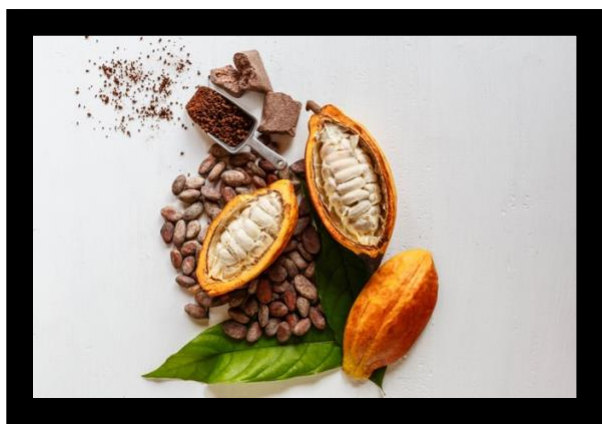




## Pairing Wine and Chocolate

Book of Bertil. 34



## Introduction: Myth or Reality?

### CHAPTER 1.0

All reasons are good to enjoy chocolate with a glass of wine, but unfortunately it is very common to simply classify chocolate into three main families, dark, milk or white, and to do the same with wine. However, the reality of chocolate is much more complex, it depends on its origins (Amelonado, Contamana, Criollo, Curaray, Guiana, Iquitos, Marañón, Nacional, Nanay, or Purús) but also if the beans come from a self-compatible, or self-incompatible tree. Like wine, chocolate offers an infinite amount of taste expression, texture and bitterness. In addition, chocolate can be pure, or aromatic with the addition of added flavors such as orange, passion fruit, coffee, salt, caramel, nuts, milk, etc. These two products, wine and chocolate, have long been considered difficult to combine—it's an acrobatic balancing act to respect and be in control of the effect that each has on the senses. But it is not so complicated if you understand the rules of pairing. Once the tips for pairing them well are understood, the result can be memorable, and so the question is not whether a combination is possible, but rather how to make the right choice among all the possible combinations. To do this, I will guide you in the fundamentals of chocolate and the different organoleptic reference points that must be taken into consideration to become a Choco-Vino-Aficionados!

### 34.1.01 Composition of Chocolate

Like vines, cocoa trees for each of the countries where cocoa is grown, are the subject of massal selection by farmers, or cross-bred by research centers, universities, or companies, to develop trees best adapted to the pedoclimatic conditions, diseases and aggressors specific to each environment. Of course, yields are often one of the criteria studied and, like the vine, when the

selection results in a tree with satisfactory criteria, it is propagated in nurseries by grafting or by vegetative propagation (e.g. cuttings). So, there are not only large families of cocoa trees, but also subfamilies and sub-subfamilies. In the same way, depending on the composition of the soil, irrigation, altitude, and orientation, a specific clone of a cocoa family will be chosen, and the same goes for the vine. For example, for the Syrah, the clone chosen may be 470, 471, 524, 747, 1140, 1141, 1188, 1345, 1346, 1352, 1353 or 1354. Therefore, the first expression of chocolate like the wine produced will depend on its geographical origin (the minerals in the soil) and its massal selection planted.



### 34.1.02 The Second Criterion

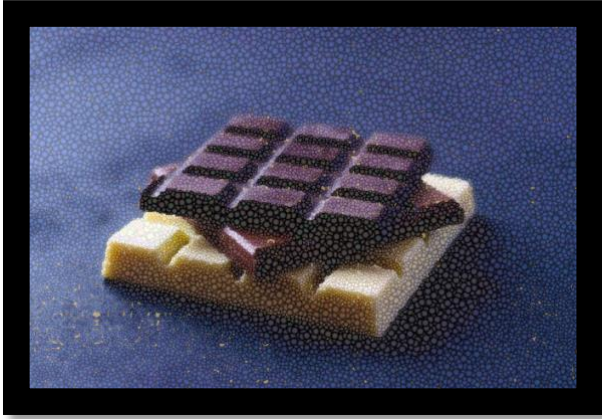
The second criterion for the proper expression of a chocolate is human intervention. The first stage is almost like that of the vine, i.e. the decision of the time of harvest and the fermentation choices. The second step—drying, roasting, and crushing—is more like that of coffee production. In general, a great chocolatier will receive their beans whole and will decide, depending on their style, to roast their bean in its shell or de-shelled beforehand. The empyreumatic aromas and the strength of the tannins, and therefore the astringency of the chocolate, will depend on these steps. The third step is that of grinding, it consists of deciding the fineness of the cocoa powder, the finer the powder the more aromatic the chocolate liquor will be. The next steps will be the refinement of the product, and finally the conching. The longer it will be, the greater the taste quality of the chocolate and the finer it will be in the mouth. During its processing, cocoa produces an oil, it is cocoa butter, this by-product is an important part of the final manufacture of chocolate (we will discuss this more later on).

**Origin chocolates:** Must be produced from cocoa from a single country.

**Raw chocolates:** Must be made from cocoa from an identified geographical region or even from a single plantation.

**Grand cru chocolates:** Characterize chocolates whose cocoa has a particular character that can be uniquely identified, which justifies a high price.

It all sounds complicated, but it is essential to understand that the more expensive the chocolate you are going to consume, the more you will have an artisanal chocolate of great taste quality, and that the same will be true with the wine you choose.



## The three types of chocolate

### CHAPTER 2.0

#### 34.2.01 How to choose your Pure Dark Chocolate

Legally in the United States, a "dark" chocolate does not have a standard of identity by the FDA as a type of chocolate. However, to be marketed as dark chocolate, a product must meet the FDA's policy for non-standardized foods bearing the term "chocolate," which has raised concerns that some products may be made using vegetable fats. As for European Dark chocolate, it must contain at least 18% cocoa butter, no less than 35% total dry cocoa and a minimum of 14% non-fat dry cocoa.

In general, therefore, we can define an artisanal dark chocolate as containing 50 to 99% cocoa solids, cocoa butter and sugar. (Be aware that inferior Dark chocolates may also add butterfat, vegetable oils, or artificial colors or flavors). Pure dark chocolate should therefore be the starting point for choosing your wine pairing.

#### 34.2.02 Dark Chocolate and Wine Pairing

To make the most perfect organoleptic pairing possible with wine, you must agree on the same percentages of its different factors.



#### 2.02.1 Rule No. 1:

The higher the chocolate is in cocoa, the more tannins it will develop (6% polyphenols), a pronounced bitterness (flavonoids), and a whole range of empyreumatic aromas (roasting) and acidity (largely from the fermentation of the beans), and therefore the purer the chocolate is (i.e. the higher the percent of cocoa) the more obvious and present the acidic sensation will be in the mouth.

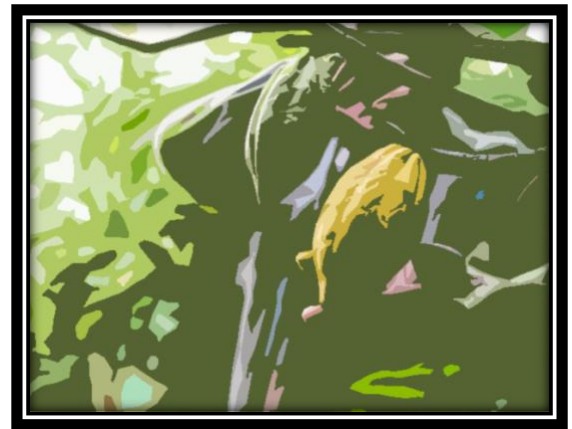
So, the purer the chocolate the more you should opt for fortified port-style wines, as they contain much higher residual alcohol and sugar levels than the most potent dry wines. But always choose a wine that is less sweet than the chocolate you pair it with, otherwise the wine will taste bitter. If you choose a dry red wine, opt for wines that are strong in alcohol from a warm climate.

The methods, decisions of vinification, and refining of a wine depend to a very large extent on the geographical origin of the wine.

Thus, the more the grapes come from a hot and arid climate (such as Napa Valley or Tuscany, for example), the more the choice of vine will be oriented towards a thick-skinned grape (high in tannin and color), fruity (acidic), which will give wines with higher alcohol levels, with more residual sugars (fructose), and finally (in order to rebalance the wine in astringency and in its aromatic range) the wine will be educated (aged) in strongly toasted oak barrels. Light / light (light, weak) - light vanillin, tannins. Medium / Medium - vanillin, cocoa, light caramel, coconut, chocolate. Forte / heavy (strong) - coffee, caramel, coconut, smoked bacon, toast). This same rule applies on the other hand in a degressive way for wines from climates that are less and less hot.

#### 2.02.2 Rule No. 2:

The texture of dark chocolate depends on its percentage of sugar and cocoa butter, and therefore the higher the cocoa content the chocolate, the harder and crunchier the chocolate will be and the longer it will take to melt in your mouth. So, to perfectly match the texture of the chocolate the wine must be full bodied (a consequence of the grape variety and the winemaking method). The sugar level rarely changes in the composition of dark chocolate, it is mainly the percentage of cocoa butter that will be modified, and which will make the texture of the chocolate more supple, buttery (round) and more melting, and therefore the lower the cocoa content of the chocolate, the more the wine should be chosen on a less powerful composition.



#### 2.02.3 Rule No. 3:

The natural aromatics of chocolate depend on its origin. This range can range from floral (honey, flower), fruity (red fruits, citrus, prune), spicy (licorice, nutmeg, toast), Dried fruit (walnuts, hazelnut, macadamia, pecans) Butter (fresh butter, caramel), or earthy (woody, leathery, undergrowth). But they can also be added in the manufacture (orange, spices, coffee, curry, red peppers, etc.). Only the main natural flavors (the 3 most important) of the chocolate must be similar in aromas and intensity to that of the chosen wine, and if the chocolate has added flavors, or it will be served with condiments (walnuts, candied orange or lemon peel, cherries, cherry, caramel, etc.) you must ignore them in the chocolate and wine pairing, since they will simply be complementary flavors (molecular associations) to the main natural flavors chosen.

#### 2.02.4 Rule No. 4:

For wine, the finesse and intensity of the tannins depend largely on the grape variety of origin and the age of the wine (the older the wine, the more supple the tannins will be). As for dark chocolate, its method of grinding and conching will decide the texture of the chocolate, which will be either grainy (like Taza chocolate), medium, or extremely silky. This tactile texture must match the same tactile composition of the tannins of the wine chosen.





**\*Memorandum:**

*My words and opinions in these newsletters are and would always be personal, and I intend to offend.*

*I always accept that others have the full right and duty to challenge me, to argue, and, if it is necessary, excommunicate me from their beliefs (often dull and hollow) because I would act the same way if it were the other way around.*



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### 34.2.03 Milk Chocolate and Wine Pairings

A milk chocolate is cocoa to which a quantity of milk powder (minimum of 14%), sugar, and cocoa butter has been added. For sugar, there are no regulations on its percentage of presence in chocolate, nor on the nature of the sweetener used. However, despite the minimum content of 25% cocoa to be used in milk chocolate, it is common to see milk chocolates with a content of 40% or even 50% cocoa, and so to reduce the use of sugar and enhance the natural taste of the chocolate. Milk chocolate is generally sweeter and creamier with added lactic acids that give them sweet and buttery flavors with notes of honey and cream, so it is important to accompany them preferably to choose light and fruity white wines that are slightly syrupy, such as a botrytised wine (Sauternes style) or a sweet white wine. But be careful not to make the mistake of pairing with a wine with too much sugar, or the wine will inevitably feel too heavy.

Your other choices depend on the cocoa content: the less there is, the more we will have to go for dry white wines, which will bring a liveliness and freshness complementary to the chocolate. If you follow the logic of the four rules previously explained for dark chocolate in moderation, then the best pairings are with sparkling wines (white or rosé) and orange wines. Be aware that for the aromatic palette of the wine, tropical aromas, lime, ginger, pineapple and other white stones, almonds, and nutmeg will enhance the taste of milk chocolate.



### 34.2.04 White Chocolate and Wine Pairings

White chocolate does not contain cocoa and is made only of cocoa butter, sugar and milk. Its sweet and buttery flavor, with notes of honey and cream and without the presence of tannin, will undoubtedly push you to go towards rancio aromas of oxidative wines, such as wines such as vin jaune, sherry rancio, or some orange wines. The choice to open an old white wine of 15 to 20 years can also be very satisfying. But if you don't have any, choose your white chocolate with a semi-dry wine from Chenin Blanc grape, or a mild dry wine, which contain a small percentage of residual sugars like a Riesling, Gewürztraminer, or Kerner, which will bring out the fruit of the chocolate without being saturating.

### Conclusion

Here's something to keep you busy for a few pounds of chocolate, gallons of wine, and a ton of guaranteed fun. Experiment, try, discover, because this is the only possibility for you to understand and appreciate your personal tastes. But never forget that moderation always tastes better, and that sharing increases the pleasure of the moment.

