



# TheWineMatrix

FREE DOWNLOAD

## 10 Essential Grapes Everyone Should Know

(and What to Pair Them With)

QUICK GUIDE



A smart, easy-to-use introduction to the wines people see most often — with pairing advice that actually helps.

By Mark Robinson & Joe Lertch



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FREE GUIDE

## 10 Essential Grapes Everyone Should Know

(and What to Pair Them With)

A fast, stylish introduction to the grapes you are most likely to see on wine lists and in wine shops — with simple pairing advice that actually makes sense.

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**Pair flavor with flavor — not color with food.**

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**By Mark Robinson & Joe Lertch**

The Wine Matrix Team

**White wine is for fish.  
Red wine is for meat...**



**Seems simple enough.**



**Wait... What the heck?**

**It's not that easy!**



**TheWineMatrix.com**

## INTRODUCTION

# A Better Way to Think About Wine

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Most people start with a very simple rule: white wine with fish, red wine with meat. It helps a little — but it leaves out the part that really matters. Great pairings happen when the wine matches the flavor, texture, and weight of the food.

This short guide introduces ten grapes that cover a surprising amount of real-world wine drinking. Learn these, and ordering wine becomes much easier.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Confidence with wine comes from seeing useful patterns. Once you understand why a crisp Sauvignon Blanc loves herbs or why Cabernet Sauvignon loves steak, the whole category becomes less intimidating.

### Inside this guide

- 5 essential white grapes
- 5 essential red grapes
- Simple pairing logic
- Quick buying confidence

### Use it for

- Restaurant ordering
- Wine shop browsing
- Entertaining at home

## SECTION ONE

# Five White Grapes

Crisp, bright, aromatic, and highly food-friendly. These five whites give readers a strong foundation without overwhelming them.

# Sauvignon Blanc

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**Style:** Crisp, citrusy, herbaceous.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Lemon, lime, grapefruit, gooseberry, grass, and fresh herbs.

**Pair With:** Goat cheese, shellfish, salads, asparagus, and herb-driven dishes.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Herbaceous wines love herbaceous food. Sauvignon Blanc is one of the easiest white wines to match with green flavors.

# Chardonnay

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**Style:** Medium- to full-bodied, smooth, sometimes creamy.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Apple, pear, citrus, pineapple, vanilla, butter, and toast depending on style.

**Pair With:** Roast chicken, creamy pasta, lobster, mushrooms, and richer seafood.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** The richer the dish, the richer the Chardonnay can be.

# Riesling

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**Style:** Bright, aromatic, high-acid, often dry to gently sweet.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Lime, peach, apricot, apple, jasmine, and honey.

**Pair With:** Spicy dishes, seafood, pork, ginger, cilantro, and foods with a little heat.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Sweetness plus acidity is one of the best tools in food pairing, especially with spice.

# Pinot Grigio

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**Style:** Light, crisp, clean, easygoing.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Green apple, pear, lemon, and subtle white flowers. **Pair With:** Salads, white fish, grilled shrimp, vegetable risotto, and simple Mediterranean dishes.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** When in doubt, Pinot Grigio works because it refreshes instead of dominates.

# Albariño

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**Style:** Zesty, mineral, coastal.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Lemon, grapefruit, peach, white flowers, and a subtle saline edge.

**Pair With:** Oysters, shrimp, shellfish, grilled white fish, and lighter cheeses.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Wines shaped by coastal climates often feel naturally at home next to seafood.

## Quick White Wine Rule

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Food Style	Best Starting Wine
Herbs, citrus, freshness	Sauvignon Blanc
Cream, butter, richness	Chardonnay
Spice and heat	Riesling
Simple light meals	Pinot Grigio
Seafood and coastal flavors	Albariño

## SECTION TWO

# Five Red Grapes

From soft and versatile to bold and structured, these five reds provide a practical foundation for most everyday decisions.

# Cabernet Sauvignon

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**Style:** Full-bodied, bold, tannic.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Blackcurrant, blackberry, cedar, tobacco, and dark plum.

**Pair With:** Steak, lamb, burgers, roast beef, and aged cheeses.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Tannins need fat. Cabernet becomes more complete when there is protein and richness on the plate.

# Merlot

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**Style:** Medium-bodied, smooth, generous.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Plum, black cherry, cocoa, herbs, and soft spice.

**Pair With:** Roast pork, burgers, pasta with meat sauce, mushroom dishes, and milder steaks.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Merlot is often the easiest red for people to enjoy because the tannins tend to be softer.

# Pinot Noir

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**Style:** Light- to medium-bodied, elegant, silky.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Cherry, raspberry, cranberry, mushroom, and warm spice.

**Pair With:** Duck, salmon, mushrooms, roast chicken, and charcuterie.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Pinot Noir is one of the most versatile red wines because it brings flavor without overwhelming the dish.

# Malbec

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**Style:** Bold, dark-fruited, generous.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Blackberry, plum, violet, cocoa, and spice.

**Pair With:** Steak, barbecue, grilled meats, smoky vegetables, and hearty sandwiches.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Malbec is a grill wine. It loves fire, char, smoke, and robust textures.

# Tempranillo

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**Style:** Savory, structured, classic.

**Flavors/Aromas:** Cherry, plum, leather, tobacco, herbs, and warm spice.

**Pair With:** Lamb, pork loin, tapas, Manchego, roasted vegetables, and tomato-based dishes.

**Wine Matrix Insight:** Earthy and savory wines love earthy and savory foods.

## Quick Red Wine Rule

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Food Style	Best Starting Wine
Steak and richer meats	Cabernet Sauvignon
Versatile everyday meals	Merlot
Lighter red-meat and fish pairings	Pinot Noir
Grill, smoke, barbecue	Malbec
Savory Mediterranean dishes	Tempranillo



## TAKE IT FURTHER

### Ready for the full guide?

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The Wine Matrix Guide to Grapes, a complete edition expands into a much deeper reference book covering a broader range of white and red grapes, more buying guidance, and a stronger Wine Matrix pairing framework. Available at our website: [www.thewinematrix.com](http://www.thewinematrix.com)

**Also explore:** *The Art of Spice & Wine Pairing* — available now at [www.thewinematrix.com](http://www.thewinematrix.com)

**By Mark Robinson & Joe Lertch**



# The Wine Matrix

## The Wine Matrix Guide to Grapes

Wine does not have to feel complicated. This guide helps readers understand the grapes they are most likely to encounter, how those grapes generally taste, and what kinds of foods make them shine.

**Inside this guide:** clear grape breakdowns, smart pairing shortcuts, quick buying confidence, and an easy-to-follow Wine Matrix approach to flavor-first wine education.

### Perfect for

- Restaurant ordering
- Wine shop browsing
- Entertaining at home
- Gift-worthy wine education

### Readers will learn

- Which grapes matter most
- How acidity and tannin work
- How to pair by flavor
- How to buy with confidence

By Mark Robinson & Joe Lertch

A Wine Matrix Library title designed for practical, approachable wine confidence.