



WINE LOVER'S GIFT GUIDE

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OYSTER OBSESSION

OYSTERS CAN BE A CHALLENGING WINE MATCH. THE PERFECT PAIRING DEPENDS ON HOW YOU PREPARE THE OYSTER—OR WHETHER YOU DO ANYTHING TO IT AT ALL.

BY JANE GRECOTT

PHOTOS: TOM VAN GELDEREN

How the oyster is handled will also affect its flavor properties and consequently the wine-pairing strategy you employ, says Anthony Labriola, Executive Chef at Caffè Regatta in Pelham NY. "As wine has terroir, oysters have what I call 'merroir'—the taste of the sea from which they came," he says. He advises buying oysters that are dry-stored whenever possible. "Dry-storing means they are harvested, kept on ice and shipped," he explains. "Wet-stored means they have been held in a sea water tank for a few days before shipping. That is not bad for the oyster, but it causes them to lose their 'merroir'." For that reason he does not advise rinsing a shucked oyster before eating. Labriola adds this oyster wisdom: "When serving oysters on the half shell, or whenever opening for good practice, preserve the integrity of the oyster by not cutting it up with the oyster knife. Do not flip it over or hack it up. When eating an oyster, do just that—eat it! Chew and savor the flavor. Don't waste the oyster by just slurping and swallowing."