

## Wines for Christmas Dinner and Turkey

Holiday gatherings are fast approaching and, of course, we must be well prepared in advance to avoid the traffic and the last minute pressure. The secret is planning.

Let's start with the meal. I suggest that you establish the menu in advance and prepare a list of groceries to avoid the last minute rush. Once you have settled on a menu, choose your wines and drinks that will accompany this special occasion. These can be purchased early to avoid the holiday rush in our stores. This task is easier if you know how many guests you will have. You must expect that among your guests, you will have a future mother, a person who is taking medications or simply someone who doesn't drink alcohol.

Along with your beverage alcohol, don't forget to get some non-alcoholic drinks such as vegetable juices or Clamato, some non-alcoholic beers and cocktails that are available at your local grocery store. It's also a good idea to have a few bottles of water on the table for the meal as people like to sip of water and wine during a meal.

It is very common to serve hors d'oeuvres before the meal. To simplify matching wine and food, especially where hors d'oeuvres are concerned, a dry sparkling wine is a good choice. It is the most flexible of wines to be served as an aperitif since it goes well with everything, including chips.

What follows will depend on the menu but let's talk about the turkey since it is the most common protein served during the holidays. It is rather easy to choose the appropriate wine to serve with turkey alone. However, things get complicated when we add vegetables; usually carrots and peas, stuffing that can be prepared in dozens of ways, potatoes, gravy and cranberries served as jelly or natural. The turkey plate, that is really light at the start, suddenly becomes a relatively heavy dish that needs an adjustment when it comes to the choice of wine.

What do we choose for wine? The answer is never easy since each of us has specific and different tastes. Must we choose a fine wine for this magnificent occasion? Not necessarily, unless our guests are true connoisseurs, which is rarely the case, a \$15-\$20 will be perfect. The other question is to estimate the required quantity. Again, everything depends on the age of your guests and their drinking habits. Generally, with the main course, you can estimate that one bottle will serve 4 people, which is about the equivalent of 185 ml or 6 oz. per guest.

Once the amount is established, the next question is to choose between a white or red wine. Here again, this depends on the preferences and, frankly, during a cheerful occasion, your guests are not there for a formal tasting. I would suggest a choice of red or white wine for all.

Allow me to make some suggestions that, I hope, will compliment your meal.

First for whites, a Riesling or Gewurztraminer, a white Rhône wine or a Torrontès would be appropriate without having to choose the usual Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc.

For reds, my favourite is a quality Pinot Noir followed by a Passetoutgrains, Beaujolais, especially a Cru and, finally, if you still have some Beaujolais Nouveau wine this is the perfect time to finish your bottles.

When you are hosting, it is essential that you manage to spend time with your guests. As I have mentioned, planning is essential. The secret is to prepare everything that can be prepared before your guests arrive. All you have to do then is to make the final touches.

Turkey, stuffing, vegetables and potatoes can all be prepared before your guests arrive. When everything is cooked, prepare, cover and place the dishes in the oven at about 185° F. At this temperature, the meal is ready to be served and, if the dishes are well covered, they will keep the required moisture level for several hours or until it is time to serve.

Organize things so that the prepared dishes are washed and stored to keep your counters clear. Don't forget that you will need space for hors d'oeuvres and appetizers. If you are serving beer and other cold drinks, set up an area to keep them cold until it is time to serve. You will need space in your fridge for the food.

Finally, keep things simple. Your guests will remember more the time spent in your company than the turkey or type of stuffing you served. It is the holidays, so don't wait until the last minute to purchase your wine and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. With a glass in hand, we quickly forget that the meal is not on time. Be ready for everything and plan for a little bit more than necessary so you don't run out of anything, especially if it's a day where all the stores are closed.

One final recommendation is to ensure that your guests return home safely by using Operation Red Nose, designated drivers or taxis.

Here are my wine suggestions:

When your guests arrive, especially if you are serving small bites, sparkling wines or champagnes are in order:

Segura Viudas Brut Reserva (Spain) \$15.99  
Pierre Sparr Cremant Brut 00 (France-Alsace) \$23.99  
Veuve Clicquot Brut (France-Champagne) \$63.29

For the main course:

#### White wines:

Fuzion Alta Torrontès-Pinot Grigio (Argentina) \$12.99  
Perrin La Vieille Ferme (France-Rhône) \$13.99  
Don David Torrontès (Argentina) \$ 16.99  
Cave Spring Riesling (Niagara) \$17.29  
Masi Tupungato Passo Blanco (Chenin blanc & Torrontès), (Argentina) \$18.49  
Pierre Sparr Reserve Gewurztraminer (France-Alsace) \$24.29

#### Red wines:

Duboeuf Beaujolais Fun (France-Beaujolais) \$14.49  
Mirassou Pinot Noir (California) \$ 14.99  
Sterling Vintners Collection Pinot Noir (California) \$14.99

Bourgogne Passetoutgrain (2/3 Gamay, 1/3 Pinot Noir), (France-Bourgogne) \$15.99  
Pelee Island Reserve Pinot Noir (Ontario) \$16.99  
Brouilly Georges Duboeuf (France-Beaujolais) \$20.29  
Spy Valley Pinot Noir (New Zealand) \$24.99

As mentioned, the Beaujolais Nouveau wines make perfect companions to turkey dinners. The price varies between \$14.49 and \$16.29.

If you so desire and that you want to complete your dinner with a nice little dessert wine, allow me to suggest a Concha Y Toro Late Harvest (Sauvignon, Riesling, Gewürtraminer) from Chile. It is available in 375ml bottles at a price of \$14.29. It is usually served in small port glasses that hold 60 ml or 2 oz. per person.

On this note, I wish you happy holidays, lots of good health and happiness.

In the Spirits was written by Guy Delorme, product advisor, NB Liquor, Edmundston