



THE ULTIMATE WINTER WINE AND CHEESE CHECKLIST

WINE AND CHEESE GO TOGETHER LIKE...

...Peanut butter and chocolate, cupcakes and frosting, the stars and the moon...must we go on?! We're sure you've all heard what a great pairing these two make, but do you know why? And which wines to serve with which cheeses?! And in which season to serve them?! Well, we're here to help!

This checklist covers three of our favorite French winter cheeses and the best wines to accompany them. Get your taste buds ready for this one....

WHY PAIR WINE AND CHEESE?

We're about to get a little technical on you all, are you ready?!

The reason why wine and cheese pair so well together is because one is an astringent (wine) and the other is a fat (cheese). We're going to quote experimental psychologist Paul Breslin for a minute...

"Because fat is oily, eating it lubricates the mouth, making it feel slick or even slimy. Meanwhile, astringents, chemical compounds such as the tannins in wine make the mouth feel dry and rough. They do this by chemically binding with lubricant proteins present in saliva [...] leaving the surface of the tongue and gums without their usual coating of lubrication. We want our mouth to be lubricated but not overly lubricated; we found in a study that astringents reduce the lubricants in the mouth during a fatty meal and return balance".

Mmmm... gotta love thinking about the word slimy while thinking about food, right?!

We kid, but there you have it: the scientific reason that we all love a good wine and cheese pairing.

Read on to discover our favorites, and you'll find a handy checklist at the end to create an ultimate winter wine and cheese dinner party.



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VACHERIN MONT D'OR

The first cheese we absolutely must mention is the [Vacherin Mont d'Or](#). This cheese is traditionally made with the winter milk from the same cows that produce Gruyère in the summer. Two different, equally delicious cheeses from the same animal?! That's our kind of cow!

Authentic Vacherin Mont d'Or is packaged in a strip of bark of spruce tree. This was originally done to help transport these very soft and melty cheeses.

It is only produced between August and March, and (taking aging into account) it is only available for sell between September 10th and May 10th.

This cheese can be described as velvety and buttery...and we're not talking Velveeta, people.

A white wine or champagne is recommended to serve with this guy. We love Côtes du Jura. This wine is produced in the Jura region of France (hence the name!) These wines are always described as being much more unique in flavor in comparison to some of their other white wine counterparts. We'll take something unique any day!



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RACLETTE

The tradition of serving a [Raclette](#) during the winter months is actually centuries old. As they say...if it ain't broke, don't fix it! The word *raclette* comes from the verb 'to scrape' in French - this draws from the fact that in super traditional regions of France, the raclette cheese wheel is heated and all of the yummiest melty bits are scraped off and eaten. The best time to eat Raclette is from October to December, but we'll be munching on this cheesy goodness all winter long - and we suggest you do the same.



The concept is simple: gather your nearest and dearest around your Raclette melting machine (basically a mini-broiler), melt your cheese in small pans called *coupelles*, and then serve over various charcuterie, cornichons, potatoes, and (of course) a yummy baguette. You'll find all of the specifics of what you'll need for that on the checklist featured at the end of this article.



Now onto the beverages...we know that the authentic Fendant du Valais wine can be a bit tricky to find unless you go into your local speciality wine shop. And if you don't have a local specialty wine shop?! We also recommend Chenin Blanc, Riesling, or really any good quality, dry, white French wine.

Bonus: More of a beer drinker? We recommend a good Belgian (shhh...don't tell our French friends!) pale ale!



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FONDUE

Fondue means melted in French, so now you know where the name comes from. And honestly, who doesn't love a pot of melted, creamy cheese that you dip bread (and sometimes meat) into?! (Save for the lactose intolerant and/or vegetarians among you...we say no one!)

That's what you'll get at a [Fondue night](#) ladies and gentleman.

The cheese is served in a communal pot called a *caquelon*, and is eaten by dipping long-stemmed forks with bread into the cheese. This is another dish that has been around for centuries - there is even mention of dipping bread into melted cheese in Homer's *Iliad*! If it was good enough for Homer, it's good enough for us.

What wine to serve with this dish? We suggest a Vin de Savoie - that is, a white wine that comes from the Savoie department in France. There are a lot of options to choose from as far as Savoie wines go, but since they can prove to be a bit hard to find as well, we can also suggest a Chablis or Riesling. Now bring on the melted cheese!



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It's easy to build a delicious meal from these cheese and wine combinations! Here are our suggestions to turn your winter wine and cheese into a full on dinner:

CHECKLIST – VACHERIN MONT D'OR

What to eat it with:

- 1 clove garlic
- ¼ cup white wine ([see recipe!](#))
- Good crispy baguette, baguette 'tradition', OR 'pain de campagne' (country bread), OR other hearty good quality bread
- Boiled potatoes
- Provincial [roasted vegetables](#)
- Fresh fruit or sorbet for dessert

What to drink... any good, flavorful white wine such as:

- Cotes de Jura
- Sancerre
- Chardonnay
- Brut champagne (information about brut, sec, etc. [in this article!](#))





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CHECKLIST - RACLETTE

What to eat it with:

- Various hams/meats such as:
 - Parma (cured ham)
 - Serrano ham (cured ham)
 - Salami
 - Grisons (actually beef, not ham)
 - Bresaola (dried salted beef)
 - Deli sliced ham
- Boiled raclette potatoes (uniform in size)
- Cornichons (similar to sweet gherkin pickles)
- Simple green salad with [French vinaigrette](#)
- Carmelized [pineapples](#) or [pears](#) or [apples](#) for dessert

What to drink... any good, dry white wine such as:

- Fendant du Valais (Chasselas grape from France and Switzerland)
- Chenin blanc
- Riesling
- Red wine lover?** Try a low-profile, chilled Pinot Noir
- Beer lover?** Try a low-hops lighter beer like Blue Moon or Hoegaarden



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CHECKLIST - FONDUE

What to eat it with:

- 1 clove garlic
- Mix of French cheeses ([see recipe!](#))
- 2 ½ c dry white wine ([see recipe!](#))
- Nutmeg, paprika, pepper
- [Kirsch](#) or [cognac/brandy](#)
- Loaf of hearty bread, cubed
- Sautéed mushrooms (or other vegetables)
- Cooked and cubed meats (ham, chicken)
- Raw fruit (apple, cherry tomato)
- Cornichons (similar to sweet gherkin pickles)
- Tablet of good quality dark chocolate for dessert (NOT chocolate fondue!)

What to drink... any crisp white wine such as:

- Roussette de Savoie (region in France)
- Chablis
- Alsatian Riesling
- Red wine lover?** Try a fresh, light-body red like a young Burgundy or Gamay



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