

Tasting Notes
Nov 2022 Pick-up
Festive Holiday Wines



Welcome to your November 2022 Smart Wine Club pickup. This is our sixth annual holiday wine assortment! Thanks to those of you who have been with us from the start, and a happy welcome to a couple of new members!

You may remember that the November tote doesn't focus on a specific region, but rather wines that are suited for the holiday season. My choices include one sparkling, one white, and four reds that I think will work well with your holiday meals, or just as a much-needed time to sit back, relax, and sip.

I'm really looking forward to celebrating traditions this year with family and friends, especially at Thanksgiving, which is my personal favorite holiday. Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas from me, and best wishes for whichever festivities you and your family enjoy. I hope you will love sharing these wines with your nearest and dearest, and I hope that they will add to the happiness of each occasion.

- **Pierre Sparr Cremant d'Alsace Brut Reserve (NV), France** – A French cremant is basically a sparkling wine made in the traditional Champagne method but from a different region of France. This bottle in particular really over-delivers for the price and is just delightful. Bright and fresh, with crisp apple and floral aromas followed by flavors of quince, citrus, and a hint of biscuit. The bubbles are tiny and very soft in the mouth. Good acidity and a long aftertaste. The perfect wine for any holiday celebration! It is made from a blend of 80% Pinot Blanc and 20% Pinot Auxerrois. Reg retail: \$20 Smart price: \$18

Pairing: Cremant wines always pair well all types of shellfish. Also try crisp-fried, salty appetizers. Or, a charcuterie platter with prosciutto or Serrano ham, creamy brie-style cheese, and dried figs.

- **2021 Bodegas Muga Rioja Blanco, Spain** – This wine is well-representative of a white from the Rioja region, where the grapes are often grown in clay soils that provide a lovely background minerality to the wines. This is a blend of Viura, Garnacha Blanca, and Malvasia Rioja grapes. It is aged on its lees (residual yeasts) for 4 months, providing smoothness and a lovely complexity. Once you pour it, you're met with intense and varied fruit aromas of peach, grapefruit, pear, apple, and even a hint of banana. In the mouth, it is smooth, well-balanced, and fresh with a lingering flavor of lemon meringue pie. Reg retail: \$19 Smart price: \$17

Pairing: This would be absolutely stunning with a seafood paella, if you're the type to do an alternative holiday meal.

- **2021 Cascina Ca' Gialla Barbera d'Alba, Italy** – I love the pretty, whimsical label on this bottle - make a wish!! The Barbera grape (this bottle is 100%) is known for low tannins and high acidity, making it a brilliant food wine that can be drunk relatively young and is easier to pair with a variety of foods. Which basically means, it's a good choice for your Thanksgiving feast where the table is laden with a bunch of diverse dishes. This wine is full-bodied and well-rounded, easy to enjoy, with lots of red fruit aromas.
Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: Perfect for Thanksgiving or a dinner where you need a smooth red that will pair with many dishes. Barbera typically also pairs very nicely with grilled meats, mushrooms, and tomato-based pasta dishes.

- **2020 Miguel Torres Las Mulas Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, Valle Central, Chile** – This is a fairly young 100% Cabernet from the Central Valley region of Chile. One of those “easy-to-drink” reds that will be well-liked by nearly everyone at the party. Aromas of red raspberries and cherries with hints of black pepper and nutmeg. Mellow, well-rounded tannins and a long, elegant finish. Reg retail: \$17 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: Try it with spiced meat dishes such as a smoky mole or a lamb curry.

- **2019 La Fortuna Fortunello Rosso Toscano IGT, Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany, Italy** – This is a “baby Brunello” made by La Fortuna, one of the oldest wineries in Brunello di Montalcino. This bold red really over-delivers for the price, and is friendly and approachable but very solidly made. Singing with fresh and dried cherry flavors, cranberry, rose petals, and cocoa. There is an interesting herbal sarsaparilla note hidden in there as well. The wine is 100% Sangiovese grapes. Reg retail: \$17 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: Try with herb-roasted meats, especially game meats. Great with rich sausages or other fattier dishes. Try with a truffle-infused cheese, especially truffled Pecorino.

- **2016 Château Larose-Trintaudon Cru Bourgeois, Haut-Médoc, Bordeaux, France** – If you serve a holiday beef roast, this is the wine you're looking for! It's from a Cru Bourgeois-classified vineyard, meaning it offers high quality wine for a reasonable price. The wine has a little bit of age already, and is ready to drink immediately. This vintage is a blend of 50% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Petit Verdot. The vineyards are located in the sub-region of Haut-Médoc, which is basically located right across the road from the famous Grand Crus of Pauillac. Dark and intense in color with aromas of blackberries and black currants, hints of leather and tobacco, medium tannins, and a wonderful lingering finish. Reg retail: \$27 Smart price: \$24

Pairing: In addition to the above-mentioned holiday beef (or lamb) roast, this bottle will pair well with any rich, full-flavored stews and hearty slow-cooked winter dishes. In terms of cheese, try this one with a fine aged sharp Cheddar, or nutty aged Gouda.