

Wine Pairing for Live-Fire Cooking

by Megan Krigbaum

Beef

Strategy: The myth that all beef is best enjoyed with some crazy tannic, oaky red wine is just that. Instead, look for a red with pure, unbridled fruit that will match wood-smoked steaks, roasts and burgers in juiciness and flavor.

Lamb

Strategy: Because lamb has a little of its own inherent funk, it can stand up to a more rustic wine, particularly reds with a slightly herbal or mushroomy character. The lightly tannic quality and high aromatics of many orange wines are also fantastic with lighter lamb dishes – essentially white wines for a red wine vibe.

Pork

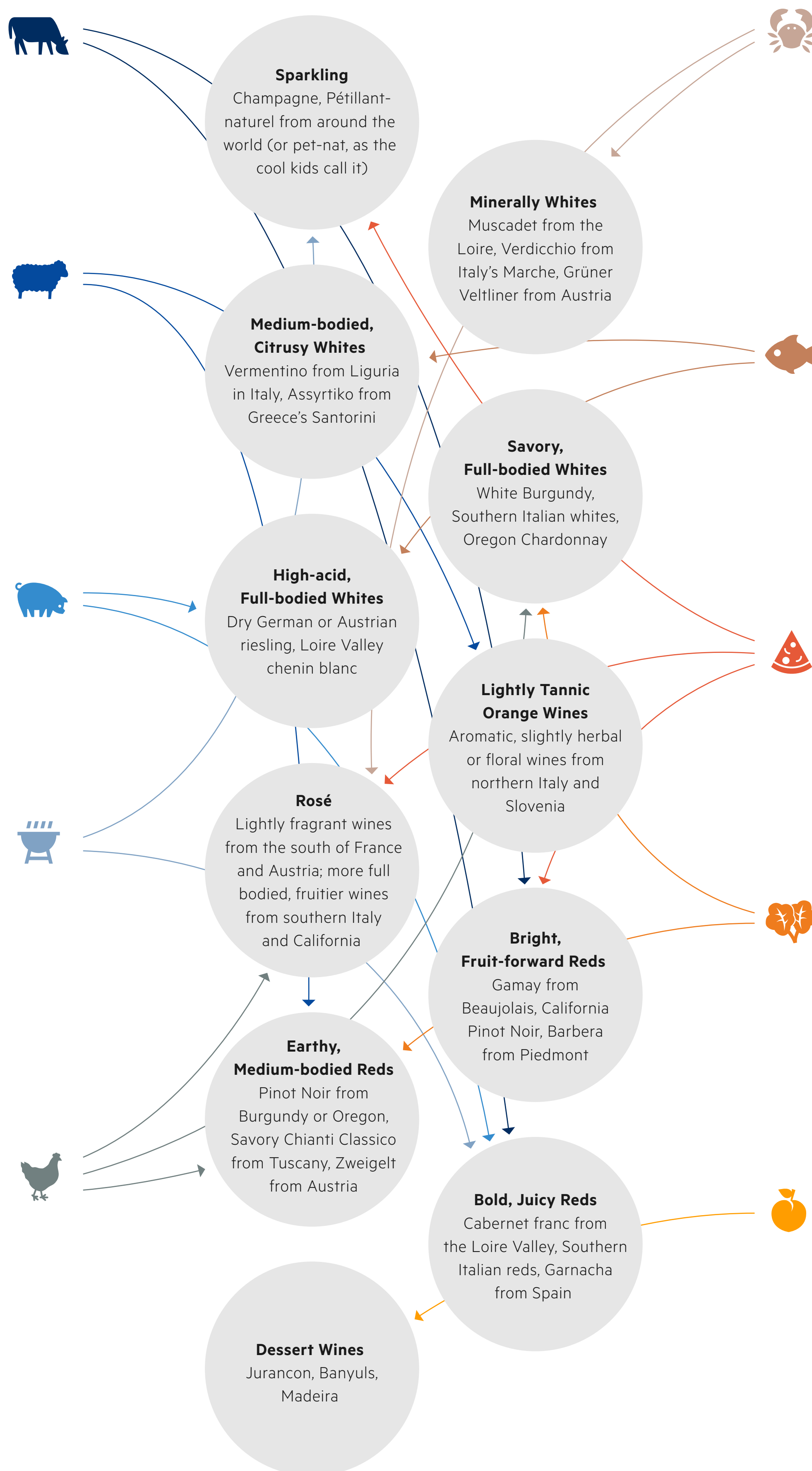
Strategy: High acid wines – of both the red and white varieties – are what you're looking for across the entire roast pork spectrum. They'll nimbly cut through the fattiest of pork bellies and won't overwhelm the leanest of pork loins.

BBQ / Smoked Meats

Strategy: Super unctuous barbecued meats, in all their saucy, tangy glory, call for wines that can handle over the top richness and texture. Either go for a fizzy wine, that will refresh your palate between bites, or nab a red with a big jolt of acidity that will meet it in the middle.

Chicken / Turkey

Strategy: Chicken and turkey are relative blank slates when it comes to flavor. In choosing a wine for these, just consider the rub or sauce you'll be using on the bird. Savory, herbal roast chicken will go with a fuller bodied white, spicy wings might call for a juicy rosé, mushroomy coq au vin definitely needs a red with some heft.



Shellfish

Strategy: The brininess of clams, mussels and lobster becomes more pronounced in the presence of woodfire, the salt and smoke interacting in a very cool way. Look for a minerally white wine that will join this party or do as those in the south France and find a nice, lightly fruity rosé that will go with just about anything.

Whole Fish

Strategy: There's little more a whole roasted fish needs than a squeeze of lemon. Apply this same philosophy to the wine that you serve with it. Choose a white wine based on the texture of the fish; something light and flaky will need a lighter white, a meatier fish needs a more substantial white.

Pizza

Strategy: A perfect food in all ways, there's little that won't pair with pizza. Some will say to pair with the toppings, some will reach only for Italian wines, but really, drink what you like. For the greatest of high-low pairings, opt for Champagne.

Vegetables

Strategy: When wood-roasted, vegetables become amped-up versions of themselves; greens get slightly more bitter, root vegetables get sweeter, mushrooms get earthier. Choose wines that have a similar concentration of flavor. White wines for greens, red wines for more substantial veggies.

Grilled Fruit

Strategy: Applying heat to any fruit – be it over wood fire or on the stovetop – will concentrate and intensify its sweetness. When pairing sweets with dessert wine, the wine ought to be sweeter than the dish itself. Put lighter colored/yellowish fruits with golden wines, like Hungarian Tokaj or Italian Passito and red or dark-colored fruit with red or deep brown wines, like French Banyuls or Madeira.