

# PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



## September 2012 – Indian Summer

I adore Indian food, but even though I am an adventurous cook, I would rather leave the cooking of this cuisine to the professionals. Recently, I had the pleasure of dining at Mirch Indian Cuisine in the Virginia Hills shopping center in Martinez. They offer dishes from both Northern and Southern India as well as Indochinese fusion. Their food is some of the most aromatic and flavorful I have ever eaten. Indian food's strong flavors make it difficult to pair with wine, however, so here are a few suggestions for wine pairings with classic Indian dishes including creamy Chicken Tika Masala or any one of the spicy Indian curries.

The first wine style I recommend with Indian food is a medium-bodied (read: 12-13.5% alcohol), fruit forward, off-dry white wine. A little sweetness in the wine is the best way to complement dishes with a spicy heat; highly flavored foods need fruity wines to hold up to their pungent flavors. Look for wines like German Riesling and Alsatian Pinot Gris.

The second wine style I recommend is a dry, fruit forward, red wine. It should have good acidity and not be too tannic or alcoholic. Tannins and alcohol increase the perception of spice in a dish and the spice increases the perception of alcohol and tannin in the wine. Each will throw off the other's balance. Grenache based wines from Southern France would work well or lighter style Zinfandels from California.

Forgoing alcohol, the true classic drink with Indian food is Chai Tea. Chai Tea is made with milk and sugar which will cool the heat from the dishes. As you see in the recipe below, the spices in the tea are the perfect complement to the classic Masala

spice blend: cardamom, cinnamon, coriander, pepper, cumin, and clove.

So, go on. Pair Up!

*Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. [www.LaSommelier.com](http://www.LaSommelier.com)*

## Chai Tea

### INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon fennel seed  
6 green cardamom pods  
12 whole cloves  
1 cinnamon stick  
1 (1/4-inch) piece ginger root, peeled and thinly sliced  
6 black peppercorns  
7 cups water  
2 tablespoons Darjeeling tea  
4 tablespoons brown sugar  
1 cup milk

### DIRECTIONS

In a medium saucepan, combine fennel seed, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon stick, ginger root, peppercorns and water. Boil for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and steep for 10 minutes. Add the tea, bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer 5 minutes.

Strain mixture, discard spices and return the tea to the saucepan. Stir in the brown sugar and milk. Serve immediately.

Yield: 8 servings