

Alfresco, a wine that curries favour

<http://www.examiner.com.au/news/local/news/entertainment/alfresco-a-wine-that-curries-favour/1948115.aspx>

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22 Sep, 2010 01:00 AM



ANY word association game would soon draw a "food" response if "wine" was the prompt.

Both are broad areas with great diversity and it is not always that simple.

Sometimes it just does not work. One of the most difficult match-ups is the hotter, spicier dishes. Curries in particular can lead to disaster, with wines becoming unrecognisable.

Given Australians' great love for Indian food in restaurants, at home and from takeaways, winemakers have in recent times paid considerable attention to, or promoted, wines that they consider suitable for this dining form.

There has been a fair cross-section of wines put forward. These have included gewurztraminer, grenache, sparkling reds and even verdelho. All, made in certain styles, have been suggested in this column over the years and have worked to some degree with mild to medium curries.

Talented Derwent Valley winemaker Stefano Lubiana has put one of his wines forward as a curry contender and it may come as a surprise. His suggestion is the 2009 Stefano Lubiana Alfresco Riesling. The Alfresco has been jointly released with the straight self-titled 2009 Stefano Lubiana riesling.

Most people think of rieslings as being delicate and ideal for drinking purely for refreshment without food. That means it is largely seen as a summer variety.

Mr Lubiana, however, does not see it that way.

"Riesling is a great food wine at any time of the year," Mr Lubiana said.

"Our classically dry style always works well with Tasmanian seafoods, and is also a great match for onion tarts, pates and the hearty terrines we often enjoy during winter.

"Similarly, our off-dry Alfresco is a terrific wine to take the sting out of the tail of spicy Indian curries and many of those chilli-accented food courses that can be difficult to match at the dinner table.

"Its slightly spritz (light bubbles) provides a refreshing finish to the wine."

Mr Lubiana has given fair descriptions of his two rieslings. Both have intense fruit flavours.

The Alfresco's citrus flavours have more cut than its sibling riesling.

There is a popular Tasmanian dish for the Alfresco that can draw on both elements of Mr Lubiana's food suggestions - curried scallops.

The toughest task is deciding which one of the Lubianas to drink.

The lead on this question has been given - it depends on the purpose.