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By ROGER BULL, The Times–Union

Wine and cheese. The pairing is a natural, of course.

But to help match just the right wine with the right cheese, we asked half a dozen local experts to suggest pairings. One wine with one cheese.

If you can't find the exact wine or cheese, or are looking for something less expensive (these experts have pretty rich tastes), you can substitute another one of the same style. Another Cabernet or another blue.

But Allan DeVault, general manager of Biscottis and bb's, suggests keeping the two from the same part of the world.

"Regional wine and food pairings in the Old World are not mere coincidence – think of Albarino and the seafood from the northwest shores of Spain, Sangiovese and the tomato–based dishes of Tuscany," he said.

So he picked a Sauvignon Blanc and a goat cheese from California. If you'd prefer a French white, go for a **French cheese**.

Some of the pairings are best before dinner, even out on the deck in the afternoon. But hurry before it gets too hot. Others are for during dinner or even dessert.

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Jeff Warne executive chef, THE Wine Cellar

The wine: 2004 Nozzole Chianti Classico Riserva from the best known of the Chianti regions in Tuscany.

The cheese: Spanish Drunken Goat, which has been aged in wine and has an edible purple rind.

Together: The cheese has a buttery texture and a semi–sharp bite. The wine also has a smooth texture, but its earthiness levels out the natural bite of goat cheese.

Serve it: Right before dinner with the cheese on ciabatta bread or flatbread crackers.

Noelle MacDougall certified sommelier at The Grape

The wine: Belle Glos Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast, a lighter bodied and brightly fruity Pinot.

The cheese: Wensleydale with cranberries, a cow's milk cheese from England.

Together: The fruit in the Pinot brings out the cranberries in the cheese, and the sweetness of the cheese allows the fruit in the wine to come through.

Serve it: In the English style, after dinner. The texture and fruit in the cheese is almost cheesecake–like. Other fruits, such as figs, can be added for a more complex dessert.

Allan DeVault general manager and wine buyer, Biscottis and bb's

The wine: Crazy Legs Sauvignon Blanc 2006 Russian River.

The cheese: California goat cheese such as Cypress Grove.

Together: The crispness and acidity of the wine balance the creaminess of the cheese, and both are a little herbaceous.

Serve it: Afternoon on the patio or a light snack anytime during the day, with the cheese on a baguette or light cracker, such as a Bremner Wafer.

Nathan Asaro certified sommelier, The Grotto

The wine: Vintage champagne, 1996 Duval–Leroy Brut, for example, which has a rich bouquet of baked bread.

The cheese: Five–year aged Gouda, much harder and nuttier than non–aged.

Together: Both are rich, strong flavors that could be overwhelmed by lesser partners. Together, they complement each other.

Serve it: It's too intense for an appetizer. Have it after dinner, even as a dessert.

Michael McMillan executive chef at Opus 39 and the Tasting Room in St. Augustine

The wine: Truchard Cabernet Sauvignon, from the Carneros region of California, which is the southern end of Napa and Sonoma.

The cheese: Blue cheese from Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese in California.

Together: The fruit and particularly the tannic structure of the wine cleanses the palate of the cheese's creaminess. The protein in the cheese mellows the tannin.

Serve it: There's too much fat in the cheese to serve it before dinner, so have it afterward, even for dessert.

Liz Grenamyer caterer

The wine: Michael Redde Sancerre, a French white.

The cheese: Goat cheese. She likes one made by Sweetgrass Dairy in Thomasville, Ga., that is particularly creamy and mild.

Together: The crispness of the white, with a slight mineral and lemony taste, cuts through the creaminess of the cheese.

Serve it: You can roll the cheese in a little bit of rosemary and lemon zest, but don't overdue it. Serve it on a crisp baguette before dinner or even out on the patio in the afternoon.

Where to buy them

The wines and cheeses are available at a variety of stores around town. Here are a few places we know for sure, with the average price:

The wine

Nozzole Chianti Classico Riserva: \$23, Total Wine.

1996 Duval–Leroy Brut: \$39, The Grotto.

Crazy Legs Sauvignon Blanc: \$18, The Grotto, Riverside Liquors.

Belle Glos Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast: \$25, Total Wine.

Michael Redde Sancerre: \$23, may need to be ordered from a wine shop.

Truchard Cabernet Sauvignon: about \$35, may need to be ordered from a wine shop.

The cheese

Point Reyes Farmstead Blue: Fresh Market, Native Sun, Bottega di Bella Sera.

Wensleydale with cranberries: Fresh Market.

Spanish Drunken Goat: Fresh Market, Bottega di Bella Sera.

Sweet Grass Dairy: Bottega di Bella Sera.

Aged Gouda: Should be just about anyplace that sells cheese.

Inside: Don't miss three more wine and cheese pairings suggested by our experts.

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Highlights: French cheese