



Selecting Wines for Thanksgiving Dinner

Pairing Wine with the traditional Thanksgiving dinner is the ultimate Wine/Food Pairing challenge. The turkey isn't the problem – roast turkey should pair well with most any wine you choose. The difficulty is pairing wine with the myriad of side dishes that accompany the meal: herbed stuffing, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes with marshmallows, and rich gravy. Trying to match wines with all of the different flavors and textures can drown many wines. A wine with plenty of fruit, and even a touch of sweetness, will match the fruit and sweetness in the meal. The wine should also have good acidity to keep the palate refreshed, and to cut through some of the richness of the meal.

Thanksgiving being an **American holiday**, we have narrowed our choices to **American Wines**.

A young, fruity **Pinot Noir** from America is an excellent choice. Pinot Noir is known as being a food-friendly wine. And, American Pinot Noir is more fruit-forward than the French counterparts. The high-acid, low-tannin Pinot, with bright cherry and cranberry flavors over rich spices will do well with all of the side dishes that the turkey requires.

Thousands of wine drinkers read the "**Tastings**" column in the weekend section of the Wall St. Journal, written by John Brecker and Dorothy Gaiter, husband and wife. In the November 11 column, John and Dorothy stated that their favorite Thanksgiving wine is an **older American Cabernet Sauvignon**. A Cabernet Sauvignon "with some age on it" has soft tannins, doesn't overwhelm the white meat, and yet stands up against the dark meat. "Its complex layers of tastes and nuances make all of the various flavors and textures on the table seem a little different and more interesting with each bite." They had a blind tasting of 50 mid-range American Cabernets priced from \$20 to \$50. Their #1 best of tasting was **Jordan Vineyard & Winery 2001 (Sonoma County)**: "*This has it all: dark rich color; dry, dense-packed fruit; real structure; and purity of taste. Very classy.*" We have 12 left at \$49.99 a bottle.

Zinfandel, an all-American wine, is another good choice for Thanksgiving. Its fruitiness along with pepper and spice help it to stand up against the strong Thanksgiving flavors. Stay away from the highest alcohol content Zinfandels because too much alcohol makes food taste bitter. Despite being maligned by many wine snobs, **White Zinfandel** is another choice for Thanksgiving. It has fruit and sweetness, but stick to the drier labels with better acidity levels.

For white wines, **Rieslings** and **Gewürztraminers** are good choices. They have excellent acidity. Many Americans prefer Chardonnays with their Thanksgiving meal, but stay away from an oaky Chardonnay, or any wine with a lot of oak. Super-dry wines can die in the presence of all of the fruit, sugar and salt in the Thanksgiving dinner. Rieslings, with their stone fruit flavors (apricot, peach, apple) work well with spice and rich sauces. The highly aromatic Gewurztraminers with hints of allspice also pair well.

Sparkling wines are very versatile. Contrary to our common perception as wines strictly for toasting or served with dessert at the end of a meal, these wines can easily serve as the primary wine for a meal. The bubbles carry the acidity, and cleanse the palate extremely well. They also have a very definite fruit component.

Above all, you don't want Thanksgiving wines to be intimidating. Bring out something comfortable for all of your family and friends. **The best way to handle the challenge is to offer an assortment of wines for your Thanksgiving table.**

See our suggested Thanksgiving Wine List.....

Or view the list online at www.belfairwinesandspirits.com