

Sea Glass at the Inn by the Sea pairs roasted Bangs Island mussels with herb-garlic butter, white wine, and grilled focaccia with "a light, chilled rosé," says chef Mitchell Kaldrovich. "At Sea Glass, we want Maine flavors to speak for themselves, careful not to overwhelm the delicate essence of seafood with heavy sauces or with the wine. The Château Pesquié Les Terrasses Rosé is light and subtle, with lasting notes of currant, strawberry, and raspberry that will not overwhelm the dish."



# Food & Wine

# Duets

BY KAREN E. HOFREITER

**C**reating the perfect pairing is a lot like finding true love—you're not going to find it if you're looking for it. Even the most knowledgeable of chefs and sommeliers rely on luck and intuition to help them stumble across their most successful food and wine duets.

For JANET WEBBER, wine director at HUGO'S RESTAURANT on Middle Street, the secret is to keep an open mind. "About ten years ago, I was choosing a pairing for a duck consommé. I was all set to offer a traditional light red, so I wasn't just *surprised* when a Burgundian chardonnay jumped out of nowhere and pronounced itself the best. I was floored. I can still taste it in my mind—10 years later."

For executive chef MITCHELL KALDROVICH of SEA GLASS, it's about getting out of the way. "For an Argentinean wine dinner, I was very concerned about pairing a malbec with crispy sweetbreads garnished with a sweet-and-sour tomato mostarda. Partly because of the natural sweetness of the sweetbreads, I wasn't 100 percent certain about this pairing; something was not settling with me. But all the diners and the sommelier thought it was *amazing*. I learned that night that while some wines are great alone, oth-

**"Food without wine is eating; food with wine is dining."**



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ers better express themselves with food, and I am just the liaison [between the two]."

Often, it's daring to take a leap. **NICK BUNKER**, dining room manager at **ARROW'S**—renowned for its two James Beard-award-winning chefs—will never forget "this couple that wanted to have a nice pairing with their Beluga caviar, so we [matched it] with Miller High Life." The mind rushes to a frosty can on a silver tray. "They said it was 'by far one of the best pairings we've ever had.'" (No guts, no glory—no wonder Miller is called the "champagne of beers!")

And for **CHARLIE BRYON**, co-owner of **SALT EXCHANGE**, it's about going beyond the limits. "At its best, dining can be an all-inclusive experience—food, wine, art, music, and atmosphere." Walk in on the right night, and you and your fellow diners will find yourselves whisked to the bright countryside of the South of France. "We'll surround you with brilliant gold paintings—reminiscent of van Gogh's *Wheat Field with Cypresses*—and seat you so close to them you can contemplate the graceful stroke marks. Seu Jorge's version of 'Changes' will be meandering softly in the background. On the menu: crusty french bread; fresh, truffle-salted tomato; grilled duck sausage; peppered venison carpaccio; and a creamy, mature Brillat-Savarin. The wine pairings will definitely include Edmeades 'Eaglepoint' Zinfandel."

**WHITE BARN INN** wine director **CHRIS BAYLEY** treats the magic of combinations like anything else: practice makes perfect. "Don't be afraid to experiment; you have to make mistakes to truly discover pairings that would be otherwise overlooked. I'll often drink the same varietal for a month to get a sense of how it 'travels' from 'place to place.' Even if a pairing doesn't work," your understanding is refined, and there's an excitement to that. "You come away with a sense of 'it lacked this' or 'there was too much of that.'"

### WHEN DIONYSUS STRIKES

Whatever the inspiration, when a pairing is meant to be, it's a magic act on the tongue. Flavors twist and turn, stretching, contracting and changing their color, performing a startling disappearing act only return to its original theme a moment later.

Take, for example, an almost musical pairing by Webber at **Hugo's**: a riesling spätlese and a baby carrot and tatsoi salad with ginger cream, anise hyssop, and prosciutto chips. Ripe pear hits the nose first. At first sip, the golden-hued wine is off-dry, with notes of pear and apple, crisp



acidity, and a lingering finish. Switching from bite to sip and back to bite, the food and wine begin an impassioned tango. The salty prosciutto and earthy Asian greens bring out the riesling's sweetness and streaks of citrus; the sweet-and-spicy cubes of moist carrot 'cake' knock out that sweetness, allowing the wine's bracing acidity to come forward at full force.

So how does this dish play with diners? "[I've had] diners relate experiencing our food and wine pairings to 'an orgasm'—some actually cry."

As Anne Tyler writes in *The Accidental Tourist*, "...it's not just how much you love someone...what matters is who you are when you're with them." ■

To complement the roasted mushroom tart with Parmesan biscuit crust, goat cheese, arugula, and balsamic syrup, chef Kaldrovich recommends a sip of Louis Latour Meursault White Burgundy. "To balance the earthy flavor of the mushrooms, a full, rich wine is best. This is a well-balanced wine, touched with minerality, that culminates in a lemon note with a lingering feel in the mouth."

## GET YOUR PAIRINGS

### PAIRED TO IMPRESS

**FIVE FIFTY-FIVE, 555 CONGRESS STREET, PORTLAND** Pre-selected wine suggestions are printed on the dessert menu, like a white chocolate-cherry soufflé with a Chilean late harvest sauvignon blanc. Executive chef Steve Corry offers periodic five-course tasting menus\* with wine pairings such as lobster mac

'n' cheese with a French pinot noir. Splurge: Thibault Liger-Belair, Richebourg Grand-Cru, Nuits-Saint-Georges, \$495. [fivefifty-five.com](http://fivefifty-five.com)

**FISH BONES, 70 LINCOLN STREET, LEWISTON** Bi-monthly wine dinners.\* Occasional 'celebrity pairings': "Kelly Ripa comes in and drinks white wine. Patrick Dempsey enjoys





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## CUISCENE

tequila and beer," says general manager David Moyses. [fishbonesag.com](http://fishbonesag.com)

**FUEL, 49 LISBON STREET, LEWISTON** Wine dinners held variously.\* We recommend "Feed Me, Justin!"—a four-course tasting menu with wine pairings such as "Ahi tuna tartare with a Trimbach riesling," says executive chef Justin Oliver. Splurge: Château Mouton Rothschild, \$395. [fuelmaine.com](http://fuelmaine.com)

**NATALIE'S, CAMDEN HARBOUR INN, 83 BAYVIEW STREET, CAMDEN** Pre-selected wine pairings are offered with tasting menu, including corn risotto with a white blend like Caymus Conundrum. "The wine works incredibly well with the sweetness of risotto," says GM Alejandro Marchesini. [nataliesrestaurant.com](http://nataliesrestaurant.com)

**WHITE BARN INN, 37 BEACH AVENUE, KENNEBUNKPORT** Wine dinners throughout the year.\* On September 16, sample a Riesling dinner with special guest Raymund Prum, winemaker and proprietor of S.A. Prum in Germany. Also: pre-selected wine pairings available with the four-course tasting menu. [whitebarninn.com](http://whitebarninn.com)

### ECLECTIC

**THE GOOD TABLE, 527 OCEAN HOUSE ROAD, CAPE ELIZABETH** Nontraditional tasting/pairing dinners.\* "A memorable dinner recently was 'Not your Grandmother's Sherry,' a nectar sherry poured with a chocolate brioche bread pudding with burned caramel sauce. It was shocking to everybody that sherry wasn't what they thought—there's this perception of your grandmother drinking it," says owner Lisa Kostopoulos. Don't miss their next wine adventure, scheduled for January. [thegoodtablerestaurant.net](http://thegoodtablerestaurant.net)

**MIYAKE, 468 FORE STREET, PORTLAND** Sake pairings enliven the *omakase* (chef's choice) five-course tasting menu. Close your eyes as you try one we can't resist, the smoky Ichinokura sake with nigiri. [miyakerestaurants.com](http://miyakerestaurants.com)

**SALT EXCHANGE, 245 COMMERCIAL STREET PORTLAND** Spirit tastings paired with hors d'oeuvres the last Wednesday of the month.\* [thesaltexchange.net](http://thesaltexchange.net)

### SWEPT AWAY

**ARROW'S RESTAURANT, 41 BERWICK ROAD, OGUNQUIT** Around the World wine dinners include New York's Delmonico, October 30; Provence, November 6; Tuscan Wild Game Dinner featuring Ruffino wines, November 13. Then there's East Meets West: A Three-Day Gala Event here Sept. 16, 17, 18. Wine pairings available with tasting menus: [arrowsrestaurant.com](http://arrowsrestaurant.com)



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**SEA GLASS, INN BY THE SEA, 40 BOWERY BEACH ROAD, CAPE ELIZABETH** Beer dinner, November 10; European wine dinner, December 8; Argentinean wine dinner, February 23, 2012; Fall Harvest menu with pre-selected wine and beer pairings all through October. [innbythesea.com](http://innbythesea.com)

**ROMANTIC**

**HURRICANE, 29 DOCK SQUARE, KENNEBUNKPORT** Fascinating three-dimensional dinner pairings\* here combine celebrity visits by winemakers and chefs to go with the gourmet cuisine. "It's important to have *the person who blended the grapes* explain how they got to [the wine]. . . and our chef, Jason Leighton, explains how he decided to pair the wines with each dish. That's how I found my favorite match, chocolate and cabernet," says co-owner Brooks MacDonald. [hurricanerestaurant.com](http://hurricanerestaurant.com)

**LOON LODGE, 16 PICKFORD ROAD, RANGELEY** Wine suggestions for individual dishes are fearlessly listed on the menu and dare to be great: "Asian-style marinated chicken tenders with a spicy peanut sauce paired with a German riesling."

**WATER STREET TAVERN, 12 WATER STREET, LUBEC** Wine and beer pairing dinners.\* Upcoming: "Our Brewmaster dinner-[no official date yet]-will feature beer and entrees. Pairings will include Long Trail Ale with our Tavern pie and a light beer with our bacon-bleu-cheese-stuffed mushrooms and stuffed quahogs," says owner Jim Heyer. [waterstavernandinn.com](http://waterstavernandinn.com)

**WINTERPORT WINERY, 279 SOUTH MAIN STREET, WINTERPORT** Dinners get paired with different Winterport wines and ales every other month.\* "This fall, we'll match a smoked malt Rauchbier with smoked ribs," says owner Mike Anderson. [winterportwinery.com](http://winterportwinery.com)

**TAKE FLIGHT**

**GRISSINI, 27 WESTERN AVENUE, KENNEBUNK LOWER VILLAGE** Wine flights are accompanied by complimentary hors d'oeuvres Friday evenings at this top-notch Italian restaurant. [restaurantgrissini.com](http://restaurantgrissini.com)

**ZAPOTECA RESTAURANTE Y TEQUILERIA, 505 FORE STREET, PORTLAND** The "new guys" here have no fewer than 60 tequila pairings upon request. "We have a Tequila Sample program where you can try three types," says owner Sergio Ramos. The unexpected: "An añejo with dessert." [zapotecarestaurant.com](http://zapotecarestaurant.com)

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*(Continued on page 72)*

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## CUISCENE

*Food & Wine Duets* (continued from page 45)

themed wine tastings like champagne and caviar, hosted the last Thursday of every month, 5-7 p.m. [brownetrading.com](http://brownetrading.com)

### EAST ENDER, 47 MIDDLE STREET, PORTLAND

Beer- and wine-pairing dinners.\* Do you dare? The "buffalo fried livers with bleu cheese, paired with Stella Artois," is the stuff of both dreams and nightmares. [eastenderportland.com](http://eastenderportland.com)

### NOVARE RES BIER CAFÉ, 4 CANAL PLAZA, PORTLAND

Beer-pairing events include: Harvest Cider Festival, Nov. 20; Valentine's chocolate pairing, February.\* [novareresbiercafe.com](http://novareresbiercafe.com)

### THIRSTY PIG, 37 EXCHANGE STREET, PORTLAND

Pre-selected beers pair with the meat-centric, 'street food' fare, like a zesty hot Italian sausage with Allagash White. 773-2469

### POWER OF SUGGESTION

#### BODA, 671 CONGRESS STREET, PORTLAND

Suggested pairings by request. "Let us tease you: the soft flavors of coconut in a beef panang curry complemented by a carménère with notes of leather." [bodamaine.com](http://bodamaine.com)

#### CLEMENTINE, 44 MAINE STREET, BRUNSWICK

Suggested pairings by request. Adventurous matches are the rule: "We like red wine and fish as an unusual pair. How about this: a salmon-brick pastry with succotash and Illahe Oregon pinot noir,?" says owner/head chef Dana Robicheaw. [clementinemaine.com](http://clementinemaine.com)

#### FORE STREET, 288 FORE STREET, PORTLAND

Chef Sam Hayward is famous for his inventive pairings by request. Must-try duo: "chilled seafood platter with a Vinho Verde." [forestreet.biz](http://forestreet.biz)

#### SOLO BISTRO, 128 FRONT STREET, BATH

"We do recommendations upon request and tend to stay within more 'traditional' parameters," says William Neilson, owner and Drinker-in-Chief. [solobistro.com](http://solobistro.com)

### EXPERIENTIAL

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## Pairings Psych 101

What is it, exactly, about “pairings” that we find so exciting and satisfying? **Dr. Scott Brown**, a **cognitive psychologist** and **professor of psychology at USM**, ventures a scientific answer: “With memory, **things we associate together** become part of the same schema—a stored framework or body of knowledge which **naturally fits together**. When you think about one thing in a schema, the other things **light up**. With **pairings**, you’re continuing the theme, **extending a pleasurable experience**. In a social situation, everyone joins in the same schema. It eases the flow of conversation and the sharing of memories and ideas.”

Which would explain why even boyfriends and husbands will go along with a **romantic evening** watching **Chocolat** served with **coq au vin** and **chocolate soufflé**—although some might prefer the more subliminal pairing of hot dogs and baseball.

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**RABELAIS AUTHOR EVENTS** Portland’s bookstore for food-lovers has found a recipe for pairing success, hosting authors who cook with more than just words. Past events\* include a book-signing with Gabrielle Hamilton complemented by a dinner featuring wine and a roast lamb inspired by her book *Blood, Bones & Butter*. 774-1044, rabelaisbooks.com

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\*See the restaurants’ individual websites for upcoming dinners and dates.

➤ More: Visit Online Extras at [portlandmonthly.com](http://portlandmonthly.com).



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