

Tasting Notes
Nov 2023 Pick-up
Festive Holiday Wines



Welcome to your November 2023 Smart Wine Club pickup. This is our seventh annual holiday wine assortment! Thanks to those of you who have been with us from the start, and a happy welcome to several 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 two sparkling wines to compare, perfect for parties; and four reds that I think will work well with your holiday meals. Or, just as a much-needed time to sit back and relax.

I'm really looking forward to celebrating annual 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.

- **Bailly Lapierre Crémant de Bourgogne Reserve Brut (NV), Burgundy, France** – In France, the term crémant signifies a sparkling wine made in the traditional Champagne method but from a different region of France. They are often quite lovely and a good value – I always look for the term when wine shopping for bubbly. You can find crémant from eight different regions in France. This one in particular is just a party in a bottle – very approachable and well-rounded. Tempting aromas of fresh raspberries, milky chocolate, and toasted cookie crumbs trick you into expecting something sweet, but the actual flavor is quite clean and fresh. It is made from a blend of mainly Pinot Noir and Chardonnay with some Gamay and Aligote. Reg retail: \$23 Smart price: \$20

Pairing: This wine will be the perfect accompaniment to a charcuterie platter, creamy bloomy-rind cheeses, or some truffled Marcona almonds.

- **Domaine du Petit Couteau Vouvray Brut (NV), Loire, France** – I hope you will enjoy comparing the first sparkling wine with this second one. The Vouvray region of the Loire Valley used to be a crémant region, but has since been upgraded to its own appellation specifically for sparkling wines, which must be made from 100% Chenin Blanc. This lovely sparkler has aromas of white flowers with hints of dill and fennel, plus a perfectly balanced acidity which helps it pair wonderfully with richer foods.
Reg retail: \$22 Smart price: \$19

Pairing: This would be absolutely delightful with Dungeness crab with butter; or fish, chicken, or pasta in any kind of rich, creamy sauce.

- **2020 Famille Coulon Le Petit Renard Rouge, Rhône Valley, France** – The label on this bottle is extremely adorable, featuring a little fox looking up at the stars. Fun fact – “la petit renard” means “the little fox” and the constellation he is looking up at is Vulpecula, which is Latin for “the little fox.” Awwwww. This is a light Rhône blend of 60% Grenache, 35% Syrah, and 5% Viognier. I love Grenache for Thanksgiving dinners with a lot of different dishes – it adapts easily to everything. The Syrah gives it a little backbone. The vineyard is small and family-owned: the Coulon family farms completely biodynamically and takes great care in selection of grapes to achieve a well-balanced wine.
Reg retail: \$22 Smart price: \$19

Pairing: Perfect for Thanksgiving or any holiday dinner where you need a lighter red that will pair with many dishes.

- **2020 Edoardo Miroglio Bio Mavrud/Rubin, Thracian Valley, Bulgaria** – A wine from Bulgaria was a first for me and I hope you’ll enjoy it as much as I do. It is believed that one of the grapes in this blend, Mavrud, has been grown in the region for over 5,000 years! Interestingly, this winery is quite up-to-date, 100% certified organic, and known for embracing the latest winemaking techniques and technologies. The wine itself is elegant and fruit-forward, another great choice for Thanksgiving. You’ll enjoy aromas and flavors of blueberry, plum, violets, and just a hint of oak. Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pairing: In addition to Thanksgiving or other holiday meals, this will pair well with pasta or pizza with tomato sauce, or barbecued meats.

- **2019 Dona Matilde Boavida Old Vine Field Blend Tinto, Douro, Portugal** – The name “Boavida” means “the good life” in Portuguese and the winemakers of this fun brand tout all the various ways in which people fortunate enough to visit or live in the Douro region enjoy it. The wine enjoys a good number of awards as well, including 91 points from James Suckling and 92 points from Decanter. The wine is a field blend, meaning the different grapes are grown, harvested, and fermented all together in one batch. The blend includes many typical red grapes of Portugal including: Touriga Nacional; Touriga Franca; Tinta Roriz; Tinta Francisca; and Tinto Cão. You’ll experience flavors of dark fruit, red currants, plus spicy and floral notes. Mellow, balanced structure and soft tannins.
Reg retail: \$12 Smart price: \$11

Pairing: Try this with boldly flavored cheese, especially smoked cheese. Also excellent with roasted red meats or any grilled meats, and rich, earthy stews.

- **2018 Gifford Hirlinger Stateline Red, Walla Walla Valley AVA, Oregon** – When you think of Walla Walla, you’re probably thinking Washington, but there is actually a small slice of the Walla Walla Valley AVA located in Oregon near the town of Milton-Freewater. Gifford Hirlinger is an up-and-coming winery in the region, and their wines are a great value. This rich blend is 48% Merlot, 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Tempranillo, and 2% Malbec. The wine is aged 18 months in 10% new oak. The resulting wine is bold and juicy with great structure. Reg retail: \$17 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: A great choice for your holiday beef (or lamb) roast, this bottle will also pair well with any hearty slow-cooked winter dishes. In terms of cheese, try this one with a nutty aged Gouda or sharp Cheddar.