

## FOOD &amp; DINING NEWSLETTER

# What wine goes best with Pirate's Booty? Or pigs-in-a-blanket?

Unexpected wine pairings were the stars of the Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival. So we decided to experiment ourselves.

By **Alexa Gagosz** Globe Staff, Updated September 28, 2023, 6:00 a.m.



A spread from the "Unexpected Wine Pairings" session at the 2023 Annual Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival at the Rosecliff Mansion. ALEXA GAGOSZ

*This story first appeared in [Globe Rhode Island's Food & Dining newsletter](#), a free weekly email about Rhode Island's restaurant industry that also contains information about local events, Q&As with chefs, dining guides, and more. If you'd like to receive it via e-mail each Thursday, [you can sign up here](#).*

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NEWPORT, R.I. — One of my favorite moments during the annual [Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival](#) was listening to the approving groans from spectators taking a buttery bite of crescent-roll-wrapped mini wieners and washing it down with a sip of White Burgundy. Or, even better: a Milano cookie and a handful of white cheddar Pirate's Booty followed by a swig of Clos de los Siete Red Blend.

"Can you believe this tastes so good?" the man sitting next to me in a Bellevue Avenue dining room asked his wife.

Well, I most certainly could. That's because some cold veggies, cheese, and Pirate's Booty straight from the bag with a glass or two of hearty red is the go-to dinner for me on Friday nights lately. TikTok calls it "[girl dinner](#)." I call it practical — and satisfying.

The festival, which took place [at the newly renovated Rosecliff mansion](#) this year, is known for its copious amounts of wine. But the organizers also sprinkle in some education in the seminars led by producers and others in the alcohol business. They've smartly increasing the amount of learning at the festival, jamming it with sessions on wine regions in Italy and Chile, wine-making techniques like aging with oak or stainless steel barrels, and culinary demonstrations by the likes of [chef Kev Des Chenes](#), an author and Food Network star.

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On Sunday, I found myself in what may be the most practical session of the weekend: “Unexpected Wine Pairings.”

The session’s instructor was Theo Rutherford, the director of wine and spirits education at Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits. He told the attendees, who paid the \$125 entry fee, to break the boundaries of classic wine pairings. Steak and cabernet? Boring! Pinot Grigio with shrimp scampi? That’s a little cliché.

Instead, Rutherford offered snacks from Trader Joe’s that paired well with wine.

I was so surprised by the number of people who were bewildered by the outrageous pairings that I decided to test some of his tips. Here are a few unpredictable wine pairings that include bites you might already have in your kitchen cabinets.

**What goes with some bubbles, especially champagne:** All bubbles are great, but check the sweetness level before you start plating — prosecco has more sugar than champagne— and remember that salt and acid go well together. Sip champagne with some movie theater-style popcorn slathered with butter, or try one of Rutherford’s favorites: champagne with a yellow bag of Lay’s salted potato chips. If you’re looking for something sweet, reach for a lemon cookie that will try to bring out the lovely citrus undertones in the bubbly. Feeling fancy? Go for caviar.

**What goes with unoaked whites, like some chardonnays and White**

**Burgandy:** If your white varietal is aged in stainless steel, has a lot of acid, and a bit of a

mineral bite, then you're going to want something fatty, salty, and with some substance to cut through the acid. Rutherford paired pigs-in-a-blanket with this pour, and the combination really coated the palate. Or try apple slices — a tart one, like Macintosh or Granny Smith — with a drizzle of honey.



Blueberry muffins in New York, Feb. 1, 2021. During the pandemic, home bakers clamored for scaled-down versions of their favorite recipes. Food styled by Julia Gartland. (Julia Gartland/The New York Times) JULIA GARTLAND/NYT

**What goes with a medium-bodied red, like a Pinot Noir:** Rutherford had us try a Californian-grown pinot noir that was aged in French oak, which brings out notes of baking spices. American oak would have amplified notes of basil, sage, and rosemary. “If you taste this and it’s sort of like Christmas in a glass, there’s a reason. It’s that French oak,” he said. If that’s your wine, reach for something with some earthiness like thick mozzarella sticks with marinara sticks, fresh blueberry muffins, or oatmeal raisin cookies.

**What goes with a red blend that might include grapes like Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah:** Many make the mistake of reaching for chocolate when pouring a glass of a dark red wine. But milk, fat, and tannins makes for a disaster combination, and making the wine taste sour when consumed together. Ease up on the chocolate, and try pairing these full-bodied reds with cookies that combine light shortbread with robust chocolate. Want something salty instead of sweet? This is where you break out the cheddary Pirate's Booty.

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