



Perfect EU Wines for Easter Pairings

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Neil McAndrew, wine industry consultant and advisor to the European Union's 'More Than Only Food & Drink' campaign, reveals the wines set to take centre stage this Easter, offering expert pairings to complement seasonal traditions and inspire consumer choices.

With UK consumers spending an estimated £1.3 billion on Easter celebrations last year¹, the holiday remains a major event on the retail calendar. While chocolate eggs and confectionery dominate sales², the period also presents a prime opportunity for retailers as families and friends gather to celebrate.

Neil says, "The beginning of the year is often seen as a period of moderation, especially with the growing number of people participating in Dry January (it is estimated that 15.5 million people in the UK took part this year)³. Easter, therefore, emerges as the first major occasion for friends and families to reunite and celebrate. It's an ideal time to explore new wines - be it a fresh white to complement spring dishes, a robust red for a traditional roast, or a sparkling wine to add a celebratory touch.

"The European Union offers an abundance of wines, making it easy to find the perfect match for spring dishes. Here are my recommendations:

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1287529/easter-retail-spending-in-the-uk/>

² <https://grocerytrader.co.uk/pivotal-season-easter-remains-one-of-the-most-important-occasions-of-the-year-for-the-confectionery-category>

³ <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/blog/mind-body-bank-balance-why-over-a-quarter-of-brits-are-planning-a-booze-free-january>

For Good Friday traditionalists

“The tradition of eating fish on Good Friday remains popular in many UK households and marks the start of Easter celebrations. When selecting wines to pair with seafood - whether it’s classic fish and chips or a more refined dish – this tradition should be a key consideration.

“As a general rule, some of the best seafood-friendly wines come from coastal wine regions, such as **Picpoul de Pinet PDO** in the South of France, **Albariño** from northwest Spain, **Assyrtiko** from Santorini Island in Greece, or **Malvasia** from Istria in Croatia.

Picpoul de Pinet PDO is a distinct white wine from the Languedoc-Roussillon region of France. The vineyards surround the Bassin de Thau lagoon, overlooking the Mediterranean town of Sète in the southern part of the region. The name Picpoul means ‘lip stinger’, referring to its crisp and zingy acidity. This wine features citrus, floral, and tropical scents, with medium-high acidity and a lengthy aftertaste. It pairs particularly well with seafood, including mussels, oysters, and grilled fish. The success of Picpoul de Pinet lies largely in its consistency, offering reliably fresh, food-friendly wines. Already popular in the UK, its distinctive fluted green bottle - called Neptune – features the Languedoc cross and wave pattern emblazoned across the top, making it instantly recognisable.

Although **Albariño** is now planted across the world, the finest examples come from the renowned Rías Baixas region of northwest Spain. Elegant and food-friendly, these highly regarded wines are pale golden-lemon in colour, bone-dry, and aromatic. They are packed with flavours of citrus, white peach, apricot, melon, pineapple, mango, and honeysuckle, and pair particularly well with seafood, especially mussels, clams, and oysters.

The impressive growth in the popularity of Greek wine over the past few years has been primarily driven by the complex, high-quality white wines made from the **Assyrtiko** grape. Originally celebrated on the volcanic island of Santorini, Assyrtiko is now widely planted across Greece and is increasingly found in other parts of the world. These wines are dry and crisp, with ripe fruit, mineral undertones, and refreshingly high acidity, making them a wonderful partner for seafood - particularly fried fish and calamari - as well as lighter meat dishes like chicken.

“Classic French wines such as **Sancerre PDO**, **Muscadet PDO** or **Chablis PDO** feature on every seafood restaurant menu due to their exceptional food-friendly qualities. Known for their crisp acidity and mineral-driven freshness, these three world-famous wines are produced within just a few hundred miles of each other.

Sancerre PDO, produced from Sauvignon Blanc grapes, is regarded as the benchmark for this style of wine. The soil and climate of the central vineyards of the Loire Valley are perfect for creating a delicious dry white wine that combines green fruit and grassy flavours with beautiful texture and refreshing acidity. The wines have a lovely mineral character, and the best examples are known for offering a delicious, multi-layered texture on the palate.

For the main event

“Lamb remains a firm favourite amongst UK consumers for Easter dining. In 2024, sales of lamb roasting joints increased by 24.1% compared to the previous year, accounting for nearly three-quarters of all lamb sold during the Easter period⁴.

“For roast lamb, medium-bodied reds with structure, some oak ageing, and maturity are a great option. **Rioja PDO** from Spain, typically produced primarily from Tempranillo and aged in barrels for several years before release, pairs exceptionally well with lamb and is a classic regional combination. Similarly, Tuscan wines made from the noble Sangiovese grape, such as **Chianti Classico PDO** and **Brunello di Montalcino PDO** from Italy, complement slow-cooked lamb shoulder beautifully.

“For something more unusual, try a wine from northern Greece with the Xinomavro grape variety, the primary grape found in many Greek PDO wines including **Naoussa PDO** and **Amyndeon PDO**. These wines are usually aged in oak and are renowned for their firm tannins, tight structure, bright acidity, and elegance – making them incredibly food-friendly and a perfect match for a slow-roasted lamb joint.

“Of course, chicken is also a popular option. It is an extremely wine-friendly meat that pairs well with a wide range of both white and red wines. A classic roast chicken matches beautifully with a **Sauvignon Blanc** or a German **Riesling**, while a **Mâcon PDO** or **Saint-Véran PDO** from France is hard to beat. A simple rule is to match the wine to the sauce or seasoning. If wine is used in the recipe, then the same wine should be served alongside it. Chardonnay and chicken - especially in a creamy sauce - is a match made in heaven.

“For customers who prefer red wine with chicken, I would recommend lighter styles to avoid overpowering the chicken’s flavour. French wines like **Beaujolais PDO**, made primarily from the Gamay grape, are excellent choices. Similarly, Spanish wines produced from Garnacha (Grenache) grapes, such as those from the **Campo de Borja PDO** in Aragón, also pair well with chicken.

For moments of sweet indulgence

“Easter is the perfect excuse to indulge in baked treats. For those looking to enjoy wines with traditional bakes such as Simnel Cake and Easter Biscuits, the nutty characteristics of Portugal’s **Madeira Wine PDO** or Italy’s **Marsala PDO** pair particularly well. For an extra special occasion, I’d suggest one of life’s great pleasures - a sweet **Tokaj PDO** from Hungary, an extraordinary and unique dessert wine with a long and illustrious history.

“One of the most popular Easter treats is, of course, the chocolate egg. Since wine and chocolate don’t naturally pair well, the general rule of thumb is that the wine should be sweeter than the chocolate. To this end, a fortified wine such as **Tawny Port**, with its lighter colour and notes of orange, nuts, and spice, pairs well with high-quality chocolate. The port's tannins help soften the chocolate's bitter edge while balancing its sweetness - especially when served slightly chilled. For those who

⁴ <https://www.agriland.co.uk/farming-news/sales-of-easter-lamb-roasting-joints-increased-by-24-this-year/>

prefer white wines, a sweet style such as a Spanish **Moscatel de Valencia** or an Italian **Moscato d’Asti** can complement the chocolate’s sweetness beautifully.

“In my opinion, fortified wines pair best with dark chocolate. A young Port is often regarded as the best match; however, for the more adventurous, I recommend an aged **Banyuls PDO** from France - a wonderful Port-like wine with slightly less alcohol, produced on the terraces of the Catalan Pyrenees in the Roussillon region.

Stock up and sell up

There is no doubt that Easter presents a key opportunity for consumers to explore new wines or trade up to higher-quality varieties they might not typically choose. With the right stock and pairing suggestions, retailers can encourage consumers to discover new favourites and upsell more premium options for Easter and beyond.

ENDS

Notes to editors

In 2024, the European Union launched the ‘More Than Only Food and Drink’ campaign to promote the EU's incredible range of food & beverages across the UK market.

The campaign aims to promote European food & beverage products to food and drink professionals in the UK, highlighting the key characteristics of the products (safety, quality, authenticity, and sustainability), with a focus on EU quality schemes - Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) - as well as the EU organic label.

The main objective of the campaign is to shine a light on the high sanitary and phytosanitary regulations in place in the EU as well as drive recognition and understanding of the EU quality schemes, encouraging the use of unique and authentic EU agricultural food and beverage products in the UK.

For any further queries, please [visit our website](#) or contact: morethanfood_UK@agripromotion.eu

