

November 27th, 2014

Circulation: 2,367 monthly online

Outlet Twitter following ([@FloridaWeekly](#)): 8,029 followers

## Solving the holiday wine puzzle



It happens every year, right at this time. We start to think about the turkeys, the cranberry sauce and everything that goes along, and the question always arises: What wine do we serve with holiday meals?

There's no easy answer, because holiday hors d'oeuvres, appetizers and dinners consist of food that are miles apart, tastewise. Maybe there's crab dip and guacamole before the meal, or shrimp cocktail. And then Thanksgiving dinner itself is a wild mélange of flavors: the spices in the stuffing, the creamy mushroom textures of that green bean casserole, sweet potatoes with extra-sweet marshmallows on top and the agreeable tartness of the cranberry sauce. To make things even more puzzling, sometimes we throw a ham or two on the table, with brown sugar, pineapple and clove.

Is wine pairing even possible?

There are two ways to approach this culinary conundrum. First, we can find a wine that goes with everything – something that is absolutely possible. Or, we can select a variety of wines that pair with individual dishes – also not impossible, but a bit more work.

So, what kind of wine would go with just about every dish? The answer is sparkling white. Either a champagne or a sparkler made in what is known as the méthode champenoise, or traditionnelle. Basically, there are three ways to get bubbles into a liquid: We can just inject carbon dioxide (which is the way soft drinks are made); we can put the fermenting grapes in an airtight vat, so when fermentation releases the CO<sub>2</sub>, it goes back into the juice and carbonation occurs; or – and this is the most expensive way, the way champagne way – we can have the secondary fermentation take place in the bottle. The third way is a multi-stage process, and quite laborious, but the results are worth it.



Dom Chandon COURTESY PHOTO



| Marqués de Riscal Verdejo Rueda 2013 – This luscious white grape from Northern Spain doesn't get enough attention. The wine it

So once choice to accompany holiday feasting is either French or domestic sparkling white, and it will say "méthode traditionnelle" on the label.

The second alternative is opening a few different wines and letting your guests do their own wine-and-food pairings. At our house, we put out a lot of whites, because the flavors tend to be more subtle and don't overwhelm the food. If you go this route, you might consider some less-traditional varietals.

Chardonnay might be a bit too fruity and sauvignon blanc a tad too acidic to go with the tremendous range of flavors and textures on your holiday platter. I recommend a verdejo from northern Spain. It's kind of a cousin to pinot grigio, but with some very attractive citrus and fruit notes. A verdejo would go nicely with your pineapple-topped holiday ham.

Another interesting choice is a Greek white wine called moschofilero (that's mos-ko-FEE-lero). Even though it's a white, there are lovely aromas of red flowers as well.

Come to think of it, rosé wines would be an interesting and festive complement to almost any traditional holiday cuisine. This style has become very popular lately, combining delicate flavors with a core of acidity that keeps the heavier foods from being cloying.

All that said, here's what we'll be drinking with this year's Thanksgiving and New Year's repasts with our family and friends. yields is pale yellow in the glass with a nose of nectarine, peach and stone fruit. There's refreshing minerality and nice acidic balance.

| **Boutari Moschofilero 2011** – Floral and citrus aromas are followed by a refreshing crispness on the palate, and faint aromas of roses and violets.

| **Domaine Chandon Brut Classic NV** – The word "brut" on a champagne-style wine means very low sugar content – a dry wine. This sparkler from California offers zingy apple and white pear flavors with hints of almond and caramel. The dry finish makes an excellent palate-cleanser after those marshmallow sweet potatoes.

| **Domaine du Tariquet Rosé de Presse 2013** – This lovely rosé from Gascony, a blend of merlot, syrah and tannat, has gorgeous color in the glass and spicy notes of wild raspberry and rose petals. Unlike many rosé wines, it's very full-bodied on the palate. |

