



Food and wine pairing: Ask the winemakers, part two

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Stephan Asseo, owner of [L'Aventure](#), is a genius winemaker with a passion for Paso Robles. After fifteen years of making wine in Bordeaux, he set out on a worldwide journey to find the perfect location where he could make innovative wines his own way, without being subject to the strict constraints of AOC rules. Some thought he was crazy, but his wines prove otherwise.

Due to its soil, geography and climate, he settled on the west side of Paso Robles, where he knew he would be able to cultivate grapes that would become world class wines. His beloved "Paso blends" are crafted from Bordeaux and Rhone varietals. He did not want to make clones of French wines, but to create blends that were unique expressions of his new terroir. He has succeeded brilliantly at doing exactly that.

Stephan prides himself on being a good grower, and has planted his vineyards very densely, 2100 vines per acre. This planting scheme yields less fruit per vine. With fewer grapes to feed, the vines produce higher quality, richer fruit. The result is big, complex, beautifully balanced wines.

We spoke about food pairings for two of the wines he poured on Sunday at [Wally's](#) Central Coast Wine and Food Celebration, the 2008 L'Aventure Estate Cuvee and the 2008 Cote a Cote. Each can be [ordered](#) from the winery, and if you have any sense, you will do so immediately!

For Stephan, his Estate Cuvee is the perfect wine for beef, anything from a grilled steak to boeuf bourguignon. He says it also has a special affinity for venison. Winemaker notes: 50% Syrah, 36% Cabernet Sauvignon and 14% Petit Verdot. Purple/black, with aromas of cedar box, wild blackberries, black cherry and fresh, raw beef. Anise and cola flavors ride the big attack, resolving themselves in tight flavors of blueberries and acacia in the enormous middle palate, finishing long with orange rind, spice and everything.

The Cote a Cote he recommended with baby lamb, especially a Moroccan tajine, made with savory (not hot) spices, or with monkfish in a red wine sauce. Winemaker notes: 40% Grenache, 40% Syrah and 20% Mourvedre. Features tea and tobacco leaf, garrigue and jambon on the nose, as well as blueberries and pencil shavings. The mouth is full of spicy berries, licorice and red currants. This wine is impeccably integrated.