

A great way to spend an evening with **Bourbon** and friends is to do a food and Bourbon pairing night. Get several friends together and three or four Bourbons together. I suggest that you make the Bourbons different proof and style. Throw in a wheated Bourbon, a high rye Bourbon, an 80 proof bourbon and maybe a Bonded Bourbon for example. Then gather your foods. Here is what I suggest:

Cheeses: The Parmesan-Reggiano has a nice buttery/salty flavor that goes well with many Bourbons. Julian Van Winkle told me he loves his products with Gouda cheese. A Brie is interesting as well. Go to a place with a good selection of cheese and pick out three or four ones that you like for the evening.

Cured Meats: Ham, Salami and other cured meats have a savory flavor that bring out many flavors in Bourbon. Get a mixture of salty and spiced meats.

Dried Fruit: Some cranberries, dates, apricots, apples or even pineapple. Dried fruits concentrate the sugars in the fruit and create some very interesting flavor changes in Bourbon.

Fresh Fruits: Orange slices, apples, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and peaches are all good. I once did a tasting with Old Forester Signature and a fresh peaches and one of the women described the pairing as “orgasmic”. It might be interesting to get some olives here as well for the salty flavor.

Nuts: I like Pecans, but toasted hazelnuts, walnuts and almonds are also good. I found buttered pecans are really nice with Wild Turkey 101.

Chocolate: Get a mixture of good dark and milk chocolates and break them into small pieces. Chocolate and Bourbon always go well together, but some Bourbons are better with the different styles of chocolate.

Bottled Water: Something chlorine free for cleansing the palate and rinsing the glasses between Bourbons.

Once you have decided on what to serve, both Bourbons and foods, get your friends together in a comfortable setting with the food arranged on plates and a Bourbon neat in a tasting glass. I prefer the [Glencairn](#) glass for these type of tastings. They are very good tasting glasses that are easy to clean between tastings. Take a sip of Bourbon to get a sense of what it tastes like and then a sip of water. Take a consensus of what you think might pair well with the Bourbon, take a bite of the food and then sip the Bourbon. Cleanse your

palate and then try something else. Have fun with it as you experiment with the sweetness of the dried fruit or the tannins of the nuts or the combination of sweetness and tannins from the various chocolates. Take notes if you wish, but try all of the experiences. Some will work better than others. After you ran through all of the foods with the first Bourbon, rinse your glass and move on to the next Bourbon.

An evening of tasting Bourbon and food is fun and educational. You might end up being surprised at how the flavors changed and it might change your mind as to what Bourbon makes the best Manhattan Cocktail or family recipe Bourbon Ball. It will be an experience that you will want to repeat often with different Bourbons and different combinations of food.