



FOOD & DRINK

Give thanks to wine

The sheer diversity of dishes on Thanksgiving and Christmas makes choosing complementary wines difficult, but not impossible.

BY GREG HORTON

The conventional wisdom for Thanksgiving is a light red for the turkey and a Sauvignon Blanc for the rest of the meal. If you want to buy one wine, then typically you go with the white, since it goes with the turkey as well. The light red almost always ends up being a Pinot Noir, but good Pinot Noir under \$30 is rare.

That conventional wisdom isn't necessarily wrong, but if you're facing yet another Thanksgiving settling for an average Pinot Noir, or if you love red wine and don't want the Sauvignon Blanc, we have good news for you. There are options beyond the conventional wisdom.

Thanksgiving and Christmas present several difficulties when selecting the right wine because of the diversity of dishes on the table: turkey (roasted, fried or smoked), ham (glazed or smoked), vegetables, candied yams, sweet salads, vinegary salads, pies, puddings and, of course, stuffing. No one wine will go well with all these dishes. The best option is to buy two or three wines and have a different selection with each course.

Americans don't typically eat meals in courses, however, especially family meals around the holidays. Holiday meals look more like a smorgasbord, and plates look like an advertising photo for an all-you-can-eat buffet. There are simply too many tastes to match one wine well.

If you decide to buy multiple wines, there are a few that should absolutely be avoided when pairing with turkey and other traditional holiday favorites. Big reds, like Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel, do



Wines such as these Marlborough Sauvignon Blancs at Byron's Liquor Warehouse, 2322 N. Broadway, are excellent choices for main course holiday dining.

not pair well with turkey — although, they do with ham. Sweet whites, like Riesling and Gewurztraminer, are also not good choices, as you will mostly taste the alcohol in these lighter wines.

For the red lovers in the family, there are two very good Pinot Noirs available locally for just under \$30. Van Duzer and Four Graces are Oregon wineries that make good Pinot Noirs for their price. Pinot Noirs should be subtle, with light red fruit but low acid. The lower end Pinot Noirs can be thin and astringent.

Also, to clear up any confusion, French Burgundies are Pinot Noirs. Several good ones are also available locally, including selections from wineries Louis Jadot and Louis Latour.

However, Pinot Noir isn't the only

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—Robert Lawson, Pavi Wines

red option for the holidays. Beaujolais is an excellent choice, as are some Rhone-style wines. Beaujolais is a light, French red made from Gamay grapes. Look for Louis Jadot Beaujolais-Villages or Barton & Guestier Beaujolais-Villages. Both are under \$20.

Old World Rhone-style blends that

feature Syrah are also light and supple enough to work as a holiday red. What about the big Australian Shirazes, as well as some of the California Syrahs? Some of the Old World Rhones are made primarily with Grenache, so check the label before you buy a Rhone.

Sauvignon Blanc really is an excellent choice for holiday meals. The Marlborough Sauvignon Blancs from New Zealand have enough citrus notes, especially grapefruit, to cut through any sweetness in the food, but the acidity is not overpowering for poultry or ham. If the grapefruit doesn't sound appealing, try the Wildhurst Reserve Lake County Sauvignon Blanc. It's an excellent wine for less than \$20.

Robert Lawson, of Pavi Wines from Napa Valley, was in Oklahoma City recently to introduce his new Pinot Grigios, one Napa and one Italian. Both are excellent, affordable choices for Thanksgiving.

"I bought into the mentality that you should be able to have a great wine at any price point," Lawson said.

He delivers two excellent whites, a slightly sweet California-style Pinot Grigio and a drier, crisper Italian style.

In addition to his whites, Lawson also featured a Dolcetto. The light- to medium-bodied table wine is also a good choice for the red lovers, and not just for the holidays.

"I wanted to focus on Dolcetto," Lawson said, "as it's a grape I love but it doesn't get very much attention."

Pavi Dolcetto, also priced below \$20, is balanced with good red fruit and a tangy, lingering finish. **OKG**