

### Wines in the City: Stephen Barrett picks wines to go with spicy food

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Plymouth wine writer Stephen Barrett

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#### I guess some of you will be indulging in some 'hot and spicy' Indian food over the Valentine's weekend?

You may also know tandoori chicken is officially the most popular dish in the UK! But what wine goes with spicy food and are you adventurous enough to try some different ones to match?

Many of us are content to stick with what we like, maybe a neutral beer or wine that, when matched with spicy dishes, becomes simply a vehicle to wash down the 'fodder'. If that's you then look away as the next few hundred words will not make much sense! If however you wish to experiment a tad keep on reading!

By ordering your favourite takeaway you can also search the wine shelves to match the power/spice of your chosen dish.

So a creamy - **Korma** - styled dish would be lovely with a richer wine not unlike a **Cava** or **Chardonnay**. Both would have enough flavour to be a lovely match. Red wine might not be as harmonious to match the creaminess from the luscious Korma.

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Onto the fabled **Tandoori** style dishes that are more user friendly with wine. Lighter whites erring towards **Chenin Blanc**, **Torrantes**, **Viognier** or even a **Sauvignon Blanc blend** would be OK as the acidity of the wine will balance with the tandoori spice and scent. Lighter reds too will be ok too with **Beaujolais** and **Romanian Pinot Noir** heading the pack. Try serving the Reds cool!

The mighty **Madras** is next and with this a more powerful **Shiraz (Syrah)**, **Cabernet** or **Zinfandel** would fit the bill. The stronger the wine the better for this macho combination works!

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By now you are probably in the zone with wines to suit full-on flavours and moreish dishes a treat. But what about wines from the Indian continent? You might just have heard of them? I have recently tasted a trio of wines from the Soul Tree label to great acclaim.

It seems that international grape varieties are de rigueur even in India ensuring recognition and safety when producing wine. It would be quite a feat to create an indigenous Indian grape/wine that might suit the current market so it's rather back to the future with Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz Cabernet currently available.

Planted over the last twenty years these international varietals are considered the future. The wines of Soul Tree come from the district known as Nasik situated in the Maharashtra province with Mumbai to the west at approx 165 kilometres and the open seaway to the world. The climate and soils are based on "southern hemisphere tropical" so selecting soils to propagate grape vines needs a special set of rules and understanding. Quality wines are coming out of Nasik and have recently won an award at the prestigious International Wine Challenge.

So tasting the **Soul Tree Sauvignon Blanc 2015 (the Bronze medal winner)** @ **£8.99** will certainly please lovers of the said grape and style as this wine is balanced and delivers leafy fruit characteristics and good acidity.

**Shiraz/ Cabernet Sauvignon 2015 @ £10.99** is well constructed while purporting a red and black fruit note with a cheery spicy finish. Lastly the **Cabernet Sauvignon from 2015 @ £8.99** is a well-made single varietal showing a black fruit, light tannins and charming raisin spice toward the end of the taste. I felt both reds needed another 6 - 12 months in bottle to show their mettle. But all in all here is sound winemaking that is definitely food friendly. Purchase via mail order on [www.soutreewine.co.uk](http://www.soutreewine.co.uk) and try with your favourite spicy Indian food.

Stephen Barrett is a Wine, Travel and Food Writer based in Plymouth. Stephen welcomes correspondence via his website [www.stephenbarrett.com](http://www.stephenbarrett.com) Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter @BistroWineMan

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