



Rick Staff  
with a remit to sniff, taste,  
and spit his way around Nanjing  
and disseminate the drinkable.

POINT SYSTEM  
0-10 A WARNING  
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WINE EXPRESSION



## Chinese Match-Making

Pairing wine with food is relatively new to China and all the world's wine growers are competing; there are many opinions, even conferences, on the subject and a lot of vested interest hot air. It has to be said that many Chinese dishes are well balanced by their own often rich, complex and salty sauces; there is seldom a necessity for more sauce by the way of wine. However, the rewarding synergy of well matched food and wine can be achieved with Chinese food. Thus this month's wine scores are representative of that synergy rather than a solo performance.

A familiar conundrum for the wine fancier in China is the number of dishes present at a Chinese banquet. A number of different wines are therefore necessary, progressing from light to dark and heavy with both wine and food; the palate can hardly make sense of a heavy Shiraz that eclipses the nuances of a subsequently tasted Sauvignon Blanc, or even a light red such as Pinot Noir.

The much cited Chinese food match grape Gewürztraminer does go well with a lot of Chinese fare; typically off-dry it can offset some of the fire of spicy food with an aromatic lychee-like sweetness. The more floral, semi-dry Rieslings will serve a similar purpose, with just a little more steely minerality. A heavily tannic Cabernet or Shiraz will stoke the fire with a cacophony of spices, but some enjoy such a collision. What's sauce for the goose is not necessarily sauce for the gander, or the salty duck for that matter.

Herein are suggested matches for three signature Chinese dishes; extrapolate the flavour profiles and you have the tools to unlock a whole new epicurean dimension. You are unlikely to find these recommended wines on the restaurants' lists, so bring a bottle or two with you. Fear not; Chinese restaurants do not charge for corkage.

Originally Cantonese, now ubiquitous; "Sweet & Sour Pork" is usually served up as deep-fried chunks of pork in a glutinous sugar-soy-vinegar sauce calling for something that's full of zippy acidity; Prosecco from Zonin (¥129, Everwines, 302 Zhongyang Lu / ¥138 BHG, Aqua City), along with some uplifting bubbles with a creamy mouthfeel and a touch of sweet apple it will joust deliciously with the rich mix of flavours (18 points).

### Looking for something to go with your Peking Duck?

Steer clear of the big tannic reds; they will play havoc with the sweetness of the plum sauce and the unctuousness of the meat, instead try the Casillero Del Diablo Pinot Noir 2009 (¥138 BHG, Aqua City); a supple, lightish red and with a suggestion of wild strawberries it has a sweet enough edge to engage perfectly. Will also chime nicely with this city's own 'Nanjing Salty Duck', and has enough chutzpah to work well with a "siu mei" style roast goose too; an eye for the birds that one (17.5 points).

"Gong Bao Ji Ding", is a widespread China staple with Sichuan origins, and so the heat rises. This dish is a stir-fry of peanuts, chicken, vegetables and chili peppers and authentic Sichuan style will include a handful of Sichuan peppercorns, which have a curious numbing effect on the palate. Is there a Dr. Loosen Riesling 2010 in the house? If not there should be one available at BHG, Aqua City for ¥166; with citrus on the nose, a nervy acidity, and a quiet minerally sweetness it makes a perfect spice charmer, and at a polite 8.5% abv makes a good school day choice (18.5 points). **NJ**