

## WINE

### Sugar and spice and all things nice



Most people describe Mexican food as “hot” and it’s true – there’s usually plenty of spiciness. But thankfully there’s also usually a good dollop of creamy coolness to bring some balance to your plate.

When you’re choosing a wine to go with Mexican food, you need to look for balance, too. Generally, it’s best to go with a softer, fruitier wine that won’t compete with the bold and lively flavours of the food.

Chocolate sauce on a steak seems like a strange combination but if done carefully and with good quality chocolate, it gives the meat a delicious sweet edge. The best wine to pair with this dish is one with similar flavour notes and lots of structure to handle the meat. Try the **De Krans Touriga Nacional 2013** (R85), made using a Portuguese grape variety known for its violet aromas and hints of dark chocolate. Smooth and ripe, it should partner the rich sauce to perfection.

Chipotle sauce is all the rage at the moment, with its chilli heat and smoky flavour. An equally smoky, spicy shiraz like the **Grande Provence Shiraz 2010** (R140) should pair really nicely. It’s a bit more expensive, but you’re paying for quality: 2010 was a good year for this wine, with its ripe black fruit and oak notes.

Mexicans are fond of using limes in their cooking. (And in their drinks – tequila time!) If you’re also cooking with limes, you need a wine with a high acidity otherwise the food can make the wine taste sweet. The grapes used to make the **Pierneef La Motte Sauvignon Blanc 2014** (R120) come from the cool Overberg coast around Elim and Napier, which gives the wine a bouncy, fresh acidity that will stand up well to the zingiest salsa. Tuck in!

– Cathy Marston