

Pairing Scotch with Food

For most of us, the idea of pairing wine with food is considered when planning for any dinner party or special occasion. There are thousands of resources that can aid our choices and help us pick that perfect wine for our meal. Scotch and food, however, is something that we might not consider in the same light. In most people's eyes, scotch is something that you enjoy after a meal or at a bar with friends. Although this is great, the options for pairing scotch with food are endless and can be just as enjoyable as that perfect wine and food pairing.

When you think about it, the idea isn't as foreign as it first seems. Scotch, especially single malt scotch in its varying forms, offers a whole range of flavours and aromas that pair perfectly with certain foods. From the sweet and light, through to the strong and powerful, scotch can be paired with any part of your meal, from appetizer to dessert.

Before I go on to talk about some possible food and scotch pairings, I believe we should go over a flavour component that may be unfamiliar to some of you, and that is 'peat'. Peat is a type of vegetal matter that grows in bogs in Scotland and, in some cases, is used as fuel to dry the barley used to make scotch. If used in large amounts, it can impart a smoky, earthy flavour to the finished scotch that pairs perfectly with certain foods.

Now with a few basics covered, here are a few pairings that may interest you and your guests at your next dinner party:

Tapas and Scotch:

With sherry being a classic pairing for tapas, it is no surprise that scotch aged in sherry casks, is a perfect marriage for this range of Spanish appetizers. Coming in all shapes and styles, it would be hard to find a match for every tapas recipe out there, yet there are some classic pairings that work perfectly. For example, the smoky, strong flavours of chorizo sausage, pair perfectly with fragrant smoky single malt. For a softer pairing, try the more subtle flavours of prosciutto or Serrano ham with a gentler, sweeter style single malt or blended scotch.

Chorizo sausage and Bowmore 12, 750 ml \$45.49

Seafood and Scotch:

With hundreds of distilleries being located by the sea in Scotland, it isn't surprising that there are some amazing pairings for seafood. For instance, the fragrant smokiness and touch of saltiness in some single malts, is perfect with the delicious and unique flavour of a fresh oyster. Why not even try replacing the touch of Tabasco or lemon juice, with a dash of scotch instead! Although it may sound crazy, sushi can also pair extremely well with some scotches. For a bolder flavoured sushi such as eel or mackerel, why not try a peaty bold flavoured scotch. As for sushi prepared with salmon or avocado, the subtle, creamy notes in some highland and lowland single malts can work perfectly.

Sushi and Glenkinchie 12, 750 ml \$69.99

Cheese and Scotch:

As with wine and cheese, scotch and cheese can be a match made in heaven. The possibilities are endless yet there are some classic pairings that are harmonious and won't take a trip to a speciality deli to achieve. The creamy, nuttiness of gruyere, pairs perfectly with the subtle sweetness and creamy textures of some highland single malts. As a contrast, the bold flavours of a blue cheese such as stilton, marry perfectly with the peaty, rich flavours of some Islay single malts. Why not try experimenting with your favourite cheeses; I'm sure there's a scotch out there that would be a perfect match.

Gruyere Cheese and Glendronach 12, 750 ml \$49.99

Sweets and Scotch:

With many scotches having an underlying sweetness, often imparted from being aged in sherry casks, there are numerous options in regards to pairing scotch with your favourite desert or sweet. Why not try some milk chocolate with fruit and nuts with well balanced, 12 year old single malt from the highlands. The nutty sweetness found in many of these single malts pairs perfectly with the familiar flavour found in the chocolate. Why not even try some salt water taffy with bold Islay malt. You may find that the sweetness in the taffy mellows some of characteristic medicinal flavours.

Saltwater Taffy and Laphroaig Quarter Cask, 750 ml \$69.99

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