

FOOD
& WINE

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WHAT TO
DRINK WITH A

Cheese Platter

The classic pairing of cheese and wine should never be overlooked when entertaining guests. Here, Peter Bourne discusses his favourite matches.

The world of cheese is immense and my voyage of discovery started in France way back in 1985. I was blown away by the vast choice and the way cheese was a respected part of every meal, not just an add-on. I returned to Australia pondering if our home-grown cheeses would ever reach the European pinnacle. Thirty years later I believe they've nudged close to the mark. The only (and ongoing) issue is unpasteurised milk.

HOLY GOAT LA LUNA + 2014 Domaine du Bel Air Les Marsaules Bourgueil, Loire Valley, France, A\$75

I explored the Loire in 1985 staying in fancy hotels like Château d'Artigny, and the plethora of goat cheeses was staggering. I reckon Ann-Marie Monda and Carla Meurs of Holy Goat in Sutton Grange, Victoria make world class goat's cheese – La Luna the pinnacle. Choosing a wine is always tricky with white mould cheese; an aged Hunter semillon would be perfect. For a curve ball I've returned to the Loire for this silky cabernet franc. The wine's acidity matches that of the cheese with the modest tannins sufficient to mop up the creamy richness.

BERTHAUT ÉPOISSES DE BOURGOGNE + 2017 Chardonnay by Farr, Geelong, A\$80

Nothing oozes Burgundy more than Époisses – the smell putrid to some, heavenly to me. I first discovered it at the three Michelin-starred Lameloise just outside Beaune. Intuitively this pungent washed-rind cheese should go with a decent red Burgundy but I prefer a chardonnay – not a lean style but a full-on Burgundian model. Nick Farr is right on the money with his – it has the structure and power to deal with the exquisitely over-the-top Époisses.

QUICKE'S CHEDDAR + 2016 Hickinbotham Clarendon Vineyard Trueman Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, A\$77

Local cheesemongers, Simon Johnson and Will Studd have raved about Neal's Yard Dairy for

years, praising its awesome range of British (and European) cheeses. I finally found myself in Covent Garden and visited the original store. They were right, it was a cheeselover's paradise, I purchased a selection of English for a picnic. A must have was Quicke's Cloth Bound Cheddar, as we served it at our wedding in 2003. The firm, crumbly texture and typical 'bite' calls for an equally firm, well-structured red – the 2016 Trueman fitting the bill quite nicely.

OCELLI TESTUN AL BAROLO + 2014 Vietti Barolo Castiglione, Piedmont, Italy, A\$138

Wine and cheese have a special synergy brought together with this unusual but delicious cheese. As the name implies, Occei Testun al Barolo comes from Piedmont and is an aged blend of raw sheep, cow and goat milk. The twist is that instead of having a natural rind or being cloth bound, the young cheese is coated in grape marc – the pressed skins of the local nebbiolo, Barolo. Naturally it's best with a Barolo, the Vietti a classic example of this perfumed but concentrated red. For the ultimate experience try them in situ, Alba's Osteria La Libera serves both in perfect condition.

PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO + 2008 Piper-Heidsieck Brut Vintage, Champagne, France, A\$129

For many, the king or queen is Parmigiano-Reggiano – or more generically parmesan. Granted DOP status in 1955, real parmesan comes from the provinces of Bologna, Mantua, Modena or Parma. A trip from Lucca to Verona took us through Abetone. The eastern slopes towards Modena were verdant green, dotted with cows knee deep in grass, slowly ruminating to produce the milk for Parmigiano-Reggiano. The memory lives on every time I eat parmesan. They say Champagne goes with everything. That's a bit of a stretch but the intense yet vibrant Piper-Heidsieck from the stellar 2008 vintage is a real treat with Parmigiano-Reggiano. Serve solo. 🍷

CHEESE PLEASE

If I had to choose a single cheese for that 'desert island' sojourn it would be Gruyère de Comté – its nutty flavours and firm, yet creamy texture are perfect for sandwiches (fresh or toasted), a fondue or just nibbling by the TV with a glass of (red) wine.

