

Two similarities between Christmas dinner and Thanksgiving dinner are abundantly clear. The majority of us will feast on Turkey or Roast Beef, and there will always be a debate on what wine to serve with dinner. The debate resurrects itself every year simply because we want to get it right. And why not? The holidays are a big deal into which we invest a lot of time and energy. So allow me to get my two cents worth of advice in and see if I can help you come out on top of the debate.

Some thirty years ago, I attended a wine seminar in which this very subject was discussed. The instructor (with whom I remain in contact) advised us that Turkey should be the least of our worries because just about any wine will go with that mighty bird. One very important point to remember is that Turkey is low in fat. This is why it's basted so much during cooking. Turkey meat is also medium in weight. As a result we find ourselves leaning toward a top quality California Zinfandel. A lesser quality Zinfandel will not have sufficient flavor or weight. A Beaujolais Cru would be an alternative choice. Both the Zinfandel and the Beaujolais will also match well with Grandma's mashed potatoes, her green bean casserole, and the various cranberry dishes.

Our friends who will enjoy a Roast Beef with their Christmas Dinner will also have an easy solution to the debate on what wine to serve. The red meat demands a red wine to match its flavors. The type of wine will be determined by the cut of the meat. Low-fat cuts like fillet will go well with a Cru Beaujolais or very mature Claret. A Standing Rib Roast will go well with a Red Bordeaux or a California Cabernet Sauvignon from the Alexander Valley. (Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon is very complex and strong in flavor.)

I just remembered that some folks may enjoy dinner with goose or duck. My only personal knowledge of a goose with Christmas Dinner is the one Scrooge bought for Bob Cratchet and his family. I have not heard of one since. However, if you should come across someone who is planning on having goose for dinner, please advise him or her to match the weight of the meat with a red wine or a medium-sweet, and high-in-acid white. The red should be a Burgundy and the white should be a German Riesling.

The best approach to any of the wines mentioned above is to shop. It is not necessary to break the budget. Here in the Lowcountry we have many places to shop. Availability of these wines is excellent. This time of the year is huge for Beverage Retailers, and they are ready to help with any question or selection.

Now for the item that always helps me fight the Humbug Factor: Christmas without Sparkling Wine or Champagne is bummer. The day was saved last week when I received my copy of the latest issue of Wine Spectator. This is an issue loaded with information and it is one that you will want to keep as a reference. Starting on page 111 there is a comprehensive feature on Champagnes and Sparkling Wines from four countries: The US, France, Italy, and Spain. The author of the article tried very hard to show some respect for your wallet. I believe that goal was achieved in that her price range was \$10 to \$28. If you are unable to find a copy, ask your retailer if you could browse the store copy. I am sure you will find a sparkler in this issue that will fit the budget and be a good fit for your Holiday Festivities.

A Merry Christmas to everyone. Go easy on the Egg Nog and be safe