

# Balancing Chart for Food & Wine

How food changes our perception of how wine tastes



		WINE TASTES			
		Sweet	Acidic	Bitter	Alcohol
FOOD TASTES	<b>Sweet</b> Sugar, honey, ripe fruit, dried cherries	↓	↑	↑	↓
	<b>Salty</b> Sea salt, soy sauce, seaweed	↑	↑	↓	↑
	<b>Sour</b> Balsamic vinegar, lemon, lime, mustard	↑	↓	↑	↓
	<b>Bitter</b> Walnuts, tea, skin of figs, coffee, chocolate	↓	↑	↓	↑
	<b>Spicy Hot</b> Black pepper, cayenne, peppers	↓	↑	↑	↑
	<b>Umami</b> Prosciutto, aged cheese, dried shitake	↑	↓	↑	↓

When food and wine are experienced together, the combination changes how we perceive the original taste of the individual item. If you pair a mildly sweet wine with a very sweet dessert, the wine will taste as if it has lost some of its sweetness. It may even taste sour. I call this taste absorption (the food has 'absorbed' the sweetness of the wine and our perception of that sweet taste is reduced). Spicy foods, for example, will increase our perception of alcohol in wine. That's taste magnification. The possibilities are illustrated in the Balancing Chart.

With a little practice, you can learn to adjust the taste of the food to complement the wine. In the case of the dessert, adding a little acid, perhaps lemon juice or zest, will absorb some of the acidity and thus bring back your perception of the sweetness in the wine. It's really just a balancing act.

↑ Increases our perception of that taste in wine

↓ Reduces our perception of that wine taste

*Example: Sour foods increase our perception of bitterness in wine (making the wine taste more bitter), while salty ingredients decrease it.*