

Tasting Notes
Nov 2019 Pick-up
Festive Holiday Wines



Welcome to your November 2019 Smart Wine Club pickup. This is our third annual holiday mixed case, exploring an assortment of festive wines. My choices include one sparkling, one white, and some reds that I think will work well at a cocktail party or with your holiday meals. All are perfect options for a hostess gift, and I've tried to find bottles that not only taste great but look great too!

If you do end up loving one of these and want to make it your "holiday house wine" this season, just call or email me – I'd be happy to help with a special order.

If you'd like to add an extra bag or two, we can help you with that – a Smart Wine Club mixed tote of wine makes a wonderful gift for a favorite friend or special client. If you'd like to do this as a gift, of course we can provide tasting notes without pricing!

I wish you peace and joy over the next couple months. Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas from me, and best wishes for whichever celebrations you and your family enjoy. I hope you will love sharing these wines with your nearest and dearest friends and family, and I hope that they will add to the happiness of each occasion.

- **Famille Cattin Crémant d'Alsace Brut Rosé (NV), Alsace, France** – It wouldn't be the holidays without a sparkling rosé in the wine club picks! A crémant is a good-quality sparkling French wine made in the style of Champagne but from a different region. The wine is a pale salmon color with tons of very fine bubbles. It is refreshing and creamy with strawberry and raspberry aromas. It is made from 100% Pinot Noir grapes.
Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pronunciation: This style of wine is pronounced cray-MON d'all-sass

Pairing: Absolutely perfect as a light sipper instead of a boozy cocktail, when you're trying not to overindulge at yet another party. Great with salty hors d'oeuvres or shellfish.

- **2018 Mantlerhof Grüner Veltliner "Weitgasse", Kremstal, Austria** – This excellent label produces a number of fine GV's. This particular one is zippy and peppery yet fruit-forward and quite complex. The grapes are farmed organically.
Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pronunciation: This style of wine is pronounced GROO-ner FELT-lih-ner

Pairing: Works well with foods that are often difficult to pair. Try it with salads containing bitter greens or a sharp vinaigrette. Also pairs with asparagus and artichokes, which can both be tricky.

- **2017 Cascina Corte Dolcetto, Dogliani, Italy** – Dogliani is considered the best growing area for the Dolcetto grape, and in fact, any bottle with Dogliani on the label must be 100% Dolcetto. This one is grown by a tiny family-run vineyard and winery and the grapes are farmed organically. The wine is lower in acid with medium tannins and body. It is fruity yet complex, with aromas of cherries, currants and woodland. Easy drinking and should be well-received at your Thanksgiving table. Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pairing: Dolcettos are always lovely with simple pastas or pizza. As mentioned above, this would work well with a big, varied holiday dinner.

- **2015 Domaine Houchart Cotes du Provence Rouge, St. Victoire, France** – This red blend boasts a pretty, Art Nouveau-style label. An interesting fact about this vineyard is that the current owner's great-grandfather was quite good friends with Cezanne, who often came to stay at the vineyard. The wine is a blend of 30% Grenache, 30% Syrah, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Cinsault. You'll enjoy ripe, black fruit flavors contrasted with fresh acidity and medium tannins. A very versatile wine. Reg retail: \$17 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: Another great choice for Thanksgiving or other big holiday meal with lots of contrasting dishes.

- **2017 Unico Zelo Barbera/Nebbiolo "Truffle Hound", Clare Valley, Australia** – Australian wine-making couple Brendan and Laura Carter have a passion for the terroir-expressive regional wines of Italy, and they seek to create fun and approachable examples of these using Australian grapes. This bottle is named in honor of the locals of the Barolo region who drink fresh, un-aged Nebbiolo wine during truffle hunts. The blend is 70% Barbera and 30% Nebbiolo. The winemakers aimed to focus on the smoke, spice and herbal characteristics of the grape, rather than fruitiness, resulting in an almost meaty, savory red. Reg retail: \$21 Smart price: \$18

Pairing: Try it with wild mushroom risotto – if you can get a hold of some truffle to shave over the top, even better! Also excellent with duck.

- **2016 12 e Mezzo by Varvaglione Primitivo del Salento, Taranto, Italy** – The Varvaglione label has been around since 1921 but their newer "12 e Mezzo" brand produces traditionally made, sustainable wines with a modern approach. This Primitivo has excellent structure and ripe tannins. On the nose you'll enjoy ripened plums and cocoa, with a spiced vanilla finish. Did you know that Primitivo and Zinfandel are the same grape? Reg retail: \$13 Smart price: \$11

Pairing: This will pair nicely with roasted or grilled red meats. If you're lucky enough to have access to venison, try it with a rich venison stew or roast, rubbed with an espresso rub.