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## SOMMELIER ROUNDTABLE

# 18 Terrific Taco and Wine Pairings, Picked by Wine Pros

We asked 10 sommeliers what bottles they'd open on taco Tuesday, for variations from al pastor to fried fish to lengua



These are the bottles pros pair with tacos, from spicy chicken tacos to succulent, stewed tripa. (FluxFactory/Getty Images)



**By Julia Larson**

Jan 5, 2024

With more restaurants that explore the different regions of Mexico opening across the U.S., it's gotten easier here to find a diverse range of authentic tacos. Whether you enjoy tangy shrimp and slaw wrapped in a soft flour tortilla, the layered, savory flavors of juicy, slow-roasted carnitas, or a nostalgic Tex-Mex ground beef taco in a crunchy shell, trying to pair wines with the different types can leave you scratching your head. To help out, *Wine Spectator* asked 10 taco-loving sommeliers for pairings that sing, from blanc de blancs Champagne to surprises like Brunello and even Amarone.

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**Mark Bright, wine director and co-owner of Grand Award winner [Saison](https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/2089/saison) [<https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/2089/saison>] in San Francisco**

Usually, I go with Champagne [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2023-champagne-wine-tasting-report-121523>] or light, high-acid whites for shrimp, fish or lighter-style tacos [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/fantastic-fried-fish-tacos-for-father-s-day>]. I love Beaujolais [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2023-beaujolais-nouveau-a-solid-year-for-fun-wines>] with all others: low alcohol, aromatic and texturally interesting. These are what I would bring to taco night!

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**Bill Cox, wine director of Best of Award of Excellence winner [Counter](https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/6346/counter) [<https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/6346/counter>], in Charlotte, N.C.**

This will sound absurd, but I enjoy tacos such as lengua [beef tongue] and *tripitas* [tripe], which are fairly well braised and pair surprisingly great with [Amarone](#)

[<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/all-about-amarone-53992>] . That faint sweetness and density of texture can match well with *al pastor* and barbacoa too, especially if the heat is present but mild and smoky.



David Gordon has been with the Tribeca Grill for over 30 years. (Courtesy of the Tribeca Grill)

**David Gordon** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/sommelier-talk-david-gordon-of-tribeca-grill-52678>] , wine director at Grand Award winner **Tribeca Grill** [<https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/145/tribeca-grill>] , New York City

My friend (and former sommelier at Tribeca Grill) Patrick Capiello is now a winemaker, and his Monte Rio is a great source for delicious and fairly priced wines from California. Most of his reds can be served slightly chilled, and I would love his Petite Sirah made from organic



vineyards in Lodi [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/travel-tip-lodi-california-underdog-wine-destination>] with a steak taco [<https://www.winespectator.com/recipes/show/id/1268>].

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**Morgan Fouss, wine director at Best of Award of Excellence winner Galatoire's**  
**[<https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/296/galatoire-s>], New Orleans**

Living in Louisiana with abundant access to great seafood, I am a sucker for fish or shrimp tacos. The crisp, clean minerality in Grüner Veltliner

[[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Gr%C3%BCner+Veltliner&text_search_flag=everything&search_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=)

[submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Gr%C3%BCner+Veltliner&text\\_search\\_flag=everything&search\\_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Gr%C3%BCner+Veltliner&text_search_flag=everything&search_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=)

pairs perfectly with either, especially when the taco has a touch of heat. Grüner also cuts through the fattiness of a brisket or carnitas taco. Grüners that come in liters are super approachable and fun. I would also choose an Albariño

[[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Albari%C3%B1o&text_search_flag=everything&search_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=)

[submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Albari%C3%B1o&text\\_search\\_flag=everything&search\\_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Albari%C3%B1o&text_search_flag=everything&search_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=)

with its salty and lime zest notes.

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**Kyle South, lead sommelier at Grand Award winner Addison**  
**[<https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/1345/addison>], San Diego**

As a New Mexico native [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/santa-fe-united-states-food-and-wine-destinations-113023>], my mind naturally soars to the thought of a spicy Hatch green chile relleno taco with a German Riesling from the Mosel such as Egon Müller

[[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Egon+M%C3%BCller)

[submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Egon+M%C3%BCller](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Egon+M%C3%BCller)] Scharzhofberger Kabinett 2020.

Classics are classic for a reason, just like the pairing of sweetness and spice. Hatch green chiles offer such a level of depth for the senses, creating a fun juxtaposition between the richness and slate quality in Scharzhofberger.

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Tristan Pitre serves world-class wine in the Montecito foothills. (Courtesy of the Stonehouse)

**Tristan Pitre, wine director of Grand Award winner [the Stonehouse](https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/1350/the-stonehouse) [<https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/1350/the-stonehouse>] , Santa Barbara, Calif.**

I love a chillable red when it comes to most tacos. Give me something fresh from [the Loire](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/a-revival-in-the-loire-chenin-blanc-tasting-report-113023) [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/a-revival-in-the-loire-chenin-blanc-tasting-report-113023>] with bright crunchy fruit, low alcohol and extreme drinkability. Two favorites of mine are the [Philippe Tessier Cheverny Rouge](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Philippe+Tessier+Cheverny+Red&search_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=-1&pricelow=-) [[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Philippe+Tessier+Cheverny+Red&search\\_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=-1&pricelow=-](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Philippe+Tessier+Cheverny+Red&search_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=-1&pricelow=-)—a blend of Gamay, Pinot Noir and Côt—and Division Wine Co.’s Béton, an American interpretation of a classic Loire blend. Pair this with some *al pastor*, and you are going to have a good time.

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**Simon Roberts, co-owner and beverage director at Award of Excellence winner [Tango Room](https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/6901/tango-room) [https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/6901/tango-room] , Dallas**

Tacos, like wine, go in a lot of different flavor profile directions, so if we're talking fish tacos I love a crisp Pinot Grigio from Friuli, Italy, called [Attems](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Attems+Pinot+Grigio)

[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?

submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Attems+Pinot+Grigio] . It has enough fruit and acid to both cut through and complement the spice. For a beef taco, I'd say a [Rioja](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=&text_search_flag=everything&search_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=-1&pricelow=-1)

[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?

submitted=Y&page=1&winery=&text\_search\_flag=everything&search\_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=-1&pricelow=-1] , which is soft, supple and balanced with black currant. It's a perfect pairing.

Finally, for a spicy chicken taco (one of my favorites), I'm opening up a simple Riesling from Austria [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/homing-in-on-terroir-tasting-report-on-austrian-wines-093023] , which takes the edge off of any spice. For a taco that's less fiery but still full of flavor, a flinty [Puligny-Montrachet](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Puligny-Montrachet) [https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Puligny-Montrachet] .

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**Danielle Kuzinich, wine director of Best of Award of Excellence winner [San Francisco Wine Society](https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/6134/san-francisco-wine-society) [https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/6134/san-francisco-wine-society] , in San Francisco**

With chicken tacos, I love to enjoy a glass of Barão do Hospital Loureiro from [Vinho Verde](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Vinho+Verde) [https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?

submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Vinho+Verde] in Portugal. The wine is crisp and refreshing, has great salinity, hints of lime and lemon and racy acidity—basically the closest you are going to get to a margarita [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/tequila-sweet-spot-reposadas-for-sipping-and-mixing] !

For *al pastor* tacos, I reach for Riesling! **Selbach-Oster Riesling Feinherb**

[[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Selbach-Oster+Riesling+Mosel+Feinherb&text\\_search\\_flag=everything&search\\_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=-1&pricelow=-1](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=Selbach-Oster+Riesling+Mosel+Feinherb&text_search_flag=everything&search_by=all&scorelow=-1&scorehigh=-1&pricelow=-1)]  
from the Mosel in Germany makes an excellent pairing. The sweetness helps balance the spice of the *al pastor* and pairs perfectly with the pineapple while the minerality and acid complement the smoky flavors of the pork.

For carnitas and fried tacos, **Bollinger** [<https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Bollinger>] is always a perfect pairing. The rich, full-bodied character of Bollinger complements the richness of the pork, and the bubbles help cut through the fat. And let's be real, Champagne should always be the first choice for anything fried! When in doubt, always go with Bollinger!

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**Hunter Ham, wine director of Award of Excellence winner Porters**

[<https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/6917/porters>] , College Station, Texas

Every time I treat myself to spicy street tacos, bursting with bold flavors of onions, cilantro, lime and beef, and wrapped in a warm corn tortilla, **Brunello** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/going-old-school-tasting-report-on-the-wines-of-brunello-di-montalcino-063023>] is my go-to wine. It might surprise some, but believe me, it's a game-changer. The high acidity of Brunello expertly slices through the heat, while its intricate layers of flavors waltz seamlessly with the complexity of the taco's ingredients. It's not just a pairing; it's a passionate tango of taste that showcases how two diverse elements can come together in a harmonious symphony. For me, Brunello and spicy street tacos aren't just a favorite combo; it's an epicurean revelation.

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**Brian Hider, wine director of Grand Award winner the Pluckemin Inn**

[<https://www.winespectator.com/restaurants/1254/the-pluckemin-inn>] , Bedminster, N.J.

How about a nice **blanc de blancs**

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/blanc\\_de\\_blancs\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/blanc_de_blancs) Champagne? I've been turned onto this one: the 2019 Hervé Brisson Champagne Les Régales. I tried it in France at the *Salon Bulles Bio en Champagne* [a Champagne festival] in Reims; it's a new producer from the Côte des Blancs. Pair this up with crispy fried chicken tacos with Mexican street corn—New Jersey corn, of course!