

Featuring Lucien Albrecht
Crémant d'Alsace Brut Rosé

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The Peking Order: Wines to Pair With Cheese

For most people, beer, not wine, is the drink of choice when it comes to Chinese. Wall Street Journal wine columnist Lettie Teague took on the vinous challenge of finding a worthy match, with surprising discoveries



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*Lucien Albrecht
Crémant d'Alsace Brut Rosé*

A sparkling rosé like this creamy, compulsively drinkable wine from Alsace, France, may be the best answer to the questions of what wine goes well with Chinese food.

"WE NEVER DRINK WINE with Chinese food," my friend Michelle Shih, a first-generation Chinese American, confessed during a recent dinner at Peking Duck House in New York with our husbands and a food-critic friend, Alan.

Michelle isn't alone. Most people I know pair beer, not wine, with Chinese food. Its unfamiliar, frequently intense flavors make pairing wines with it a difficult undertaking. A single dish can flood the palate with sweet, spicy, salty and sour flavors, sometimes all at once. And then there are the condiments: Sauces like soy and the ubiquitous black vinegar not only up the pairing challenge, they almost discourage wine-drinking.

Of course, all wine lovers—especially professional ones—relish a challenge, and finding a worthy match for Chinese seemed to me like a public service of sorts. But where to begin? There's no such thing as "Chinese" food, after all, but rather eight distinct regional cuisines. Three in particular—the sweet Cantonese and the spicier Hunan and Sichuan (Szechuan)—show up most often on American menus ... And, of course, Champagne and other sparkling wines, especially rosé, pair well with Chinese food—for many of the same reasons that beer is a good match. (Bubbles help clear the palate, counteracting the salt and the heat of the spice.) In fact, a sparkling rosé might be the best choice for wine drinkers who don't want to think too much about pairings.

The Lucien Albrecht Crémant d'Alsace Brut Rosé (\$16) that my husband and I recently had with some Chinese takeout certainly proved this point. While the spicy orange beef was dull, the steamed dumplings lumpish and the General Tso's chicken sickly sweet, the Lucien Albrecht was lush and fruity, balancing out the sweetness of the chicken and almost able to enliven the beef. "Maybe what Chinese food really needs is a wine that has a little dazzle, that's fun," said Roger. He might just have a point.



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