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Investigating key elements leading to food and beverage pairing: A methodological approach

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Abstract: During a meal, the dish is rarely consumed alone. It is generally served with a beverage. However, all dishes don't go well with all beverages. The choice of the proper products to pair is therefore necessary to be sure the meal experience be pleasant. Catering professionals and producers usually face this situation to satisfy their customers and to enhance their products' sales, but how do they to know which products can be matched together or not?
In order to better understand how the experts, do to pair food and beverage and give their recommendation, to bringing out the key elements which could lead to a good or bad pairing and to compare the results for two beverage's type such as wine and beer, individual semi directive interviews were realized with twenty Sommeliers and Beer experts. These interviews were composed of three parts. During the first part, different dishes were presented to each participant as a leaflet. On the basis of these documents, several questions about the association of these dishes with beverage were asked. The second part was almost the same than the first one except that the presented leaflet represented different beverages (wines and beers). The participants were questioned about these beverages' pairing with dishes. They were asked also to give us some details on their personal experience.
This study was the first part of a PhD project on the association between beers and meals from the perception to the consumers' judgement in real eating and drinking situation. The obtained results allowed therefore to emphasize some unclear points regarding the key elements leading to a good or a bad food and beverage pairing and to give some directions for future studies.

Keywords: Food, beverage, pairing, experts, wine, beer

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