



Convivial Feasts



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A HOLIDAY CHALLENGE: WINE AND THE THANKSGIVING MEAL

One of the few politically correct American holidays remaining, Thanksgiving may also be one of the most stress-free. No presents are required as right-of-entry and typically, everyone in the gathering contributes to the components of the meal. Folks tend to graze all day long, watch football and take naps. What then, can better enhance this lazy day than a good bottle, or two or three, of wine? That is, of course, shared among the large assembly of guests attending. (We presume people will enjoy their wine responsibly.)

The question of which wine to serve with the meal has challenged the best of cooks and connoisseurs. If you want one wine to carry the entire meal, Pinot Noir has tremendous versatility, offering the body, tannin, fruit, complexity and acid balance necessary.

With the variety of foods and flavors being served, another solution is to pair the wines with each course. We recommend modest pours to take your guests gently through the day, and conspicuous pitchers of water appearing in every room.

Following is a summary of both whites and reds to sample with your feast.

WHITES

Viognier

Because of Viognier's characteristic aromatic nature, serve a glass as an apéritif or to enhance your ripe, white-cheese appetizers.

Recommendation: The 2004 Jade Mountain Vineyard Viognier, whose fruit oozes out like syrup and clings to the tongue.

Sauvignon Blanc

The herbaceous quality of Sauvignon Blanc marries well with turkey and herbed stuffing.

Recommendation: The 2005 Provenance Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc, known for its zesty, fragrant flavors and racy aromas.

Gewürztraminer

The stimulating disposition offered by typical Gewürztraminers punctuates your side dishes, while its sweeter components augment desserts.

Recommendation: The 2005 Canoe Ridge Vineyard Gewürztraminer, with its affinity to spicy and salty fare, as well as its ability to complement fruit and spice flavors.

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A SIMPLE THANKSGIVING MENU

Using the accompanying guide, you, as Thanksgiving Planner Extraordinaire, might prepare a bill of faire similar to this:

Appetizer:

Gruyère or semi-soft Monterey Jack cheese on table water cracker

PAIRING: VIOGNIER

Salad:

all-veggie plate with light, creamy herbal dressing

PAIRING: SAUVIGNON BLANC

Turkey meal:

Bourbon-glazed roasted turkey (see recipe, page 7), stuffing, cranberry sauce, sweet potato pie and asparagus.

PAIRING: ZINFANDEL

Dessert:

poached pears with cinnamon

PAIRING: GEWÜRZTRAMINER

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN ORDERING THESE RECOMMENDED WINES, SEE THE WINE SECTION STARTING ON PAGE 8.

REDS

Pinot Noir

Again, Pinot Noir will harmonize agreeably with most of your offerings.

Recommendation: The 2004 Orogeny Vineyards Redding Ranch (Marin) Pinot Noir, comprising essences of coriander, cinnamon and sweet cream overtones.

Zinfandel

A bit stronger than Pinot Noir, Zinfandel manages to balance the competing flavors of your eclectic meal.

Recommendation: The 2003 Beaulieu Vineyard Napa Zinfandel, spicy and lush, but round with medium tannins and pleasant acidity.

Syrah

Similar to Zinfandel, Syrah has the power to support and enhance the wide variety of dishes on your table, especially enjoyable with the spicy stuffing and darker turkey meat.

Recommendation: The 2003 Jade Mountain Vineyard Napa Syrah fills the bill with deep, ripe fruit and dense, dark-chocolate aspects on top of an elegant, silky texture.

WINE PAIRING BASICS

The goal in creating your wine-pairing menu is to begin delicately, gradually work your way to richer dishes, and to finish lightly. The wines follow the same path: from sweet-light to fresh to full-bodied to crisp. Again, wine servings should be moderate.

Catching folks before they fall asleep, end your meal with a brisk, scenic group walk, followed by a viewing of your favorite holiday DVD.

We wish you a tranquil and sumptuous Thanksgiving holiday!

 PAULA BARKER

