



PHOTOS: STEPHANIE AUGELLO

MUNCHIES
FOOD BY VICE

We Had Maynard James Keenan Judge Pairings of His Wines with Food and Music

Regarding the food and music pairings, Keenan warned: "If there's Creed on this playlist, I'm fucking cutting you."

EF By [Ethan Fixell](#)

December 21, 2018, 3:30pm [f](#) [t](#) [s](#)

Dressed elegantly in a suit alongside his longtime manager and friend, Dino Paredes, the frontman of platinum-selling bands Tool, A Perfect Circle, and Puscifer sits at a table in Manhatta—one of New York City's newest fine-dining restaurants, opened this fall by Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group—as a winemaker, not a rock star, recounting a story about legendary Brunello producer Gianfranco Soldera.

“The first thing he'll show you is his wife's vegetable and flower garden,” Keenan begins. “And if [Soldera] catches you staring over at the tasting room trying to find that bottle you want to add to your collection... the fucking tour is over. Because you didn't recognize what made his wines unique: These flowers; these bugs; these vegetables...[they're] what elevates the Sangiovese to be different from any in this area. He's not gonna tell you that out loud; he's gonna watch to see if you're paying attention.”

Likewise, Keenan doesn't need to talk about his music —over the course of three decades, he's already said all there is to say. He'd much rather talk about wine; after all, the passion, depth, and attention to detail that made him such a successful musician can be found in the juice he lovingly produces at Caduceus Cellars in Jerome, Arizona. And yet, while sommeliers and critics alike recognize the potential of his land's terroir and skills as a farmer, the music legend is still at the relative dawn of his winemaking career, even after bottling over a dozen vintages.

Music

Digging up the Past With Maynard James Keenan

JONATHAN DICK

02.25.17

Food

Sommeliers and DJs Have More in Common Than You Thought

AARON JOLLEY

05.04.15

“I feel like we're still ten years out of gaining people's trust in what we're doing here,” Keenan says of his wine. “Everyone is still convinced that I'm selling this off of Tool. They're convinced somebody else is in the cellar doing it. I challenge you to find a tour date between August first and October 15th. Good luck.”



in the same category with [Bon Jovi, who has a rosé brand] is infuriating,” he says. “No offense to him or Drew fucking Barrymore—get out of the way!” He likens those who slap their names on someone else’s liquid for a money grab to guitarists uninterested in performing or recording their own parts.

Keenan also faces resistance because his wines are subtle. They are not mainstream crowd-pleasers, but beautiful, complex, and restrained—like the inversion of his deceptively heavy music, hiding great power behind seemingly delicate façades. They require careful attention.

Which is perhaps what brings him to New York’s downtown restaurant Manhatta, where two Master Sommeliers have built a musical meal around his wines. To help us all get a better understanding of Keenan’s work, Chef Jason Pfeifer and John Ragan—Wine Director for Danny Meyer’s Union Square Hospitality Group in New York City—have paired unique dishes with five of Caduceus Cellars’ cuvees. Meanwhile, Andy Myers—Wine Director for José Andrés’ ThinkFoodGroup in Washington DC, and a well-versed metalhead and musician himself—has curated a soundtrack for each course. Best of all, Keenan will have the chance to play critic for once in his over-scrutinized life, giving feedback on every pairing.

“If there's Creed on this playlist, I'm fucking cutting you,” Keenan warns Myers. “I will bleed you out.”

And with that, we dive in to find out just how closely these somms are paying attention—and went into some interesting anecdotes during our between-course interludes.

THE WINE: 2017 Caduceus Lei Li Nebbiolo Rosé

THE DISH: *Fried Chicken with Hot Sauce*

John Ragan: “With certain dishes that you might drink a beer or cocktail with, you can sub in rosé with a good amount of fruit. The sauce of the dish is kind of like a hot honey. It's got a sweet and sour spiciness, and I love this with the rosé because it has a certain cooling aspect to it. The heat on that sauce by itself might be a little bit much, but the rosé tempers it well, and the spiciness brings out even more of the fruit in the rosé.”



THE SONG: "Fireball (I Wish I Was a Spaceman)," by Barry Gray

Andy Myers: "Look, the wine is lovely and quite well made, but it's still rosé. Loosen up. This song is the end credit theme to a goofy early-60s sci-fi marionette show called *Fireball XL5*. Like rosé, this song always makes me smile and do that silly little dance I do when no one is looking."

Maynard James Keenan: “That little bit of spice? Absolutely. My friend actually did a Thai spice dish with the 2013 version of this rosé, almost like a papaya salad. The rosé was still alive and vibrant and paired perfectly with those spices; it was a pleasant surprise.... I think that song went perfectly with the nature of this rosé. My wife is an absolute bat-shit redneck, in a great way. She's super fun, and this wine is named after her; it pairs as perfectly with her as it does with this wine.”

ADVERTISEMENT

INTERLUDE

Keenan: “When grapes come in, we have our pH and Brix levels on a whiteboard, but on the far right, we have our playlists. Sometimes I look back at notes and go, ‘We were playing PJ Harvey [last year], let's put PJ Harvey on again.’ I'm really inspired in the cellar by things that have that darker overtone. So I'll listen to Low, PJ Harvey, Gillian Welch...because there's so much space in those songs, I get things done. When I have Metallica or Slayer on, the predominant thing in face is the song, so I don't work as well with that music playing.”

THE WINE: 2014 Caduceus Primer Paso

THE DISH: *Duck Confit with Cassoulet, Bacon, Watercress*

Ragan: “Syrah in the New World has always been a little bit of a tricky thing. Either people treat it like Cabernet, which is just a disaster, or they try to emulate a Crozes-Hermitage style and they pick way too early. I was really impressed with this because it comes across as being proudly New World, but with an incredible amount of funk and gaminess.... You actually get a little mintiness with the duck.”



THE SONG: “Peaches En Regalia,” by Frank Zappa

Roth with a fever, sleeping on your couch. The wine was all fruit and exuberance at first, and then got down and dirty, funky and a bit raw. Zappa made so much sense. This beast of a song is tightly focused, and yet still maintains a playful lilt. I thought it really captured the two-sided nature of the wine.”

ADVERTISEMENT



THE VERDICT:

Keenan: “This dish is fantastic. I’m going to need all of this to go.... While Andy was describing what was happening in the glass, the first song that came to mind for me was Captain Beefheart's ‘Click Clack,’ because it starts

COURSE THREE

THE WINE: 2014 Caduceus Nagual de la Naga, Sangiovese Blend, Cochise County

THE DISH: *Crescent Duck with Broccolini, Orange, Spaghetti Squash*

Ragan: “I really love Sangiovese’s tart, orange rind, kind of bitter sort of thing. Obviously, Sangiovese is high-acid, too; no matter how much Cabernet you put in there, that wine is going to show acid. So I thought a bittersweet orange, gamey, funky dish would be a lot of fun.”



Myers: “Blood, copper, and iron: This wine tastes like loss and regret; like sucking a penny with a split lip. It has great precision and focus, but still comes off a bit unhinged emotionally. Kind of like The Jesus Lizard. They’re one of the tightest bands I know; I reel between awestruck and terrified when watching them. I really wanted a song that was focused, knew where it was headed, yet still provided that sense of unease that I got from this wine.”

THE VERDICT:

Keenan: “The gaminess of this dish went perfectly with the wine’s structure, and the cherry skins.... I don't agree that this song goes with this wine, [but] I'm just super fucking happy that it's playing right now. Love, love, love the Jesus Lizard.... Then again, there's a kiss of Brett in here; that's the [Jesus Lizard vocalist] David Yow. There's the danger. Too much, all of a sudden you go way the fuck off the rails. But a kiss of Brett in the right balance, you can kiss the danger and not leave a mark.”

[Health](#)

I Tried a 70s Diet Where I Only Ate Eggs and White Wine for Three Days

ALEKSANDRA
BLISZCZYK

09.30.18

[Food](#)

Ragan: “Nobody’s ever made a great record that didn't take a hell of a lot of chances. Do you feel like it's the same making wine?”

**Isn't as hard
as it sounds**

ASHLEY RAGOVIN

06.25.16

Keenan: “Yeah. In a way, you have to trust your instincts in the cellar, just like you have to trust your instincts in the studio. But you still have to retrace your steps to have some success and sustainability with that process... I love AC/DC, but those albums are pretty much the same fucking albums. And that's fine for them. I will listen to that band. I'm not interested in *being* that band.”

COURSE FOUR

THE WINE: 2015 Caduceus Nagual del Judith, Nebbiolo, Yavapai County

THE DISH: *Wagyu Coulette with Potato Aligot, Brussels Sprouts, Mushrooms*

Ragan: “This is a pretty hedonistic dish. Nebbiolo is the exact opposite: it's all acid. [Winemaker] Dan Petroski says that any great Barolo is a wreck by the numbers [pH, acid, etc.]...but then you taste it and it's one of the most magical wines of your life. So Nebbiolo is almost like, not a complete thing. I think this dish is almost as incomplete, because it's just rich on rich; earthy on earthy. Hopefully, together, they make sense.



THE SONG: *“Pink Turns to Blue,”* by Hüsker Dü

Myers: “This wine is a buzzsaw with grace; it’s generous, but has a nervous child hiding in the closet. It’s really treble-heavy with wonderful, manic energy. Every song I considered was Hüsker Dü just because Bob Mould’s guitar tone was so cutting back then, and I really wanted to capture how the high-toned fruit and acid make this wine shimmer and shake. I also love the sweet, jangle pop of the vocals; it reminds me of the happy fruit in the wine.

THE VERDICT:

Keenan: “I saw Hüsker Dü play in Fort Wayne, Texas when I was stationed there in 1985. And I think I sold the drummer some fake crank. It was actually just NoDoz in a plastic bag. And he gave me the thumbs up... I

INTERLUDE

Keenan: “I used to eat out like this...when I could recover more easily. I found that I can't do that [now]. I played sports in high school, so there's an ‘eye on the ball’ aspect to everything I do. The ball for me tomorrow is the [A Perfect Circle] show [at MSG]. I have some jiu jitsu tomorrow, but even that's secondary because it warms up my body for the show. So as soon as we're done with this, I'm going back to the hotel, there's a bathtub, and I'm going to watch a couple episodes of *Ozark*. ...And by *Ozark*, I mean *Sex and the City*.”

COURSE FIVE

THE WINE: 2015 Caduceus Nagual del Judith, Tempranillo, Yavapai County

THE DISH: *French Onion Burger with Gruyère, Caramelized Onion Jus, Cornichons*

Ragan: “Tempranillo, in my mind is like, meat, herbs, and onions. So this remoulade has the herbal thing going on—the green, a dilly, parsley kind of thing. So many onions go into making just one of these because it's all stewed down, and then you've got the Wagyu meat that's kind of luscious, but at the same time, kind of funky.”



THE SONG: *“Is That All There Is?”*, by Peggy Lee

the ride home that its date will never talk to it again. Peggy Lee's voice is worn like old velvet: still lovely, but aged. The juxtaposition of fun fruit with depressing emotions worked beautifully with this song; Peggy's sad monologues mixed with a Parisian circus/bistro chorus arranged by Randy Newman. This might be my favorite pairing of them all."

THE VERDICT:

Keenan: "This sandwich is incredible. It's not really what I'm supposed to be eating today because I kind of burned the candle at three ends last night... I see it and go, 'I want that,' but I know if I put that all in me, it's gonna be a rough night."

Myers: "God, if I had a dollar for every time I've said that..."

Keenan: "Hey, you know, got to pay the rent.... There's a nostalgia to that song for me because [Cleveland late-night hosts] Big Chuck and Lil' John would show a monster movie on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings. The show was very much an inspiration for Puscifer because of the little sketches in between, and ['Is That All There Is?'] was the closing number. I prefer the food pairing over the song pairing, although that was the song of the night for me.... Instead, I would have gone with something that appears clunky on first listen, but then when you get more into it, you realize, 'Holy shit, there's a lot more going on with this.' I would go with Tom Waits on this because it's like, 'What's that? What's he doing? That seems dumb.' Well, why don't you fucking sit down and listen?"

OUTRO



Andy Myers goes so far as to compare Tom Waits's music to Keenan's wines, which also require you to sit down, shut up, and listen. "[In tasting] your wines, I kept coming back to using the word 'smuggler,'" Myers explains. "You're hiding great winemaking in these wines; but it takes it a minute... You have to be quiet for it to show itself."

No, Maynard James Keenan won't *ask* you to pay attention. As with his music, he'll let his wine do it for him.

Maynard James Keenan will be performing with Tool at US festivals this May, and the band will tour Europe this June. To purchase wines from Caduceus Cellars via mail order, click here.