

## Ask A Somm: Which Wines Pair Best With Pizza?

by Kat Odell Aug 4, 2016, 12:32p @kat\_odell



Welcome to *Ask a Somm*, a column in which experts from across the country answer questions about wine.

Considered one of San Francisco's [essential restaurants \[0\]](#), [Tony's Pizza Napoletana \[1\]](#) is a multi-faceted pizza operation that fires up myriad of pie styles, from Detroit to Sicilian to coal-fired. With its wide range of pizzas and toppings, wine director **Juli Gregg** pairs mostly Italian and California-sourced juice, much of which is based on the tomato-friendly sangiovese grape. Below, she offers up a few suggestions on how to pair wine with pizza.

**Q:** *What kind of wine best pairs with pizza?*

**Gregg:** To Italians, wine and food go hand in hand. One of the most iconic Italian family dishes is pizza. So, pairing pizza and wine should be easy, right? Or maybe there is more to it. I work with *the* pizza maker, Tony Gemignani at Tony's Pizza Napoletana. Tony's is truly the fine dining of pizza due to the quality of products we use, make, and put out. With seven different ovens and nine different kinds of dough, here, wine pairings becomes a little more challenging. The wine list at Tony's is about 75 percent Italian, with the rest California, not to ignore our backyard in Napa and Sonoma. I personally love the quality and value you get from Italian wines, plus the amount of varietals makes it fun to explore different regions.

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So, what is there to consider when pairing wine and pizza? Well, let's start with the basics. Dough — is it a thin crust or a thick crust? Is there charcoaling? Next, sauce — is it a delicate hand crushed tomato sauce? Is it a hearty tomato sauce? Pesto? No sauce at all? Just a white pie? Consider then the cheese or cheeses that are used — just mozzarella? Burrata? Goat? Lastly, are there meat toppings? Prosciutto or pepperoni? Sausage? What kind? All these are the key elements to look at when pairing wine with your pizza.

An easy hack to figure out pairings is to look at the ingredients and consider what region of Italy the toppings represent. For example, we have a pizza called the Tartufo. It is a white pie with delicate cheeses, prosciutto, arugula, and finished with truffle oil. These ingredients all are very northern Italian, especially Piemontese. One of my favorite northern Italian varietals is Barbera. Barbera pairs with almost everything. It is a medium-bodied, fruity varietal that has enough acid and body to pair with almost any dish. A Barbera I love to pair with this pizza is the **Marchesi di Barolo, Barbera d'Alba, Ruvei (\$16 [2])**. This single vineyard Barbera is a smooth, easy drinker that pairs perfectly with the ingredients of the Tartufo pizza, or any pizza with somewhat similar ingredients. Barbera is a great varietal to get non-Italian wine drinkers over to the Italian side with easy, smooth tannins, good fruit, and medium body.