

Wines from Farpointe Cellar
photo by Chris Frütchie



In the Holiday Spirit

By DeAnn Daley Holcomb

THE AROMAS from your kitchen are tantalizing with the turkey and dressing cooking in the oven, pumpkin and pecan pies set out on the kitchen counter and the appetizers on the buffet table – it is a Thanksgiving holiday scene Martha Stewart would be proud of. But have you made up your mind on what you will be drinking with your merry feast? The menu won't be complete until you decide what beverages to compliment all your special foods from the Waldorf salad to sweet potato casserole and on to the main course of turkey, dressing and gravy. Here are some expert opinions to assist

with selections of wines and beers for your special dinner.

"I like a good white wine so if you are thinking turkey, you might consider a nice, buttery chardonnay like a Sonoma-Cutrer Chardonnay would be something I would suggest," said Craig Vaught, co-owner of Isabella's Italian Restaurant in Frisco. "There's no wrong answer when it comes to Thanksgiving because there are new zinfandels described as jammy and spicy like Neyer's from California, that might go well with the pairing of turkey and cranberry sauce." Mr. Vaught said he already has an idea what he plans to have

with his Thanksgiving feast beginning with what wine to pair with the appetizers.

"Thanksgiving is such a cornucopia that I would definitely set the table with more than one wine glass as a part of the table setting to allow your family and guests to experiment," Mr. Vaught said. "You are looking at having a huge array of foods so why not include several different wines? Since Thanksgiving is not so much like a formal dinner with everything on the table at once, I think it would be fun to do the same with wines."

Some wine connoisseurs say the key is understanding the tricks to the game of wine pairing and that means knowing the components in the wine, such as alcohol level, sweetness and acidity, and then complement and contrast with the basic tastes of foods like sweetness, sour, tangy and salty.

"Some wines I would consider would be a Pinot Grigio or a Vermentino. A nice California white could be a Malvasia Bianca by Palmina and I would have an Inama Soave Classico, a nice Italian wine on the table," Mr. Vaught continued. "I would put three or four wines on the table and then add a couple of dessert wines so at least two wine glasses would be needed. Separately, I would have ready dessert plates and dessert wine glasses and an after dinner liqueur, or cordial."

Mr. Vaught recommends a sherry like Osborne PX to go with your pumpkin or pecan pie.

"Some people at your table are going to enjoy white more than red but then you are going to have those guests who enjoy a good merlot like the Pine Ridge Merlot. There are several choices you have and that is what is so great about selecting and trying to please everyone. I would definitely have three or four wines on the table because that is what makes it fun," Mr. Vaught said. "You might include one more red wine to round out the list like a Banfi Brunello di Montalcino from Tuscany."

Chris Potestio, Central Market's wine business development manager



International beers at World Market North Plano

photo by Chris Fritchie

recommends you have a blueprint for your wine and beer pairing to be successful.

“Number one is to decide on your menu,” Mr. Potestio said. “What we are trying to convey at Central Market is there are many varieties that go with many different foods served during the holidays. The traditional food pairing wines might be a pinot Noir or a popular sauvignon Blanc and chardonnay that are lighter wines. Lots of people are familiar with Riesling, it is gaining popularity and a great wine pairing with turkey meals.”

Mr. Potestio adds, “As far as a traditional turkey dinner, what I like to do is serve a different wine with each course as it makes the dining experience a lot more fun. Almost like a meal, you can work your way from lightest to heaviest and that is a way to work your wines as well.”

Take the challenge out of pairing wine with your Thanksgiving feast by keeping in mind these suggestions from wine and food specialists.

When pairing wine with turkey, chicken or game, you really can’t go wrong. Consider if your turkey is prepared with a sweet or fruit-based sauce then you might want to select dry whites or the richness of a white burgundy or California-style chardonnays. If you are considering a red wine, the fruitier reds pair well with turkey and then you might work your way up to a Beaujolais, a fairly light wine for

red. The safest bet may be the pinot noir.

“Sauvignon Blanc, chardonnay, pinot noir and then some type of dessert wine to finish off a meal,” Mr. Potestio said. “If you are eating pumpkin and pecan pie you might consider a tawny port or sherry that can replicate that nutty characteristic. People often forget the port or sherry is a chance to cleanse your palate. As far as a dessert wine you can do anything. The lose rule of thumb is if you are serving a heavy dessert you might want to consider a port because it is going to have more fruit to it. The best pairings occur when the sweetness and intensity of the wine is similar to or greater than the dessert.”

BEER AS A REFRESHING CHOICE

Don’t shy away from adding beer to your tasty selections. A rule of thumb for pairing beer with food follows the basic rules of wine matching meats with red wine and white meats and fish with white wine. In beer terminology that means pairing darker beers like an ale or stout with red meats and selecting lighter beers like lagers for white meats and fish. And beer always matches well with salty foods. Ultimately, let your palate be your guide.

“Beer is really coming on and I see it being a very popular trend over this next year,” Mr. Potestio said. “You already hear about wine and food pairing and I think you are going to start hearing more about

beer and food pairing. I think as more people experiment and learn about wine they are doing the same with beer. The micro brews are slowly starting to take the place of the traditional beer.”

ADD SOME SPARKLE

Don’t forget the bubbly. Champagne or sparkling wines are always great as a starter wine and champagne works well with dessert.

“You may want to consider sparkling wines and champagne as a great way to start off the wine tasting,” Mr. Potestio said. “So often people consider

sparkling wines or champagne for only celebratory purposes but it is really great before or after a meal.”

Champagne doesn’t have to price you out of your budget. Some of the French non-vintage brut sparkling wines are very reasonable and California and Texas offer world-class sparklers.

When setting your table for your Thanksgiving dinner, don’t be afraid to step out of the traditional circle.

“You can put two wine glasses out with your water glass, a glass for red wine and a glass for white. You might as well have fun and offer different types of wine,” Mr. Potestio said.

“People spend a lot of time preparing this meal so you don’t want to serve a wine that will over shadow it or take away the taste, so don’t pair a very heavy wine that will take away all that time preparing in the kitchen,” Mr. Potestio said. “If it is a lighter meal, depending on what meat or vegetables you are serving, be cautious of some of the heavier wines.”

Holidays are a time for celebration. You can enhance this year’s celebration by carefully matching the primary taste characteristics of the wines, beers and sparkling wines to the characteristics of your Thanksgiving dinner. Enjoy!

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