

Wine & Chocolate

Being American originally, I grew up steeped in the tradition of Valentine's Day which, which arrives on the 14th of this month. Let this be a reminder for those who don't happen to pledge allegiance to the Stars and Stripes and as a preview, Valentine's usually means nice dinners, wine, and for some reason, chocolate.

Chocolate is one of those things that's pairs with most wines really, really badly. Sure, you can go with the time-tested adage of "Custard, good, steak good, what's the problem?" but if you've tried pairing it in the past, you've probably found that chocolate and white or red wines get pretty scratchy with one another. There are however quite excellent options, but they're not the first wines you'd think of despite their being incredibly traditional in Catalonia.

Vinyes dels Aspres - Vi de Panses NV

This is a dessert wine from Empordà. Yes, it's sweet but let me emphasize that it's extremely elegant being vinified with dried grapes so there's no alcohol added via the "mutage" process that the French do with their Vin Doux Naturel. Made from 100% Grenache, it carries balanced sugar as well as acidity and is wonderful for very dark chocolates. The nuttiness to the wine in the form of almond and hazelnut aromas as well as light floral notes make for one delicious bottle. 20€

Arrels del Priorat - Arrels 30 Anys

This is a traditional, oxidized wine from Southern Catalonia called, "vi ranci". The name "rancid wine" sounds horrible in English but the wines of this style are more akin to a Catalan Cognac than anything else. This particular wine, produced in partnership of René Barbier of Clos Mogador and the Jaume Balaguer of Gratallops, is best had with lighter chocolates. Also made with 100% Grenache, it has apricot, fig, and quince aromas. The hit of acidity at the front of the palate gives way to untold depth as well as notes of toasted almonds and walnuts. 30€