

# U3A ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

## CHRISTMAS WINES 2020 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group members

Now that we are into another lockdown, I thought some of us may be spending some of our time preparing for Christmas, in the hope that we can be together with our families, or if not, we will still need to eat and drink ourselves, and then plan a postponed celebration with loved ones.

So with that mind, I saw an article in Decanter which I have cribbed below and thought it may give you some hints when looking for wines to serve at Christmas. Finally a few bargains to be had at the end courtesy of Aldi.

### Christmas wine and food pairing

Many people's festive dinners may look a little different this year given the economic and social impact of Covid, who knows if we can enjoy the day with family...but if you are still planning to serve the traditional Turkey for Christmas, here is some information to try and assist your decisions.

Classic styles when pairing wine with turkey would be:

Full bodied Chardonnay, eg Burgundy or California

Pinot Noir

Mature Bordeaux, Rioja or Barola

Beaujolais (Gamay)

Remember, turkey is not a powerful meat, so your wine matches should take this into account and be either a full bodied white, or medium bodied red with low or medium tannins and relatively high acidity. Too many mouth coating tannins will ruin the hours spent slaving away in the kitchen, with not much fat on the plate to soften these tannins. The saltiness of the turkey can also make tannins taste bitter. However, if your wine has had several years of ageing in the bottle, the tannins will have softened.

A Christmas dinner table is full of flavours and complexity with cranberry, bacon, stuffing, a variety of vegetables etc all vying for attention which is where a wine with medium or high levels of acidity will cope better with a myriad of flavours.

### Red wine with Turkey

Everyone has their own personal tastes, and there are so many options out there, but Pinot Noir in its various guises around the world is often seen as a great match for turkey dinners.

#### Pinot Noir

Pinot Noir from bolder Burgundy crus, such as Gevrey-Chambertin or Pommard, should work exceptionally well. If you can stretch to the Grand Cru of Chambertin then you're in for a treat, but there are also plenty of less expensive options out there. Try looking towards Fixin or Santenay, for example. Be aware, though, that some lighter styles of Burgundy Pinot, such as classic Volnay wines, may be overpowered by the range of flavours on your plate.

How about a delicious Pinot from Oregon's Willamette Valley or California's Santa Barbara County, or a Schug Pinot from Sonoma County, too.

#### Beaujolais Cru

Gamay is often underrated and it's easy to also make the mistake of thinking that all Gamay wines are lightweight. Not so, especially in those 10 Beaujolais Crus known for making wines with more power and depth, such as Morgon or Moulin-à-Vent.

#### Aged Bordeaux

Cabernet Sauvignon is obviously in a completely different universe to what we've just talked about; big tannins, big acidity and lots of luscious

dark fruit. Merlot, too, carries significant weight in its classic Bordeaux Right Bank form. Yet the delicately poised balance of fruit, acidity and integrated tannins can still work wonders with your turkey dinner, if some of those tertiary aromas from a few years of bottle age have started to develop around the edges.

Other classic reds from the bolder end of the spectrum would be aged Barolo or Chianti Classico.

Mature Rioja can also combine those lovely, earthy, mushroomy aromas with bright red fruit and medium-weight tannins. There are also plenty of relatively good value options. Be wary of choosing a wine with too much oak influence, however.

### White wine with turkey

#### Chardonnay

Sometimes ignored at Christmas lunch, a full-bodied Chardonnay can be an enchanting accompaniment to your turkey, especially with traditional sides such as bread sauce. The best examples exude oaky richness that can give sweet spice notes, while creamy lactic acid really helps out with a meat that can sometimes be on the dry side. A backbone of acidity helps to balance out the flavours. Good Chardonnays, in general, are found in the similar geographical areas to good Pinot Noir.

White Burgundy from the Côte de Beaune will work well at almost all levels. As above, those lucky enough to be able to choose a Puligny-Montrachet 1er Cru or a Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru are unlikely to be disappointed. The high levels of minerality and acidity in these wines help to cleanse the palate, allowing you to wade through all the trimmings effortlessly. The Mâconnais is an area to explore for relative value options, particularly for anyone who enjoys riper fruit notes on their Chardonnay. Domaine Serene 'Récolte' 2016 from Oregon's Dundee Hills is an example of a bolder style of Chardonnay showing dried apricot, spice and lots of concentration – but with enough acidity. Other wonderful examples can be found in Victoria in Australia, from Victoria to Adelaide Hills to Margaret River, or in California from Napa Valley to Sonoma's Russian River Valley to Santa Barbara County.

Don't overlook South African 'top-class' Chardonnay from Hamilton Russell Vineyards, or New Zealand, The Kumeu River Chardonnays made near Auckland are extraordinary wines and are capable of offering fantastic value for money.

These wines mentioned above from Decanter magazine give you an indication of the type of wine to look for, and the region. It may be that they are beyond your price level so look for similar grape, country and region and ask your wine merchant or supermarket wine manager to help you choose something similar. Ryan at Chapel Cellars in Truro, or Charles at Ellis Wharton are more than happy to recommend wines within your budget and both will deliver, depending on quantity (usually minimum 6 I think). Supermarkets at this time of the year often have a 25% discount off when buying 6 wines, and Aldi wines recently have been recommend not only by Decanter magazine, but by wine critic Jilly Gooden....

After tasting Aldi's Veuve Monsigny Champagne Brut with her expert palette (an 18-year stint on top BBC TV show *Food and Drink* doesn't teach you nothing), Jilly valued the bubbly tipple at £25 – nearly double its actual price tag of £12.99. The bottle also scored extremely well in Good Housekeeping's annual Christmas taste test, coming second only to a £23.99 Waitrose bottle and beating many other higher priced champagnes to nab the runner-up spot. As well as the Aldi champagne, Jilly consistently valued every bottle in the supermarket's seasonal wine offering at either the same or (more often) higher than its current retail price: the Specially Selected Mâcon Villages came in at 33 per cent higher (£9.99 versus its actual retail price of £7.49), while she rated the Specially Selected Chilean Gran Reserva Pinot Noir at £10.99, when its real price tag is just £6.99.

So there are some wines out there for your Christmas at all price ranges. Hope this has helped, and happy shopping.  
Amanda