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Chocolate and wine are an amazing duo: they bring out the best in each other. The natural tannins in cocoa prime the palate for the tannins in the wine, allowing the other flavors in the wine to shine. Here's how to maximize your tasting experience:

- 1. PREPARE:** Chocolate should be served at room temperature, and the wine at the temperature recommended for the varietal. Cleanse your palate with tepid water or a bland cracker.
- 2. TASTE THE WINE:** Swirl around to coat the side of the glass and release the aromas. Put your nose close to the glass; what scents do you detect? Now sip the wine, swirl in your mouth, and notice the various flavors. Is it fruity or dry? Acidic or flat? What notes are evident? When you're done, cleanse your palate.
- 3. SAVOR THE CHOCOLATE:** Break off a bite-size piece. Take in the aroma, identify the smells (berry? spice?) and look at its rich color. Place the chocolate in your mouth and let it slowly dissolve. What flavors do you detect? How would you describe the texture?
- 4. NOW, THE WINE AGAIN:** Swirl in your mouth so it blends with the chocolate. How have the flavors of the wine and chocolate changed? Are any of the notes in the wine more evident?
- 5. REPEAT!** Cleanse the palate between tastings.