

Wines for Asian Flavors

Intercontinental wine matching with
five recipes BY HARVEY STEIMAN

Photographs by
Linda Xiao

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by Hadas
Smirnoff

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Open a menu in any American restaurant these days and don't be surprised if it lists distinctively nutty sesame oil in a salad, the earthy tang of Thai fish sauce in the steak marinade or the twang of fresh ginger in a fish dish.

And that's only the tip of a deep iceberg. Ingredients once found primarily on Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese or Indian tables are tempting American chefs and home cooks to expand their flavor tool kits.

Introducing "foreign" flavors is a recurring theme in culinary history. Cuisines as we recognize them today have evolved dramatically thanks to explorers bringing back ingredients from afar. Tomatoes had no role in Italian cuisine until the 16th century, when trade began with the Americas, where tomatoes originated. French colonists tasted curry blends in India in the 17th century and brought back the spices that became *vadouvan*, long a staple spice mix of French home cuisine.

How does it affect our wine choices when mainstream American cooking embraces ginger, soy sauce, curry spices and once-exotic flavors such as lemongrass, Szechuan peppercorns and tamarind? Restaurateurs and wine professionals at Asian restaurants with a special affinity for wine have extensive experience making these matches.

Tasting alongside those who have experimented with the possibilities underlined that the same approach for pairing wine with a classic French or Italian dish works well with Asian ingredients too. They match the weight of a wine to the heartiness of a dish and seek bridges between the flavors and the wine.

The difference? European cuisines have had centuries to adjust their foods to their wines and to hone the wines so they taste just right with their food flavors. For the most part, Asian cuisines did not evolve with wine in mind.

That hasn't stopped sommeliers and restaurateurs from finding success working with everything from the subtle, savory aspects of Japanese cuisine to the fiery, tangy elements of Thai food. They tend to favor different wines with the soy sauce and sesame oil overtones in Chinese dishes than they do with the sweet and earthy balances in Vietnamese specialties. And they know how to match the range of heat in Indian curries, from mild to pungent.

At Wild Ginger in Seattle, which has a pan-Asian menu, wine director Martin Beally manages the *Wine Spectator* Grand Award-winning list with an eye toward wines unfazed by sweetness, funkiness or spiciness—hallmark Asian food flavors. That doesn't mean choosing innocuous wines, however. He matches Côte-Rôtie, a rich red, with scallops coated generously with black pepper, and Walla Walla Valley Syrah with lamb chops glistening with a coconut-based black peppercorn glaze.

Peppercorns in the scallop and lamb dishes forge a link with the Syrahs. Because the wines' tannins are not aggressive, the matches



Martin Beally, wine director at Wild Ginger in Seattle, draws from the restaurant's Grand Award-winning wine list to match the kitchen's Chinese and Southeast Asian cuisine.

work for Western palates. Cultural backgrounds, however, can affect wine preferences, Beally has found. "At our Bellevue [Wash.] location, we have more [customers] from India and China. For them, the spice level is never enough," he says. "They love a big Cabernet because the tannins intensify the heat and make the food feel spicier. Those who grew up in America are the opposite."

We can use these restaurateurs' long experience to find connections with Asian flavors as American cooking adopts them, even if those interviewed also agreed that it can take some convincing to get guests to choose a serious wine with the Asian flavors on their menus.

Recently Dan McGarry, a sommelier at Wild Ginger, offered a reserve wine list only to have the party refuse to look at it. "They said, 'Wine doesn't go with the food here—we'll have beer,'" he recalls. "I explained the benefits, but they didn't budge."

Being in Napa Valley makes things easier for Amgad Wahba,

general manager of Morimoto Napa, where Japanese cuisine meets a Napa Valley wine country mind-set. Guests often pick a wine before they even open the menu—"because they're in Napa Valley, and they want to drink Cabernet or Chardonnay," Wahba shrugs. Meanwhile, "Some just want sake or beer."

He happily serves the wine they want, but will often offer a half glass of something he knows matches better with a specific dish.

At Kin Khao, serving authentic home-style Thai cuisine in the Parc 55 hotel in San Francisco, pouring wines by the glass from the bottle at table has paid dividends. "Guests would see us walking the bottles across the room, and they started to ask about it," says chef-proprietor Pim Techamuanvitt. "Most people don't think of wine at a Thai restaurant."

She founded the restaurant in 2014 with Sam Zelter. Now the chef, Zelter was then running a wine bar in Santa Cruz, Calif., that Techamuanvitt frequented. "We expected to sell mostly cocktails and beer," she says of Kin Khao. "We only had a wine list because Sam and I like wine."

There was no wine on the family table when she was growing up in Bangkok. "But at college in Europe, I learned about wine in France," she says. "I still have a French palate."

As the breadth of the wine list multiplied, "We also got more mature," Zelter says. "We still [list] wines we want to drink, but now it's a more balanced selection. If someone wants a Cabernet, we have it, but in a lighter style that's more appropriate to the food. If we can, we steer a Cab fan toward Rioja, which we think is a better choice."

The secret for red wines with spicy food is to choose ones with soft tannins, says Richard Dean, who presided over Taj Campton Place's *Wine Spectator* Best of Award of Excellence-winning cellar at the hotel's Campton Place restaurant for a decade. The master sommelier, who retired in January, long recommended "brown wine" with the kitchen's spiciest dishes—"older reds and whites, but also Sherries," he says. Wines with a little brown at the rim have aged long enough to polish away the rough edges of youth, which only get spikier with vivid spices. Also, older wines' nutlike aromatics find common ground with Asian spices.

This opens the field beyond simple and fruity wines to prized,



Pim Techamuanvitt is chef-owner of the Thai restaurant Kin Khao in San Francisco.

memorable bottles, the kinds of wines longtime diners at Taj Campton Place's restaurant have demanded for decades. They came for cutting-edge American cuisine in the 1980s and 1990s when Bradley Ogden, Jan Birnbaum and then Todd Humphries led the kitchen, and more recently for the French cuisine that Laurent Manrique and Daniel Humm brought to Campton Place.

Srijith Gopinathan got the assignment as chef when Taj Hotels bought the property in 2007. At first, he added nuances from his native southern India to the menu's creative take on California haute cuisine, but, urged on by patrons, his food now sings with a full chorus of Indian ingredients and techniques.

Dean conducted exploratory tastings every time a new dish was introduced on the multicourse Spice Route menus, which rely heavily on Indian spices. He poured a mature Barolo to accompany the main dish of an all-vegetable menu.

Its tannins softened by age, the wine deftly balanced the zippy southern Indian sauce of coconut and curry flavors; the sauce actually increased the Barolo's raspberry character.

While mature reds have their place with these flavors, wines in which acidity is key do too. So it's no surprise that sparkling wines come up a lot.

"Of the few cardinal rules we follow," says Kin Khao's Zelter, "We avoid any wine that doesn't have good acidity. Acid components in the food make the wine even flabbier." While soft wines lose their backbone with tart food, the zing of brut sparkling wine, with its taut natural acidity, can complete the picture with Kin Khao's seafood salad, served with a bright tamarind-based dressing.

Sparkling wines are Gordana Josovic's go-to choices for Vietnam's subtly funky flavors, sweetness from fruit and sour tastes from tamarind and lime. (Chiles are not as prevalent in Vietnam as they are in Thailand.) Josovic, who's responsible for the wine program at the French-Vietnamese restaurant Le Colonial, an Award of Excellence winner in San Francisco, likes Champagnes and New World bottlings patterned after them, but also wines such as France's sparkling Vouvray and Italy's fizzy red Brachetto d'Acqui, or even an experimental sparkling mead (honey wine) from a local meadery.

Lambrusco, a red sparkling wine from Italy's Emilia-Romagna region, makes a seamless match with an appetizer of baby back ribs

FEATURED RESTAURANTS

CAMPTON PLACE
Taj Campton Place
340 Stockton St.
San Francisco
(415) 781-5555
www.tajcamptonplace.com
Best of Award of Excellence

KIN KHAO
Parc 55 Hotel
55 Cyril Magnin St.
San Francisco
(415) 362-7456
www.kinkhao.com

LE COLONIAL
20 Cosmo Place
San Francisco
(415) 781-5555
www.lecolonialsf.com
Award of Excellence

MORIMOTO NAPA
610 Main St.
Napa, Calif.
(707) 252-1600
www.morimotonapa.com
Award of Excellence

WILD GINGER
1401 Third Ave.
Seattle
(206) 623-4450
www.wildginger.com
Grand Award



Chef Srijith Gopinathan oversaw the transformation of Bay Area fine-dining stalwart Campton Place into an Indian restaurant.

that are slow-cooked in funky fish sauce and honey before being glazed with a passion fruit reduction.

Although she has been working with the restaurant for less than a year, Josovic has been a sommelier for 20 years and lived in Vietnam long enough to get a handle on how wine works with the flavors. "I did trial and error on my own, as a customer," she laughs. "I found many successful combinations. I discovered that lower-alcohol, aromatic, high-acid wines are the best."

A high-acid wine won't get flabby with high-acid tastes, whether it's lemon on an oyster or green papaya in a Vietnamese salad. A fruit-forward white can take on heat in the food, be it spaghetti aglio e olio, with its classic shot of red pepper flakes, or kung pao chicken, with its red chile peppers.

For Riesling and Gewürztraminer, Josovic prefers the structure and flavor profile of Alsace rather than the softness of New World styles. To demonstrate the difference, she pours two wines with French chef Jean Denoyer's signature dish, *cá hâp lá chuôi*. Wrapped in banana leaves, sea bass fillets are steamed with sweet potato noodles, then served with black bean and coconut sauce and a salsa of ripe papaya.

The dish brings out all the classic rose-petal aromatics and pure pear fruit in Husch Gewürztraminer Anderson Valley Dry 2016. But Weinbach Riesling Alsace Cuvée Colette 2015, lithe, crisp and dry, with Golden Delicious apple and lime flavors, creates a stunning equilibrium. Take your pick—drama with the Gewürz or harmony with the Alsace classic.

Riesling can also match well with red-meat dishes. A gently sweet Riesling from the Mosel creates real synergy with Wild Ginger's beef tenderloin marinated in garlic, ginger, lemongrass, chiles and soy sauce, wok-seared and finished with Thai basil and peanuts. The Riesling's residual sugar softens the impact of the peppers and ginger, and the underlying high acidity links with the tangy lemongrass aromatics. "It's one of the best pairings we have

in the restaurant," Beally says.

Rieslings taste great with two of the most common flavors associated with Asian cooking—soy sauce and fresh ginger. Similarly floral and aromatic white wines such as Gewürztraminer, Pinot Blanc and Chenin Blanc behave much the same. Riesling with Asian flavors became such a cliché because it works.

A textbook lesson on how different flavors can bring out different aspects of a single wine comes from a variety of sauces in small dishes that surround the raw fish in a sashimi presentation at Morimoto Napa.

The sweetness of a ripe bell pepper dip makes a classic round and herbal Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc's natural acidity and lime notes pop. The blast of acidity in a

yuzu dip softens the same wine's texture. Both options are delicious; the variations bring a smile.

At Kin Khao, a smooth young Chassagne-Montrachet red picks up more fruit depth with the meatiness of beef cheeks in Thai massaman curry, rich with ginger, tamarind and bird's eye chiles. As delicate as the wine is, it loses nothing wrapped around the hearty dish.

There's science behind these matches. Regardless of a wine's color, flavor bridges can connect it to foods in unexpected ways. An aged Chardonnay, for example, with its toasty, mineral overtones, can pair well with smoked meats in Asian dishes tasting of soy sauce because the same aromatic molecules can be found in both the wine and the food. Likewise, Viognier, Muscat,

Gewürztraminer and Malvasia wines often share key aromatics with ginger, creating strong ties with dishes that rely on the root's distinctive harmonics. And for the record, the electric zing and aniseedlike notes of Szechuan peppercorns light up whites such as Sauvignon Blanc and Vermentino because they share the flavor molecules that create anise aromatics.

In other tastings, the leafy accents of both Cabernet Franc and Chablis, which do well



Sommelier Gordana Josovic pulls surprising wines to match Le Colonial's French-Vietnamese food.

with celery or mustard in Western food, also show an affinity with the flavor of wasabi, the grated green root served with sushi. Although dry mustard often substitutes for wasabi in everyday Japanese restaurants, the extra depth of the real thing creates an even more congenial bridge.

The tart flavors of lime, tamarind and passion fruit, the flame of fresh chiles and the funk and umami of fish sauces and soy sauces can all be amiable partners to wine. Exotic though these might seem, matching wine with them actually follows the same logic as with flavors more familiar to an American palate.

My own education in Asian flavors' companionship with wines dates back some 40 years. Shortly after moving to San Francisco in 1977, I attended a dinner hosted by Cecilia Chang, owner of the Mandarin, then a standard-bearer for fine Chinese cuisine in America. She poured a Sonoma Cabernet Sauvignon with her kitchen's impeccable Peking duck. The taste still haunts my memory.

According to the wine-matching rules of the time, the sweet, glazed duck skin, the white buns with hoisin sauce and the raw edge of scallions should have cut the wine off at its knees. Instead, the flavors dramatically spotlighted the Cabernet's plush texture, currant and blackberry fruit and hint of bay leaf. The richness of the duck came through, and the flavors mingled effortlessly on the finish.

The idea that great wine could dance with ginger, bounce happily off sesame oil and meld smoothly with curry spices gained traction in the 1970s, when chef Richard Wing began to embrace the then-unexplored territory where Chinese and Western cooking overlap at the Imperial Dynasty, which he had opened in 1958 in remote Hanford, Calif.

The California-born chef learned to cook French cuisine as General George C. Marshall's aide in World War II and as his personal cook for postwar visits to China and Russia. When Wing returned to his family's traditional Chinese restaurant, he made the Imperial Dynasty into a destination. He effortlessly combined mastery



Morimoto Napa serves modern Japanese food; wine director Amgad Wahba (left) selects wines and sake to match.

of French and Chinese cooking into stunning evening-long menus that drew gourmets and wine and food societies from all over the country. His brother, Ernest, amassed a wine cellar of rare French and

California bottlings, which Richard expanded on after Ernest's untimely death. (Richard Wing himself died in 2010.)

Wing's menus teemed with perfect wine matches. Stony Hill Chardonnay was one memorable partner for the signature escargots in ginger- and garlic-infused cashew butter, which I experienced on several occasions. A supple white Bordeaux, Domaine de Chevalier, found common ground with a classic Chinese soup laced with truffles. And Jaboulet Hermitage La Chapelle gained even more complexity with braised lamb shank that had more than a nodding acquaintance with oyster sauce.

Does that sound like the prototype of today's American menus, where Asian flavors live in harmony with Western foods? You bet. Today, with even more sophisticated cooking and a greater range of wines to choose from, things have only gotten better.

Graphing Flavor

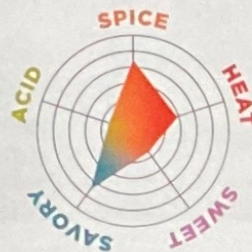
For many of us, successfully matching wine with Asian food may require a new lens. We often think of the protein first when pairing,

but with any cuisine, it pays to ask what the dish's dominant flavors really are. This is especially true of most Asian cuisines, in which the character of a dish generally comes more from the supporting ingredients than

from the protein.

Understanding the balance of these flavors is key to finding the best wine match, and visualizing the flavor constellation of a dish can help us do that. The dominant flavors in the

recipes included here are **acid, spice, heat, sweet** and **savory**. Our "flavor graph" shows how much of each element is present in every dish; the stronger the flavor, the greater its emphasis in the graph.



SYRAH FOR SCALLOPS

Chef Ming Tan
WILD GINGER

www.wildginger.net

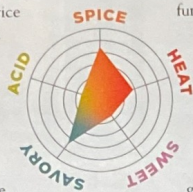
Despite a total cooking time of less than five minutes, this recipe packs a lot of flavor. It combines the sweet richness of fresh scallops with an abundance of black pepper. The scallops are tossed in a quick reduction of soy sauce, shaoxing rice wine (or Sherry) and sesame oil.

Chef Ming Tan moved with his family to Seattle from Kaiping, China, and now heads a staff of more than 50 cooks, often working right along with them as they prepare for the day. At home, he grows Asian greens, plums and green beans in his backyard. In the kitchen, he lives by three tenets: "clean, fresh, flavor."

A popular choice on Wild Ginger's menu, the scallop dish opens up many choices on the restaurant's wine list, a Wine

Spectator Grand Award winner since 2009. The go-to pick "is one of these things that happened accidentally," wine director Martin Beally says, admitting that his first thoughts involved white wines. "But a lighter-style, peppery Syrah, clean, not funky, with lower alcohol, works fantastically well."

This St.-Joseph from Jean-Louis Chave fits that description, and the dish is hearty enough to justify drinking a red wine with the depth of a good Syrah. Freshly ground pepper notes in both the dish and the wine create a welcome link and put the emphasis on the wine's gorgeous black fruit character without overwhelming the scallop itself. The wine's tannins are so beautifully polished that the texture almost emulates a white wine's glossy feel.



Hong Kong Black Pepper Scallops

Rice bran or safflower oil, if pan-frying
3/3 pound large scallops (20-count work well)

Rice flour

1 teaspoon soy sauce

1/2 teaspoon shaoxing rice wine (or dry Sherry)

1/4 teaspoon sesame oil

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup chicken stock

1. Heat about 1/2 inch of oil in a skillet, or pre-heat a deep fryer to 375° F.

2. Dredge scallops in rice flour and shake off excess. Fry the scallops for about 45 seconds to get a light crust (turning them once if pan-frying). Drain them well on clean towels or newspaper.

3. In a dry wok, combine the soy sauce, rice wine, sesame oil and black pepper, and turn heat to high. Before the liquid evaporates, add the scallops and stir-fry vigorously until the mixture dries and the scallops are coated in a golden glaze. (This should take only a few seconds.) Add the chicken stock and toss the scallops to coat evenly, less than 1 minute. Serves 4 as an appetizer or 2 as a main course.

KEY INGREDIENTS

Black pepper, sesame oil

WINE MATCH

Syrah-based reds

➔ **Jean-Louis Chave Sélection St.-Joseph Offerus 2014 (91, \$36)** • An alluring style, with a whiff of white pepper giving way to sleek sanguine and iron notes that race along, accompanied by pretty bitter cherry and damson plum fruit flavors. The long finish lets savory and mineral details play out. —J.M.

Alternate Choices • To find good options search for Syrah-based wines with "pepper" and "drink now" in the tasting note. Among them are **Louis Chève St.-Joseph Ro-Rée 2015 (91, \$30)**, **M. Chapoutier Crozes-Hermitage Petite Ruche 2014 (90, \$33)** and **Maison Lombard Vin de Pays de la Drôme La Renommée 2015 (90, \$20)**.



LAMBRUSCO FOR RIBS

Chef Jean Denoyer
LE COLONIAL

www.lecolonialsf.com



The aromas emerging from the oven while these baby back ribs are cooking will have everyone in the house sniffing their way to the kitchen; it's that enticing. The meat falls off the bone, and the glaze, made from fish sauce-infused juices brightened with passion fruit puree, adds a simple but powerful punch.

Chef-restaurateur Jean Denoyer and his

partners opened the San Francisco branch of the New York original Le Colonial in 1998, taking over the rambling space vacated by Trader Vic's. A standout not only for its well-executed Vietnamese dishes, Le Colonial also boasts a 200-selection wine cellar that has held a *Wine Spectator*



Award of Excellence since 2017.

Gordana Josovic, responsible for the cellar, began her career in San Francisco at Acme Chophouse, the original high-end restaurant at AT&T Park. She has also worked at fine-dining destinations such as Jardinière, Best of Award of Excellence-winning

One Market and, more recently, Epic Steak, another Best of Award of Excellence winner, where she was wine director.

Consulting for Le Colonial (she also teaches at the San Francisco Wine School), Josovic has expanded the mostly French selections with options largely from California but also from Italy, the source of what turned out to be the ace match for these ribs.

A light, fragrant Lambrusco, fresh but not obviously sweet, barely darker than a rosé, melds with the mild flavors in the ribs. The natural acidity of the passion fruit lifts the funkiness of fish sauce in the glaze and aims it right at the refreshing aspects of the wine. The fruit-on-fruit arrangement makes for a welcome combination.

Slow-Baked Baby Back Ribs

1/3 cup diced shallots (2 medium shallots)

1/4 cup Thai or Vietnamese fish sauce

1/4 cup honey

1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

1 rack baby back ribs, cut into 3 sections

1 cup passion fruit puree or passion fruit juice

Sesame seeds, for garnish

Mint Slaw (recipe follows)

1. In a slow cooker (or casserole or baking dish large enough to hold the ribs in one layer (a little overlap is OK), stir together the shallots, fish sauce, honey, salt and pepper. Add the ribs and toss to coat. Turn them meat-side up.

2. If using a slow cooker, cover and cook the ribs on low for 7 hours. If using a casserole or baking dish, cover with a tight-fitting lid or aluminum foil, and bake at 280° F for 3 to 3 1/2 hours, until the ribs are very tender.

3. Using tongs or a wide spatula, transfer the ribs to a rimmed, foil-lined sheet pan, meat-side up.

4. To make the glaze, pour the juices from the slow cooker or baking dish through a fine-mesh sieve into a small saucepan. Discard the solids. Add the passion fruit puree to the saucepan. Set over high heat and bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cook until syrupy, 5 minutes if using passion fruit puree, 10 to 15 minutes if using juice.



KEY INGREDIENTS

Fish sauce, passion fruit

WINE MATCH

Sparkling red

➔ **Fiorini Lambrusco di Sorbara Corte degli Attimi 2016** (88, \$17) • Black cherry coulis, panna cotta, smoke and grilled herb notes are bright in this tangy and balanced rosé Lambrusco, which has citrusy acidity and a lively bead, ending with a zesty, spiced finish.—A.N.

Alternate Choices • Lambrusco in the brighter style, such as **Lini Oreste & Figli Lambrusco Emilia In Correggio 910 Scuro NV** (88, \$18), **La Battagliola Lambrusco Grasperossa di Castelvetro Dosage 15 2016** (88, \$19) and **Umberto Cavicchioli & Figli Lambrusco di Sorbara Vigna del Cristo 2016** (87, \$18).

Brush the ribs with this mixture, either while hot or after standing for up to 1 hour.

5. Turn the oven to “broil” and arrange an oven rack at the highest position. Just before serving, broil the ribs, meat-side up, until

browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board, meat-side down. When cool enough to handle, slice into individual ribs.

6. Place some slaw on each serving plate and arrange a few ribs on top. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serve the remaining glaze on the side. *Serves 4 to 6 as an appetizer or 2 to 3 as a main course.*

TO MAKE THE MINT SLAW

1 cup coarsely shredded carrots
2 cups shredded cabbage
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1/4 cup (packed) fresh mint leaves, large leaves roughly chopped
1 1/2 teaspoons sesame oil
1 teaspoon honey
Salt and pepper to taste

In a mixing bowl, toss first 6 ingredients to combine. Season with salt and pepper, and serve immediately. *Makes 3 cups.*

AGED RED FOR CURRY

Chef Srijith Gopinathan
CAMPTON PLACE

www.tajcamptonplace.com/dining

Sure, that perfectly aged bottle of great red wine can go beautifully with simply roasted beef, chicken or game, but it can also form a mutual admiration society with something a bit more daring, such as this seductively aromatic southern Indian vegetable dish.

At Campton Place, a *Wine Spectator* Best of Award of Excellence winner since 2006, the cellar holds a wealth of such treasures. With this dish, longtime wine director Richard Dean (who retired in January) enthusiastically offers aged Barolos, Barbarescos, Riojas and California

Cabernet Sauvignons. Polished with enough age, their tannins comfortably sidle up to spices (and sweetness from coconut milk) that can toughen the texture of younger wines.

Chef Srijith Gopinathan features this soul-satisfying dish on a seasonally driven





menu for vegetarians. Dean's choice of a supple Barolo not only survives the vivid spice flavors but gains extra depth and definition with the mix of spices and coconut milk, plus the gentle nudge of chile pepper. Testing the recipe, I opened a Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon that, 14 years past its vintage date, offered suppleness and depth, gaining presence with the dish's flavors.

Like many Indian recipes, this one employs a range of spices, but most of the work can be done well in advance. Just before serving, add the vegetables and garnish the dish with a sprinkle of cilantro leaves and a few whole cashews.

The restaurant serves this alongside freshly made *idiyappam*, south Indian rice noodles known as "string hoppers." To keep it simpler, Gopinathan recommends steaming some basmati rice instead.

Vegetables in Cashew Sauce

- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 1 small white onion, peeled and sliced
- 2 teaspoons red chile powder
- 1 tablespoon garam masala powder
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 tablespoon garlic paste
- 1 tablespoon ginger paste
- 1/2 fresh jalapeño, seeded, stemmed and chopped fine
- 1 large tomato, finely chopped with seeds and skin (or 1/2 cup tomato puree)

- 1/2 cup roasted cashews, plus a few for garnish
- 14 ounces coconut milk
- 2 cups vegetables (such as cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, radishes, carrots and edamame) cut into small florets and similar-size pieces
- Salt, to taste
- 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro, for garnish

1. Heat the coconut oil in a medium pot over moderate heat. Add the onion and cook until the moisture has been absorbed. Reduce heat to low. Add the chile powder, garam masala and turmeric. Reduce heat to low, and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes.

2. Stir in the garlic and ginger pastes, add the jalapeño and cook for 5 minutes more, until jalapeño is very soft. Add the tomato and cook for another 5 minutes, until tomato is very soft.

3. Combine the cashews and coconut milk in a blender, and process to a fine puree. Add this mixture, plus 1 cup water, to the pot. Stir to combine; it should have the consistency of a pureed soup. Add salt and additional jalapeño to taste.

4. Add the vegetables and let simmer until cooked through, about 5 minutes. Take care not to let the mixture boil, or the coconut milk may curdle.

5. Sprinkle the mixture with chopped cilantro and a few whole cashews. Serve over basmati rice. Serves 4.



KEY INGREDIENTS

Garam masala, turmeric, coconut

WINE MATCH

Aged full-flavored red

➔ **Chappellet Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Pritchard Hill Estate Vineyard 2004** (95, \$125)
 • Rich, dense and layered, yet elegant and light-footed, with tiers of supple mocha, blackberry, currant, tobacco and olive tapenade unfolding. Maintains focus through the long, sustained finish.—J.L.

Alternate Choices • Pick something that has been cellared long enough for the tannins to have softened. Among recently released wines from vintages in the previous decade are **Mirafiore Barolo Riserva 2007** (94, \$140), **Mastroberardino Taurasi Radici Riserva 2009** (95, \$75) and **R. López de Heredia Viña Tondonia Rioja Viña Tondonia Reserva 2004** (90, \$51).

RICH BUBBLY FOR SHELLFISH

Chef Pim Techamuanvivit
KIN KHAO

www.kinkhao.com



This salad relies on layers of tartness from tamarind and lemongrass, zing from ginger, and heat from Thai bird's eye chiles. All that flavor doesn't compete with a stylish sparkling wine—instead, it lifts the wine to another level.

Chef-proprietor Pim Techamuanvivit overcame a wineless upbringing to find ways to bring fine wine to her Thai cuisine at Kin Khao, where this salad is a popular first course. It's worth steaming the fish and frying the flaked flesh, boiling the prawns and making tamarind water to compile the

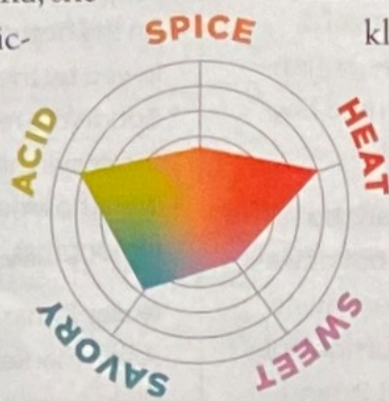
flavors and textures that make this match work with fine fizz in the glass.

To match up with the tamarind, she suggests Champagne or a classic-style sparkling wine with some richness of its own. Indeed, a grower Champagne tasted with the dish at the restaurant leapt with even more vivid flavors. In testing the recipe, a Roederer Estate Brut stood up a little straighter without losing its fruit generosity.

"The style of Thai food with crispiness,

whole fried fish, salads that have fried shallots or garlic chips, things you eat with fried rice cakes, they're all perfect with sparkling wines," she explains.

For another pairing option, Techamuanvivit likes the dish with sleek reds. "We focus on different types of acidity," she notes. In this case, tamarind lends itself to bright reds that lack sharp tannins. The little bit of greenness found in Cabernet Franc also works well with herbaceous elements in the food.



Gamay is not my favorite, but cru Beaujolais or Bourgogne Passe-Tout-Grains would be bright and delicious with this.

Thai Seafood Salad

- 4 tablespoons tamarind water (see note)
- 2 tablespoons Thai or Vietnamese fish sauce
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar or palm sugar
- 10 ounces catfish fillet (or another flaky white-fleshed fish)
- 4 or 5 medium prawns or wild shrimp (about 10 ounces), preferably with shell and heads on
- 1 ½ cups high-smoke-point oil, such as rice bran or safflower oil
- 2 to 3 tablespoons rice flour or tapioca flour (if using the prawn heads)
- 2 makrut lime leaves, very thinly sliced, for garnish
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, very thinly sliced, for garnish
- 2 Thai bird's eye chiles, cut into thin rounds (or more to taste), for garnish
- ½ small shallot, thinly sliced, for garnish
- 1 teaspoon very thinly sliced lemongrass, for garnish

1. In a small bowl, stir together the tamarind water, fish sauce and sugar. Taste the mixture; it should be sour and slightly salty, and finish with almost imperceptible sweetness. Adjust the balance as you prefer. If the tamarind water is very thick and you end up with a thick sauce, thin it out a bit with tepid water. (The tamarind sauce can be prepared to this point and held at room temperature for up to 1 hour.)

2. Fit a large saucepan with a flat steamer basket. Add about an inch of water. Cover pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low and place fish fillet in basket. Cover pot and steam the fish until cooked through and flaky, 3 to 8 minutes depending on thickness. With the tines of a fork, break the fish into small pieces, squishing them a bit to break them down into tiny, fluffy flakes. Set aside to dry slightly.

3. If using head-on prawns, break off the heads and set them aside. Bring a pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add the prawns and boil until just cooked on the outside but still translucent in the center, about 2 minutes. Transfer prawns to a bowl of ice water and let chill until cool enough to handle. Peel



and cut into bite-size pieces.

4. Heat the oil over medium-high in a 3- to 4-quart saucepan until hot. Working in batches to avoid overcrowding the pan, sprinkle a handful of the reserved fish flakes into the hot oil and fry until golden and crisp, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon or flat sieve, transfer the crisp fish flakes to paper towels. Let cool.

Optional: The reserved prawn heads can be dredged in the rice flour and fried in the remaining oil until crisp, about 2 minutes. Drain on paper towels.

5. Spread a small amount of tamarind sauce on the bottom of each serving plate, followed by the fish flakes and prawn pieces. Spoon the rest of the sauce over. Top with the prawn heads, if using, and sprinkle evenly with the lime leaves, ginger, chile, shallot and lemongrass. *Serves 4 to 6 as an appetizer.*

Note: Tamarind water can be purchased at Asian markets. To make your own, in a medium bowl, soak ½ cup tamarind paste in 1 cup warm water until softened, about 5 minutes. Knead the paste for a minute or so, then

KEY INGREDIENTS

Tamarind, lemongrass, ginger, bird's eye chile

WINE MATCH

Rich bubbly

➔ **Roederer Estate Brut Anderson Valley NV (92, \$24)** • A voluptuous and expressive sparkler, with floral red apple, brioche and cinnamon spice aromas and rich, vibrant flavors that finish on a luxurious note.—*T.F.*

Alternate Choices • To match with the complex flavors in this dish, look for richer styles of sparklers, often found in grower Champagnes and New World wines such as **Domaine Carneros Brut Carneros Estate 2012 (93, \$35)**, **Chartogne-Taillet Brut Champagne Cuvée Ste.-Anne NV (92, \$50)** and **Duval-Leroy Brut Champagne Réserve NV (91, \$50)**.

pour the water through a coarse sieve set over a bowl. Knead the paste in the sieve for about 30 seconds to press out the remaining liquid. The mixture should have a light, spoonable texture.

VIOGNIER FOR BLACK COD

Chef Sean Massey
MORIMOTO NAPA

www.morimotonapa.com

Black cod, also known as sablefish, has found a home with Japanese-American chefs, who have made something of a signature out of the fish braised in a sweet, silky bath of sake or mirin (sweet sake), with either soy sauce or miso. Masaharu Morimoto's version infuses the fish with soy sauce and ginger.

With all the sugar in the cooking liquid, one might think a good match would require a sweet wine, but some alchemy involving the rich umami of the soy sauce finds a balance with a dry white. Viognier has a satiny texture of its own and plenty of ripe fruit flavor. A dry one in the style of Condrieu makes a sensational partner.

At Morimoto Napa, where the California-centric wine list sports a *Wine Spectator* Award of Excellence and offers an array of Viogniers, this dish frames an unusually savory Napa Valley bottling perfectly. When testing the recipe and match, a more widely available Penner-Ash Viognier from



Oregon made a smart choice.

Unlike most fish, black cod is almost impossible to overcook. Rich in fat, its gelatinous texture keeps the fish from falling apart when thoroughly cooked. It's often easiest to find at Asian fish markets, and can be shipped from Alaska. There's not an ideal substitute species, but this recipe—and the wine match—could be applied successfully to salmon.

Braised Black Cod With Ginger-Soy Glaze

2 cups junmai sake
6 thin slices fresh ginger
6 black cod (sablefish) fillets, skin on, 6 to 7 ounces each
1 1/2 cups sugar

1 cup soy sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons tamari
3 tablespoons mirin
2 tablespoons julienned scallion, for garnish
1 tablespoon julienned fresh ginger, for garnish
At least 6 cups cooked white rice, for serving (from at least 2 cups raw rice)

1. Pour the sake into a large, deep skillet or flameproof casserole dish. Add the ginger and the fish, skin-side up. Cover and cook over high heat for 3 minutes. Add the sugar, reduce heat to medium, and cook, uncovered, 3 more minutes.
2. Pour the soy sauce and tamari over the fish. Raise heat to medium-high, and cook, covered, for 5 minutes. Keep an eye on the pan, as this mixture tends to foam and spill over too high a flame. Add the mirin and cook, uncovered, for 3 minutes more. Glaze the fillets by repeatedly spooning the thickening sauce over them while cooking.
3. With a slotted spatula, carefully transfer the fillets to a platter. Check the fish to make sure it has no residual bones hidden in it. (The bones are easier to remove after the fish is cooked.) If the cooking liquid has not already thickened to a light, syrupy consistency, raise heat to high and continue cooking until thickened, a few minutes more.
4. Place some steamed white rice on each serving plate. Top with a fillet and garnish with scallion and ginger. Drizzle with the ginger-soy cooking liquid. Serves 6.



KEY INGREDIENTS

Soy sauce, ginger, scallions

WINE MATCH

Viognier

Penner-Ash Viognier Oregon 2016 (90, \$30)

• Delicate and pretty, with star fruit and lychee nut aromas and supple, oily apricot and lemon flavors that glide along the finish.—T.F.

Alternate Choices • Although a wine of similar sweetness to the sauce could work well, a rich, satiny dry Viognier tips the balance away from being too sugary. Try **Darioush Viognier Napa Valley Signature 2016 (90, \$44)**, **Yalumba Viognier Eden Valley 2016 (90, \$20)** or **San Simeon Viognier Paso Robles Stefano Vineyard Estate Reserve 2016 (88, \$20)**.

