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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ COOKING

Wine with Asian Food: New Frontiers in Taste

Edwin Soon
Patricia Guy
Tide-mark Press (March 2008)
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For sixteen consecutive years, wine sales in the United States have grown at nearly a five percent rate. Indeed, Americans have been on such a bender as to leapfrog both the Italians and the French into becoming the world's number one wine consuming country in 2008. It's no surprise then to see a commensurate rise in the publishing of wine books, including a more recent rise in food and wine pairing books. Of real interest to serious epicureans is the handful of authors attempting to identify the appropriate wine to serve with the food and cooking of Japan, Southeast Asia, and India. Dishes from these regions frequently combine layers of strong flavors. Furthermore, Asian chefs love to play with textures in a chewy—meets—crunchy game of contrasts. Wine, one must remember, can also be creamy, chewy, tannic, and bubbly. Pairing the two is not for the fainthearted.

Wine with Asian Food, the best project to date, opens with a thorough examination of the basic flavors inherent to Asian cooking: salty, sour, sweet, bitter, and umami, a newly recognized rich and meaty-type flavor known to Japanese chefs for more than a century. Next, authors Patricia Guy and Edwin Soon offer a template categorizing scores of typical Asian dishes based on their predominant flavor. From there we learn about the seven broad categories of wine styles so that readers can simply match a food category with a wine category. Don't be put off. Their writing is immensely clear and the effort worthwhile because very few things are more satisfying than a favorable dinner table match with the added bonus of a wine glow.

The book then moves on to offer fifty recipes separated into the aforementioned five food categories ranging from Fresh & Herbal Flavors to Fiery & Sweet Flavors. Each of the recipes is touted as being as "classic" and "widely available in restaurants yet easily prepared at home." Full-page color photos are placed opposite, and each dish is referenced geographically and often historically. The all-important wine recommendations will appeal to fans of Old World (Europe) and New World (North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa) vintages, as well as oddball pairings for the adventuresome.

Based on the quality of this effort and the endless number of Asian dishes to research, we recommend that Tide-mark sign Guy and Soon to a series of similar titles.
MATT SUTHERLAND (February 15, 2008)

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