

### Wine and Chocolate—A classic Couple



Valentine's Day is just around the corner and love is in the air, so why not talk about it on the air!

Given the age-old tradition of giving heart shaped boxes of chocolate to your loved one on February 14<sup>th</sup>, let's talk about how wine and chocolate, if done correctly, can be as complimentary to each other as Superman and Lois, Romeo and Juliet, or Homer and Marge.

And just as with any great couple, pairing wine and chocolate takes a little work since the wrong combination can bring out bitterness in the chocolate or, even worse, make the wine tart and acerbic. But if you follow a few simple tips, you'll enjoy a Valentine's treat you're sure to fall in love with.

First, it helps if the wine is a little sweeter than the chocolate. For example, a creamy style dark chocolate would pair well with a late harvest Muscat or Port. Next, the lighter the chocolate, the lighter the wine. White chocolate goes great with Sherry or older Madeira while milk chocolate usually plays well with merlot or even sparkling wine. Lastly, if the chocolate is concentrated – like a bittersweet chocolate – then the wine should be concentrated as well. Usually a hardy zinfandel or fortified red wine, such as Banyuls, will do the trick.

Here are a few of my favorite wine and chocolate pairings.

#### Chocolate Fudge Brownies

**The 2008 Maimai Merlot from the Hawkes Bay region of New Zealand is a perfect foil for a super-rich chocolate fudge brownie.** This exceptional Merlot gets a big lift from the addition of 27% Malbec, which adds big black fruit notes on the bouquet. The palate is chalked full of lush dark plum and black cherry flavors with hints of cinnamon. Notes of mocha on the medium-framed finish adds extra depth. **\$15**

#### Dark Chocolate Cups Filled with Fresh Raspberries

**The 2011 Murphy-Goode Zinfandel Liar's Dice from Sonoma County in California,** is powerful without being overwhelming. Loads of black cherry, dark plum and spices roll over the tongue in smooth waves. Hints of chocolate-covered cherry slide in on the backside of the medium-long finish, providing a fantastic backdrop for the combination of chocolate and fruit. **\$20**

#### Chocolate Italian Love Cake

**The 2013 La Spinetta Moscato D'Asti Bricco Quaglia from the Piedmont region of Italy,** is made from the white muscato grape. This slightly sparkling wine is low in alcohol and slightly sweet thanks to the residual sugar. It features characteristic flavors of honeysuckle, ripe pear and baked peaches. The notes of roasted almonds on the rich finish make it a perfect match with chocolate Italian Love Cake or a chocolate-dipped almond cookie. **\$21**

#### Milk-Chocolate Covered Strawberries

I know it seems a bit cliché, but somehow Valentine's Day just wouldn't be complete without a Champagne from France. The **Non-Vintage Piper Heidsieck Brut Champagne** from France is a bargain given the complex flavors of green apples, citrus notes and slate that cover the tongue. Hints of roasted nuts and abundant acidity combine to provide a wonderful, crisp finish and a nice counter-balance to the rich chocolate and sweet strawberry. **\$30**