

EASTERN SHORE • WHAT'S UP?
HOME GROWN
LOCALLY OWNED
ANNAPOLIS, MD

FEBRUARY 2010

WHAT'S UP? Annapolis

HEALTH

HOME & GARDEN

DINING

ART

Who's Handling Your Finances?

Leading Financial Professionals 2010

Living, Loving Retirement Bliss

Colorful Kids Rooms

Frederick Douglass: From Captive to National Treasure





The Wine Column Wines and Vines

By Laurie Forster



Laurie Forster, The Wine Coach®

Wines for Chocolate

Fifty-eight million pounds and over \$345 million dollars—that's the amount of chocolate purchased the week of Valentine's Day. So, chances are, if you have a valentine (or even if you don't) you are going to be indulging in some chocolate on Cupid's Day. This might lead you to the question, "What wine should I pair with my chocolate hearts and truffles?" I am so glad you asked!

It's important to note that a good pairing will depend on the type of chocolate you're savoring. Overall, you want to match bolder, darker chocolates with bigger wines and lighter, sweeter chocolates, like white or milk, with lighter wines. In my opinion, sweet and fortified wines work better with chocolate than dry wines. Before you start writing letters to disagree with me—I do acknowledge that there are some dry red wines, like Cabernet or Zinfandel, that can work wonderfully.

Without further ado, here are my suggested pairings for dark, milk and white chocolate. All you need to do is invite the right person and add some love.

Dark

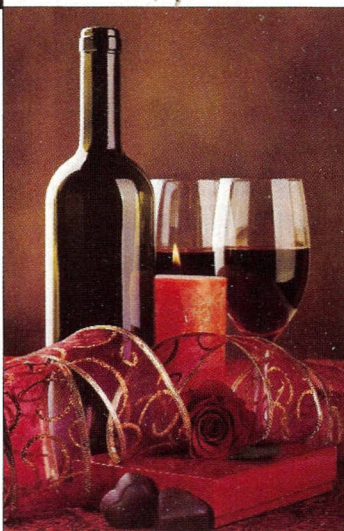
There are actually several great choices when choosing a perfect partner for dark chocolate. One of my favorites is **Brachetto d'Acqui** from the Piedmont region of northwestern Italy. Made primarily from the Brachetto grape, this red sparkling dessert wine has intense raspberry flavors with the perfect amount of sweetness for dark chocolate. Think of it as a raspberry sauce for your chocolate. The bubbles also act to cleanse your palate before each new bite of dark chocolate.

The traditional favorite of chocolate lovers is Port and I especially like **Tawny Port**

with chocolate. Tawny Ports are known for their dark rich flavors of raisins, toffee, caramel and nuts, which happen to all be great toppings for chocolate. These ports are named after their tawny color, which is obtained by aging the wine in oak. True Port wines are fortified wines from Portugal (called *Porto*), but great Tawny Port-style wines are made in Australia, the United States and South Africa.

Another fortified wine that is a great partner with dark chocolate is **Banyuls**. This dessert wine is made from the red grape, Grenache, in the Roussillon region of southern France. Like port, this wine is fortified with a distilled spirit made from grapes. This fortification takes place before fermentation is complete which leaves residual sugar (i.e.

sweetness) in the wine. With a rich texture and flavors of raisins, plums, mocha and black cherries, this is the perfect partner to dark chocolate or, also, to enjoy all by itself!



Milk & White

White and milk chocolate require more delicate pairings. These are sweeter chocolates and don't work with dry wines like dark chocolate does. One of my favorite pairings for these types of chocolates is **Moscato d'Asti**. Semi-sparkling or frizzante, this sweet white bubbly is made from the Moscato Bianco grape in Piedmont Italy, just like its red relative Brachetto. Perfumed floral aromas mix with flavors of ripe peach and pear. Moscato's acidity keeps it from seeming too sweet and is a nice contrast to the creaminess of these chocolates. Also, due to its having a lower alcohol content than most wines (5-7%), you'll be able to indulge just a bit more and still stay focused on your sweetheart.

Another great partner for white or milk chocolate is a fortified Muscat wine. There are some great French examples such as **Beaumes de Venise** and **Muscat de Riveslattes**

Try these pairings for Dark Chocolate...

Banfi Brachetto d'Acqui (Piedmont, Italy)

One whiff of the Banfi Brachetto brings images of roses and raspberries to mind. This sweet sparkler has a clean finish that is perfect for your next bit of chocolate. The acidity of this wine also makes it a good paring for spicy Asian dishes or salads with berry vinaigrettes. *Retails for about \$20*

Warre's "Otima" 20 year Tawny Port (Portugal)

Aged for 20 years in seasoned oak barrels, this tawny port has perfectly balanced tannins and acids making each sip bright and elegant. Flavors of nuts and raisins make it a great match for chocolate mousse or chocolate with nuts. Aged tawnies are made for consumption and will not improve significantly with added age, so drink up! *Retails for about \$52.*

Domaine de la Rectorie Banyuls (Roussillon, France)

Made from slightly raisinated Grenache grapes, this is a definite soul mate for chocolate! This wine is full and smooth with flavors of red berries and a touch of spice. *Retails for about \$36.*

Try this pairing for White Chocolate...

Ceretto Santo Stefano Moscato d'Asti (Piedmont, Italy)

Fruity, Fizzy and aromatic, this Moscato will make you as giddy as your first crush! Delicious with every sip and only 5.5% alcohol, this is a great lunch or brunch wine, too. Pair with your white chocolate treats for a heavenly combination. *Retails for about \$24.*

Try this pairing for Milk Chocolate...

Yalumba Museum Muscat (Australia)

Made from the red and pink varieties of Muscat, this "sticky" from Yalumba is the perfect sip with milk chocolate. Yalumba is one of the oldest family run wineries in Australia and delivers great value across all its wines. This sweet Muscat is amber in color with ginger and orange aromas and a touch of rose petal. *Retails for about \$18 for a half bottle.*

which are the classic standards. New world countries make their own versions of these Muscat-based dessert wines, including South Africa, California and Australia. In Australia, they call dessert wines, like Muscats, "stickies," referring to their full, rich consistency. I especially like the Australian Muscats coming from the Rutherglen region because they are not only delicious but also a good value. Muscats are sweet and full bodied with the aromas of rose petal, ginger and orange as well as raisins. If you like Tawny Port you'll love a Muscat!

This Valentine's Day, no matter whether you are going out or staying in, there is a good wine to sip with your favorite chocolate indulgence. Just take into consideration the type of chocolate when choosing the right partner in order to ensure that the two complement each other. Just like for every person there is a soul mate; for every chocolate there is the right wine.

Laurie Forster, The Wine Coach® is a wine educator and author of The Sipping Point: A Crash Course in Wine. For more information on Laurie's services or her book visit www.thewinecoach.com. ■