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PERFECT PAIRINGS FOR CARB-AWARE CUISINE

There's no doubt about it – today's new carbohydrate consciousness is changing the way America eats. In just over a year, *The South Beach Diet* has sold more than five million copies and *Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution* is fast approaching four hundred weeks on *The New York Times* Best-Seller List. With the number of carb-conscious eaters growing every day, the latest ACNielsen Homescan Panel Dietary Awareness Survey indicates that as many as 17 percent of Americans currently are following some type of carb-aware eating plan.

“This new generation of carb watching is full of good news and delicious choices, especially for wine drinkers,” says chef George Stella, host of *Low Carb and Lovin' It* on the Food Network. “People who enjoy drinking wine can continue to do so on a low-carb eating plan.”

While exact carb counts differ slightly from wine to wine, “A good rule of thumb is to figure that a five-ounce glass of white wine has one gram of carbs; rosé, two grams; red, three grams; and a dry sparkling wine, about five grams,” explains Wine Market Council President, John Gillespie. Not only is there room to incorporate wine into these eating plans, but the new carb-aware lifestyle is based on celebrating great foods – foods that are naturals for pairing with wine every day.

So whether you're looking for low carb, smart carb, or just delicious new recipe ideas, following are Chef Stella's simple tips for incorporating wine with today's carb-aware cuisine:

- **START WITH THE SAUCE.** “Like any sophisticated cuisine, there are plenty of flavorful, carb-smart sauces that add high-impact punch to any course of your meal – and they're a great place to start when thinking about wine pairings,” explains Stella. For example, red wines from the Cotes du Rhone have just enough acidity and peppery character to handle mustard-based sauces well. Chardonnay has the backbone and the body to stand up to the rich flavors of creamy sauces. For tomato-based sauces, do as the Italians do and reach for a classic Italian wine like Chianti. The herbaceous character of Sauvignon Blanc offers the perfect balancing act for assertive fresh-tasting herb sauces. And sweeter sauces are complemented by a well-chilled rosé.

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- **ADJUST THE ACIDS.** Vinaigrettes and vinegar-based marinades are a super low-carb flavor booster, but can pose a challenge for wine pairings because of vinegar’s tangy acidity. “Luckily, there are a few easy fixes to make these marinades more wine-friendly,” says Stella. To help adjust the acids, try substituting lemon juice or wine for all or part of the vinegar. A little balsamic vinegar will also balance the acidity with its mild sweetness. Adding a salty ingredient (such as olives or capers), a few chopped nuts, or a little bit of a flavorful cheese like feta or blue cheese also will do the trick. Or, if you prefer to stick with a mild vinegar, Sauvignon Blancs are crisp and acidic enough to balance the acid and will also complement the spices most often found in a vinaigrette.
- **FIRE UP THE FLAVOR.** Grilling has become such an indispensable method of cooking that carb watchers are keeping their grills – both inside and outside – fired up year-round. “Not only is it a healthy way to cook, but everyone loves the great smoky taste that grilling imparts to vegetables, seafood, and meat,” explains Stella. Top wines to pair with grilled fare are versatile, slightly smoky Pinot Noirs; medium to full-bodied Chardonnays; or tannic, fruity Merlots.
- **GO GLOBAL.** Savvy carb-conscious chefs have taken inspiration from cuisines around the world that already feature naturally low-carb delicacies. Whether it’s a spicy South American ceviche or a hearty Tuscan T-bone, follow their lead and take the opportunity to sample an unfamiliar wine from a corresponding country. Or, if you prefer to stay closer to home, try cooling down zesty global flavors with a crisp, dry sparkling wine or a soothing rosé.

For more great wine pairing suggestions and carb-aware cuisine from Chef George Stella, log onto www.wineanswers.com.

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The Wine Market Council is an independent, non-profit trade association of grape growers, wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and other organizations affiliated with the wine industry.