it turns the grapes into raisins. The harvested grapes are left out in the sun for typically 5 to 7 days, being turned every few days for even drying. These grapes are then pressed, and then they're fortified with a distilled spirit. So the alcohol level tends to go up to about 17.5% alcohol. Then they age in oak butts in a solera system. Go back to Episode 33, which is my fortified wine episode with Tim Jackson, Master of Wine, and I touch on exactly what a solera system is there. Now this specific wine spends about five years of oxidative ageing in those solera barrels. And the result, you get this 19% luscious, almost chocolaty, beautiful raisin style of sweet wine. Now Pedro Ximénez is fantastic with chocolate. The ultimate food pairing I think for anybody who is a Pedro Ximénez drinker, is vanilla ice cream with Pedro Ximénez just poured over the top. Do it, you will thank me, it is absolutely divine. Vanilla ice cream never tasted this good. Now, ahhhh for me, you have the raisins, you have the prunes but it's this beautiful slight nuttiness. A hint of walnuts and lovely dark chocolate shards. So that kind of walnut, that nuttiness is coming from that slight oxidative ageing. And it is intense. It's luscious. It's super unctuous. It's syrupy almost. It is rich, and it's like caramel, toffee liquid with all the raisins and nuts mixed in. There is a real coffee powder edge to it on the finish. And if you've ever drunk the juice out of a tin when you take out like figs, so like fig syrup. It's exactly like that. Now interesting for you to know, of all the dessert wines and sweet wines out there. Pedro Ximénez in theory is probably the sweetest wine of all of

them. So if you like sugar, definitely give this one a try. Now of the four dessert wines that I tried with all the different chocolates, this one actually was the perfect all rounder, it really handled the dark chocolate, milk, white and all the different flavourings inside those chocolates. It didn't have some of the finesse that some of the others did with specific chocolates, but as I said, an all rounder, it was smashing.



Janina Doyle 29:10

Now I mentioned about Episode 33 which is on fortified wines. My winery of the week was an Australian winery called Seppeltsfield and Seppeltsfield focus on Tawnys. Now Tawny, Tawny Port if it's from Portugal in the Douro region. Tawny's are a type of fortified wine that have oxidative ageing, and I still had some of that exact Tawny left around to go and listen to the tasting note on that episode. That perfectly paired with dark chocolate. It's a brilliant chocolate pairing. I've also heard on the grapevine that a Snickers bar with Tawny port works really really well. I haven't tried it, anyone, do you want to try it and let me know?



Janina Doyle 29:53

So hopefully you have a bit more of an idea now about different dessert wines in terms of are they late harvest, perhaps they've been subjected to noble rot? Have they been frozen on the vine? Has their fermentation been stopped with a fortified spirit. Have they been left out in the sun to raisin? There are so many different ways to make sweet wines, but most of them have a laborious process. And they do tend to cost more money. But none of these ones that I've tasted today are going to set you back too much. Go and grab your own wines, dry wines or dessert wines and play around with chocolate. Remember, it is subjective, and it's completely your own experience. Everything I've said, maybe is going to be different for you. So go and try it. Let me know your favourite food pairings. I'd be really intrigued to find out from you what you think really works or perhaps what doesn't. So I'm going to finish on a quote about what is probably considered the very best dessert wine in the world. And it's about Château d'Yquem. Ode to the price, it is normal that the majority of people have not tasted this wine. But after you hear this quote from French writer Frederic Dard, you will have a slight better idea of how amazing dessert wine truly can be. And he says, "I do not call Yquem a wine because there are an infinite number of wines as such, but Yquem is unique. I prefer the word nectar, the drink of the gods. And if I found one that was more noble, I would be less ashamed of our restrictive vocabulary so poorly suited to superlatives." Right? Well, I hope that has got you in the mood for Christmas or if you're listening to this after Christmas for whatever celebrations that is knocking at your door. As always, thank you so much for listening to this. If you haven't subscribed already, please do like it. Share it. All the usual have an amazing Christmas

treat yourself to a delicious bottle of something and until the next episode. Cheers to you.