



Champagne & Thai Food

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Truth: Wine pairs horridly with spicy Thai food. White wine might be a little better than red wine, but let's face it, red or white, the spicy, fish sauce gusto of Thai food is like a sledge hammer to the taste of wine and its complex, delicate flavors.

If you're enjoying a fiery *pad kee mao* (translation: shit drunk noodles) or putting *nam jim* (fish sauce and Thai chilis) on your Thai fried rice, or just eating *som tom* (spicy green papaya salad) the last thing you want to do is chug down a couple gulps of Chardonnay to tamp down the fire.

Beer is the common booze choice with Thai food. (Personally, I knock back a couple shots of Mekhong Thai whiskey¹ before and after dinner.) Beer puts out the fire and makes you burp. Mai Tais, Long

Island Ice Teas, and Margaritas also pair well and stand up to spicy, fish sauce-drenched Thai dishes.

But wine and Thai food? Is there any way to broker a friendship between the two? And what about our favorite Benedictine monk, Dom Perignon, who in 1670 started making wine with tiny bubbles? Could he be the key to unlocking one of the greatest epicurean conundrums to confront our taste buds-wine and Thai food?

I unintentionally discovered the answers to these question a few years ago in Las Vegas. Not Pattaya or Chiang Mai or even Bangkok, but Sin City, USA. More specifically, at the Arias Casino on the Vegas Strip.

My *Thai* wife and I flew into Las Vegas to visit her *Thai* friends and we wanted *Thai* food. We decided on [Lemongrass](#), a trendy haunt located just off the the main casino. By the time we sat down for dinner, we were all well lubricated, at least us guys.

After the women ordered dinner-whole fish in herbs, pandan chicken, mussaman curry, eggplant & crispy pork, spicy tofu, kao pad crab, green curry, tom yum soup, and fish maw-the husband of my wife's best friend (another farang) asked the waitress if they served champagne. Without blinking, she produced a wine list with several selections. Yes, Dom was on the list.)

This was a first. I've been to hundreds of Thai restaurants in Thailand and the US, but this was the first to offer champagne. But again, this was the first time having Thai food on the Vegas Strip. Within minutes a bottle of champagne was sitting in a bucket of ice next to our table.

I adore champagne. My wife and I even made a pilgrimage to Epernay, France to pay homage to Dom Perignon. Still, I was rather surprised by the order of champagne. With Thai food? Never imagined such a thing. But it was a festive dinner with old friends. Besides, since I didn't order it, I didn't have to pay for it I figured.

A bite of fish followed by a sip of the bubbly. Not bad. A bite of pandan chicken and another sip. Better yet. Then the true test-the spicy tofu, and tom yum soup. Nirvana! The taste of the champagne held up just fine and the carbonation cooled the spiciness. Burrrrrrp. Game on!

It wasn't long before a second bottle of champagne arrived at our table. Needless to say, it was a great dinner with friends. If you haven't eaten fish maw and washed it down with the bubbly, well you haven't taken Thai food to its next level.

Since that dinner, I have often paired Thai food with champagne, sparkling wine and maybe the best choice, Prosecco. All carbonated wines.

Bubble Logistics: Issues & Solutions

Outside the Vegas Strip, you'll probably never find a Thai restaurant that serves champagne. Very few even offer wine. So how do you drink champagne or any bubbly at a Thai restaurant?

The obvious option is BYOB, Bring Your Own Booze. Or better yet, BYOBAG, Bring Your Own Booze And Glasses. If you were eating at a French restaurant in Bangkok, you wouldn't hesitate to bring a special bottle of wine or champagne. So why not do it at a Thai restaurant? And the Thai restaurant

won't charge you a corkage fee.

I do almost all my wine buying in Chiang Mai at Rimping Markets. They have a good selection of champagnes and Proseccos. I can pick up a bottle of Italian Prosecco for less than \$20 (US). Not bad. Champagne is slightly more. But the shelves are well-stocked with it.

You don't have to eat Thai food at a Thai restaurant. Have a delivery app bring the food to you. And don't eat it out of the containers it comes in. Put the Thai food in nice serving ware and set the table. (Remember Thais eat with a spoon and fork, not chop sticks. ²) Invite friends. Pop the cork. Your dinner will become legendary—"Oh, remember when we ate Thai food and drank champagne at your place!"

Wine Spritzes

A simple way to have wine and Thai food is a wine spritz, which is a non-alcoholic carbonated drink. A wine spritz can easily handle all the fish sauce, galangal, and chilis you can throw at it.

The wine spritz: 1 glass of cheap white wine (I use a glass and a half) and 1/2-3/4 glass of sweet lemon soda. Add 2 jiggers of Aperol liquor, or 1 jigger of Campari liquor. A wedge of lemon. Pour over ice in a large goblet-style glass. Easy-peasy.

If you're having a lot of people over for that Thai dinner that's going to be delivered to your home, go rummage through your garage and find that punch bowl set that you got as a gift 10 years ago and never used. Mix up a big punch bowl of wine spritzes, put it in the middle of all the Thai food and have at it. Your friends will declare you a genius of taste.

Parting Thoughts

I'm sure many of you will insist that wine goes perfectly with Thai food. It doesn't. But that's a matter of taste. Literally. You are more than free to take a \$30 bottle of wine, pair it with Thai food, and make it taste like a skid row special that's been left open in your refrigerator for six months.

But even if you insist that wine and Thai food pair together just fine, consider the culinary maxim: Everything goes better with champagne. Everything! Especially Thai food.

Category

1. Thai Food is Thai Culture

Tags

1. thai food

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