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GOOD EATING

UNCORKED

Put down the pâté and pass the popcorn

Hoity-toity treats may be

The munchies

The "Four P's" are what Peter Marks, director of wine at Copia, the American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts in Napa, Calif., calls America's top snacks: Peanuts, popcorn, potato chips and pretzels.

Lucky for wine lovers, these snacks go as well with vino as with beer or soda pop. But what sort of wine?

The Good Eating taste panel tried the Four P's with a variety of wines, red and white, still and sparkling. Tasters picked the snack food they thought went best with each wine. The snack choices were relatively classic: Chicago's own Jay's potato chips; Planters cocktail peanuts, Rold Gold Tiny Twists pretzels and Orville Redenbacher's Tender White microwave popcorn.

This will probably come as no surprise to veteran barflies, but the cocktail peanuts won out with two of the wines, but pretzels barely made a dent in the contest, earning just one vote.



Bune photo by Bob Fila

THE WINE

THE SNACK

Perrier Jouet Champagne Grand Brut

The buttery sweetness of the popcorn

Popcorn

2004 French Rabbit Chardonnay

The funky depth provided by the peanuts helped fatten up this French white's thin, herbal character. \$11 (1 liter tetra-pak)

Peanuts

herbal character. \$11 (1 liter tetra-pak)

2004 Georges DuBoeuf Chenas

This Beaujolais was a light sipper with plenty of summer cherry flavor. Again, the richness of the peanuts helped bolster the wine. \$14

Peanuts

2003 Wild Horse Zinfandel Paso Robles

Everyone's favorite on its own, this peppery, smoky zin needed little help from the snacks. Some thought the popcorn provided a mellow match while others thought the potato chips worked best. \$15

Popcorn and potato chips

—B.D.

Sources: We found these wines at Sam's Wines & Spirits, Binny's Beverage Depot stores, Treasure Island Foods, The Wine Cellar in Palatine, Cabernet & Co. in Glen Ellyn, Antioch Fine Wines & Spirits. Not every wine may be in stock at your local stores; prices may vary from store to store. Prices are rounded off.

including pizza.

"It cleanses the palate, so the last bit of pizza is as dynamic as the first," Owings said. There is

Of course, the shock value of sparkling wine paired with snack foods can't be overlooked, especially when it comes to so-

cial situations. Something unexpected always livens things up.

about a sparkling mix of fruit, acidity and fat helps cleanse the palate. The last nibble is as dynamic as the first, Owings said. "It likes sparkling wine

Alixé Lischett of Copia in Glen Ellyn. He tried Perrier Jouet Champagne Brut with popcorn and potato chips. "The crispness of the Champagne plays well with the richness of the barbecue sauce," he said.

ing fried is particularly good to anything bubbly, he said. "The bubbles to Duncan. The bubbles that butter sensa-

cial situations. Something unexpected always livens things up.

"There's this cultural bias, hard to overcome, that says wine, Champagne in particular, needs something nice to go with it," Owings said. "Snack food is a great angle, people should consider it."

Not that lively is always a good thing. Ellis' animal crackers idea did not sit well with the representative from Rex Hill, a winery known for pinot noir, at a tasting seminar.

"The winery rep felt they would make the pinot taste too bitter because they do have a lot of sugar in them and asked us not to serve them," Ellis recalled. "But, I still feel it is a pretty nice match. They remind me of the cracker/cookie that is

often served in tasting rooms in California."

Liang thinks a wine that gets into the informal spirit of most snack foods is a good choice. "Something in a jug," like Three Thieves zinfandel, would be "fun" with Cheetos, she said.

Schaefer's routinely pairs wine with snacks at the Skokie store's weekly tastings, said wine consultant Barbara Rooks. The "snack" tends to be more along the lines of a store-made artichoke dip (works great with sauvignon blanc, she reports, because the dip contains so much Parmesan cheese) rather than junk food.

But Rooks admits to a weakness for salt and pepper flavored potato chips. These chips "pair up pretty darn well with a smooth Aussie shiraz, some-