



Quick Guide:

HOW TO PAIR DARK CHOCOLATE

WITH WINE, SPIRITS & CHEESES

by To'ak



INTRODUCTION



Dark chocolate, when tasted on its own, offers a fascinating ride of sensory impressions. Pairing dark chocolate with certain wines and spirits or cheeses can offer yet another level of pleasure and complexity to the experience. In the best of cases, a perfect pairing can elevate dark chocolate onto a higher realm altogether.

Note: Be sure to acquaint yourself with one of our Tasting guides before delving into this guide. This guide assumes your familiarity with the dark chocolate tasting process.

HOW TO DO IT

There are many ways to pair dark chocolate with a wine, spirit, or cheese, and we invite you to experiment. However, there is a certain procedure that we've developed, through many enjoyable hours of trial and error, that we're happy to recommend. Think of it as an arranged courtship between two soon-to-be lovers, and you have been given the task of bringing them together.

MEET THE PROSPECTIVE LOVERS

Start out by carefully tasting the dark chocolate on its own. Next, carefully taste the wine, spirit, or cheese on its own—exploring both aroma and flavor.

THE COURTSHIP

Now, once you have an idea of their individual personalities, it's time to bring the two together, in a three-step process.

1

First, place a piece of dark chocolate in your mouth and allow the melting process to get underway. With To'ak chocolate, this usually takes about ten seconds.

2

Then, take a small sip of the wine/spirit, bathing the chocolate in your mouth for another few seconds. In the case of cheese, take a bite of the cheese and slowly chew both chocolate and cheese together.

3

Lastly, swallow the wine/spirit but keep the chocolate in your mouth, allowing it to completely melt, and open yourself up to the unexpected evolution of flavors that occurs. In the case of cheese, there is no way to separate the two once they've been mixed inside your mouth—so just enjoy this marriage to the fullest.

Preferably, spirits should be served neat or, in some cases, with a very small addition of water.

Be forewarned that ice will mute the flavor of both the chocolate and the spirit and may compromise the experience. Cheese should also be served at room temperature.

WHAT TO PAIR WITH



Certain whiskies, well-aged cognac or rum, and sweet fortified wines like vintage port and Pedro Ximénez Sherry are our favorites, although some añejo tequilas can work, and we've even had success with absinthe and green chartreuse. Contrary to popular belief, red wine is a much trickier pairing partner with dark chocolate; the tannins in red wine tend to compete with the tannins in dark chocolate, although exceptions can be found. Some white wines can be made to work, although sweet dessert wines and especially sweet fortified wines tend to work far better. Likewise, sweeter champagnes tend to work better than dry champagnes.

When pairing with cheese, the fat of the cheese tends to absorb and neutralize the bitterness of the dark chocolate, and often brings out the latent nuttiness of both chocolate and cheese in an unusually beautiful way. In general, we've found that brie, camembert, gouda, and gruyere pair exceptionally well, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. Much more needs to be explored in this realm.

For a more comprehensive list of wine, spirit, and cheese pairings, please visit our website at:

toakchocolate.com/collections

