

SNOW ON WINE

"The acquisition of any knowledge is always of use to the intellect." Leonardo Da Vinci

"Spice stimulates the intellect, and both are enhanced with well chosen wine." Jeff Snow



"Food & Wine" magazine devoted the August 2018 issue to Mexico, proclaiming that the Wineries and restaurants of the Valle de Guadalupe are the World's new Napa. "Oh yeah, Mexican food!" you say — "we just drink beer or Tequila." And Gabriela Camara, chef and owner of Contramar in Mexico City, and Cale in San Francisco, agrees that with the very hottest peppers, beer is best. But, she says, "Light, fruit-forward wines pair well with the spicy and acidic Mexican food." And not to forget that with 6000 miles of coastline, seafood abounds, and for grilled or raw, Gabriela prefers "...bright, costal whites. But overall," she says, "chiles are the foundation of Mexican cuisine." We know the heat of chiles comes from capsaicin which is famously soluble in alcohol, which at low levels can "cool" the burn. But higher concentrations of alcohol may add burn, compounding the heat. So Gabriela recommends drinks based on the level of pepper heat. Sort of a sliding scale with 5 levels:

1. Mild. "A big red like a Zinfandel can actually accentuate the heat of mildly spicy dishes in a good way."
2. Hotter but not fiery. Low alcohol reds like a Beaujolais.
3. Very hot. "Bubbles of a light sparkling Cava (Spain) seem to magically lessen heat."
4. Fierce heat. "...off dry German Riesling.", or Jeff's personal favorite Gewürztraminer from Alsace, France.
5. The HOTTEST. "Melt your face heat levels, give up on wine and go for beer. Your life will better. Seriously."