



HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

WITH WINE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BY RYAN GREENE

With the holidays approaching, so are the holiday parties. An essential item in planning any holiday party is the wine. With such a vast array of options available, there are some simple guidelines to follow to liven up any party with the right selection of wine.

Variety is key, as everyone has different tastes, so it is recommended to have at least two types of wine – a red and white. Additionally, it is always celebratory to include a sparkling wine, such as Champagne, Spanish Cava, or Italian Prosecco. Sparkling wines are also versatile, pairing extremely well with a wide variety of foods.

If you prefer a still white wine to a sparkling, two of the most popular and well known are Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. While both are considered dry (i.e. not sweet) white wines, they differ considerably. Chardonnay is a full-bodied white wine that has flavors of apple, lemon, lime, pineapple, butter, and vanilla. Most are familiar with the bolder California Chardonnays, with their full-bodied buttery character. However, you may also consider a French Burgundy, which includes the well-priced Chablis wines, known for their lively, mineral character. These French counterparts are considered to be a bit more reserved, with less oak influence.

Sauvignon Blanc is a medium-bodied white wine known for being crisp and refreshing on the palate. Flavors range from green melon, passion fruit, grapefruit, and even herbal aromas such as fresh cut grass. Sauvignon Blancs

from New Zealand are consistent in quality and are very reasonably priced. Other options include the Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé from the Loire Valley in France and others from Washington and California (also known as Fumé Blanc).

Choosing a red wine can be a bit trickier, due to wide variety in styles. While there is definitely a time and a place for a bold, complex wine such as a Cabernet Sauvignon, this may not be the best choice for a party, as they often heavier and can be more difficult to pair with certain foods.

A better choice is Pinot Noir, due to its lighter style and food-friendliness. Many consider it to be the most versatile of all of the red wines, integrating well with both fish and red meat. Pinot Noir also has softer tannins, making it seem more delicate and fresh with a good level of acidity. Aromas can be fruity (cherry and strawberry), as well as earthy. The best examples of Pinot Noir come from Oregon, California, and Burgundy.

A good second option for red wine would be a Merlot, which has a delicious velvety mouth feel (but fuller bodied than Pinot Noir). For those who prefer a fuller-bodied red wine, Merlot is a nice approachable option. Typical aromas and flavors in Merlot can include strawberry jam, plums, and even chocolate.

These are somewhat general guidelines, and it is always a good idea to ask your local wine shop for more specific recommendations. Make sure to let them know what type of food you plan to serve, so that they can help with the pairing as well. But regardless of what wine you serve, any type of wine can be enjoyed in good company.

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WITH THE RIGHT
SELECTION OF WINE.*