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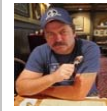
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Wine & Food Pairing
Italian Wine Pairings for Thanksgiving

By Kathy A. McDonald Wed., Nov. 23 2011 at 9:30 AM
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Kathy A. McDonald

Italian wines pair well with Thanksgiving dinner too

Why not try an Italian wine with Thanksgiving dinner? Consider that most L.A. Thanksgiving dinners break away from the traditional heavier dishes of the East Coast and Midwest. It's highly doubtful that the cousins in Kansas are serving anything akin to Ammo's take home menu, featuring charcuterie plates as starters and charred rapini with garlic and chili as a side, so why shouldn't the wine selection be adventurous too?

Not that there's anything wrong with a lovely Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir served with turkey or tofurkey for that matter, but as Taylor Parsons, Osteria Mozza's wine director points out, "Italy makes great food wines at a mid-range price points that pair well with California's Mediterranean influenced dishes."

Here's how it can be done Italian wine-style. First up: the bubbly.

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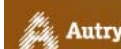
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Kathy A. McDonald

Well-balanced and structured, Italian wines are Thanksgiving dinner friendly

Like California sparkling wines or Spanish cavas, there are many fine examples of well-priced, mass-produced Proseccos. Select Whole Foods have the best selling [Mionetto IL Prosecco](#) \$11 -- with an easy-open bottle cap.

However, there's a huge range of variation in Prosecco. Adami's Bosco di Gica Brut, Prosecco Di Valdobbiadene (\$15, available at [Wally's Wine Store](#)) is an ideal cheerful aperitif. Dry, fresh and bright, it comes from a family owned winery that has been in the wine business since 1490. "Italian wines don't overpower food," says Manuel Bronson, Wally's Italian wine buyer. "And I think Italian wines pair well better with foods because in general they have more acidity, less tannins and lower alcohol."

Versatile and with a reputation for sweetness, Moscato d'Asti is very low in alcohol (only 4% to 6%), making it all-day wine. It can be served with appetizers, a cheese course and dessert -- better a non-chocolate dessert. The [2010 Saracco Moscato d'Asti \(\\$16\)](#) is one of the best; effervescent and not sweet, it comes from Piedmont in Northern Italy. Perhaps the only Italian wine that's earned a rap lyric (Kayne West rhapsodized about it in "Make Her Feel Good.") the floral aromas and refreshing nature of this wine will perk up any dish.

There are a variety of options on what pairs best with Thanksgiving's main event. Since it is rarely known for its delicacy, turkey can handle the medium tannins of lighter reds and particularly those with berry qualities. Bronson recommends the Di Giovanna Nerello Mascalese, an ancient indigenous varietal grown on Sicily's Mt. Etna's slopes, for its incredible structure. Italian wine importer Brian Larky, founder of Dalla Terra Winery Direct, thinks a Lambrusco would be "a fun new pairing for turkey; also great would be a Dolcetto or Barbera d'Alba." (For devoted locavores, Palmina Winery in Santa Barbara releases a [very approachable Dolcetto](#) that's fermented in barrels imported from Italy.)

Rounding out the options is a full-bodied and elegant [2006 Vietti Castiglione Barolo](#) (\$50). The well-balanced wine is a blend of fruit sourced from the top "crus" of one of the largest estate vineyards in Italy. *Buon appetito!*

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