

November 12th, 2014

Circulation: 21,745 monthly online

Outlet Twitter following: 16,000 followers



Choosing Wines for Thanksgiving

By [Richard Fadeley](#)

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and no meal can be more challenging to the wine lover. You are not only confronted with a panoply of flavors but with people, young and old, who may or may not like wine, white or red. If you are in charge of the wines (which I often am), this can be a daunting task. Everyone has an opinion on what goes with turkey (lots of wines do) but it's the dressing, gravy, cranberry sauce and all the side dishes that make this big meal the Gordian knot of food and wine pairing. We used the upcoming holiday as an excuse to conduct a seasonal blind tasting and give you some ideas as to what works best with the big bird.

We prepared a traditional Turkey Day spread complete with two different dressings (cornbread and herb); gravy; and thyme-roasted sweet potatoes. We also had a green bean casserole (it wouldn't be Thanksgiving without it); a citrus salad with chopped walnuts; homemade bread; and of course, the guest of honor, grilled turkey breast. With wine glasses in hand, we diligently worked our way through 18 wines, white and red, to find out firsthand just what does go best with this annual feast.

At any special occasion, it is nice to start with a flute of sparkling wine, and since this is the most American of holidays, it would be appropriate to have something from the U.S. We have tasted several for this article, but really, domestic sparklers are easy to buy and for the most part are good values. Plan on about six flutes per bottle. You could have the sparkler with a salad or soup, if you are having one; otherwise, serve it with a welcoming toast or blessing, and you are ready to eat.

We went to work with a taste and sip, sip and taste. Some of the entries seemed to get lost amid the rich flavors bouncing across our palates, and some never had the stuffing to confront the wall of flavors coming off the table. We did find some interesting wines that had just the right dose of savoir faire to fit nicely with the food. Our overall favorites included whites, rosés and particularly reds. This is a classic example of where you want the wine to be the frame and the meal the picture. The wine will have to play background music for Aunt Sally's mac-and-cheese and be enjoyed by folks who might not have wine on a regular basis.

When we pulled off the bags (used in blind tastings), we were surprised to find some unusual names and faces among the whites. Our favorites were two rieslings and a nice Vouvray — one from Oregon and two from France — and a grüner veltliner that was an electric surprise. They really hung in there with the food and made for a complete experience. But the clear favorite for all

of us were the Beaujolais crus from Duboeuf (other cru Beaujolais would work too), not to be confused with Beaujolais nouveau (ask at the wine store to be sure). They seemed to cover all the bases. There really should not be any compromise with this meal-of-meals.

I would suggest serving both a red and a white — and a rosé as a third wine would not be out of place. Choose an off-dry (alcohol content 12-12.5 percent) white, not a late harvest or German Spatlese or Auslese, for the meal. The off-dry whites played nice with all of the spices and aromas, rolling right along with the rich sweet potatoes, and had a captivating spice and nutmeg notes. The Trimbach and Kudos rieslings were a hit that could make you look like a wine wizard and impress your guests; the Vouvray is a sure bet; and the grüner veltliner was crisp and on point, yet a touch off-dry, making it just perfect with everything.

All of our ratings compare the wines to the food and not the wine alone and you will notice that, with only a few exceptions, these wines are under \$20, most around \$15. Now you have no excuse not to serve a nice red and a white wine with your holiday meal. Let us know how your feast turns out and what your favorite wines were.

Thanksgiving Wine Review

SPARKLING

Domaine Carneros '10 Brut ★★★★★ Best White California \$24.99

Clara Brut, North Coast ★★★★★ Another Star California \$15.99

Chateau St. Michelle NV Brut ★★★★★ A Best Buy Washington \$9.99

Scharffenberger NV Brut ★★★★★ If you can't decide California \$14.99

Gruet '12 Brut Blanc de Noirs ★★★★★ Another Top Choice New Mexico \$17.99

WHITE & ROSÉ

Trimbach '11 Riesling ★★★★★ Best of the Whites France \$19.99

Toussaint '12 Vouvray ★★★★★ Another Winner France \$13.99

Skeleton '13 Grüner Veltliner (1.0 Lt) ★★★★★ Tasty & A Best Buy Austria \$12.99

Kudos '12 Riesling ★★★★★ Another Best Buy Oregon \$12.99

Bougrier '13 Rosé d'Anjou ★★★★★ Interesting Pick France \$10.99

Vignes des Prêsheurs '13 Tavel (Rosé) ★★★★★ Provencal Rosé, Nice. France \$17.99

Tariquet '13 Rosé de Pressée, C de G ★★★★★ Another Best Buy France \$11.99

Mulderbosch '11 Steen Op Hout ★★★★★ SA Chenin Blanc South Africa \$13.99

RED

Georges DuBoeuf '11 Moulin-A-Vent ★★★★★ Star of the Show France \$14.99

Deboeuf Jean Dedscombes '11 Morgon ★★★★★ Another Star France \$15.99

M. de Gramont '11 Chorey-Les-Beaune ★★★★★ Very Elegant France \$29.99

Jadot '12 Beaujolais-Villages ★★★½ Good Value Here France \$11.99

Ritual '11 Pinot Noir, Casablanca ★★★½ Another Best Buy Chile \$16.99

Our four star rating system and how it might compare to the Wine Spectator 100-point scale:

★ Good (80-83), ★★ Very Good (84-87), ★★★ Very Good/Excellent (87-89), ★★★★ Excellent (90+)

All ratings are only opinions of our tasters and not meant to offend your personal favorites.

Let us know what you think: Email food@free-times.com.