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Matching Indian Bubbly with Indian food

March 03: When matching Indian food with wine, people make the mistake of thinking about only red and white wine-sometimes maybe Rosé. They tend to overlook the sparkling wines which can be a great match because the bubbles act as palate cleanser and being high on acidity they cut into the fat of the greasy food so prevalent in the Indian cuisine, provided the food is not heavy on chillies, opines Subhash Arora

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Wine pic - by Adil



Most sparkling wines produced in India use Methode Traditionelle and are quite fruity and complex but not overly elegant. Their styles range from Brut to Brut Nature, with general sugar levels from 8-12 gms/liter. The bubbles and acidity makes them a very good match with certain Indian foods, bearing in mind that the cuisine is a multi-dimensional with great diversity. A Substantial portion is used by deep or shallow frying and these foods are best matched with sparkling wines with medium sugar content.

The most predominant grape is Chenin Blanc for Brut which is harvested when the natural acidity is very high and sweetness medium. This makes them suitable as an aperitif. Try with vegetarian samosas, mixed pakoras or kebabs like fish kebabs, paneer tikkas, even Amritsari fish will go very well with Brut from Sula, Grover Zampa, York and Chandon.

Fratelli Brute Nature is ideal with mildly spicy snacks like fish fingers, grilled fish, shrimp cocktail and even dishes like tandoori chicken. I recommend it even with aloo and gobi parathas (Indian pancakes stuffed with vegetables like potatoes or cauliflower with egg bhurji (scramble eggs with some vegetables and mild spices) Many people are used to taking papadam with chutney with their whiskey-any of the Brut would go well with this appetizer.

Food pics by- Subhash Arora at Masala House



They are also excellent condiments with vegetable pilaf, biryani and chicken biryani. Try Chandon Rose with mutton biryani. Sula Brut Tropicale made from a majority of red wine grapes including Shiraz and Pinot Noir is a heavenly combination with paella type sea-food and rice preparation.

Rose Brut uses Shiraz, Zinfandel, and Pinot Noir and are excellent matches with mutton kebabs that are made in fats-shammi kebab, seekh kebabs, chicken and roasted prawns with mild marinating. Chicken tikka masala would happily dance with the slightly creamy Chandon Rose with fruity flavours and zesty bubbles.

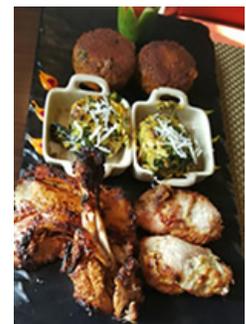
However, there are certain exceptions. Some hot dishes from South India, spicy Rajasthan food with lots of chillies and meats with liquid curries are not a very good match - even with sweet sparkling wines which are not produced in India. Some foods use multiple spices making the dish very exotic and complex. Sparkling wines may not be a great match.

A common mistake made in India is to pair a Rose Brut with desserts. The better quality Rose Brut produced by Methode

Traditionelle Sula, Grover Zampa and Chandon are overpowered by the sweetness of Indian desserts. A better match is to use the simple and sweet Sula Seco Rose, which is made by tank fermentation and has residual sugar of more than 40 gms/liter with fairly good acidity, making it drinkable on its own or with desserts like Gulab Jamun, red fruit gratin.

Vegetarians can enjoy the Brut with mildly spicy fried vegetables, masala dosa and most snacky preparation like idli, vada, uttappam, hara-bhara kebabs (made from ground lentils). Rose Brut is delicious with aubergine bhartha, mushroom matter.

Indian sparkling wines are recommended to be served at 5-7°- Roses can be a shade less cold at 6-8°C. Since the ambient temperature is usually on the warmer side, I recommend serving them at the lower end of the temperature since they get warmed up faster. I also recommend a serving of not more than 90 mL for the same reason.



My ecstatic reaction when I tasted Sula Brut Tropicale with seafood paella at the Launch in Mumbai last year-heavenly match!

Subhash Arora

The article was written primarily for Glass of Bubbly magazine, published in London and focusing on champagnes and other sparkling wines and meant as a basic guide to match Indian sparkling wines with Indian foods. For original Article published recently, click www.glassofbubbly.com or click [HERE](#)-editor