

6 wines to try this Thanksgiving

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Thanksgiving is a celebration of life and family. It marks the middle of fall and all the season's bounty and rings in the onset of winter. It's an exciting time of cool weather, sweaters and apples. It gives us an occasion to be grateful. And, of course, there's the food.

Why not some wine to get you started that won't break the bank?

» Varichon & Clerc Brut, Savoie Region, France (\$11-\$13): A non-vintage sparkling wine made in the methode traditionnelle. The color is ring gold. There's a nice effervescence, and the aroma is like a crisp fall apple. The flavor is full of apple fruit, soft acidity and some bread tones. It's a fruit-forward bubbly with some balance.

» 2010 Selbach "incline" QBA Riesling, Mosel, Germany (\$11-\$13): The best wine for any challenging food pairing is a QBA German Riesling from a good producer. It's the combination of tartness, low alcohol and a tinge of residual grape sugar that makes it sing with any combo. Thanksgiving is tough on wine; if you pick one to cover all the bases, pick this one. The color is silvery gold. The aroma is of fresh tart fall apples. The flavor is bursting

with the same fruit as the nose with a refreshing tartness and a sweet finishing touch.

» 2010 Whispering Angel Rose, France (\$16-\$20): Rosés are also a wonderful all-around food wine. They have more alcohol and some have more red wine-like stuffing, so they tend to be amazing with cured meats, turkey, ham, pork and chicken. If there are a lot of sweet dishes on your Thanksgiving table, this rosé will get a little hot, but in general any rosé (including Buehler White Zinfandel) will be lovely. The color is pale pink with some onion-peel tones. The aroma is focused with a hint of wild strawberry and red fruit. There is some earth in the background that is attractive. The flavor is bright and refreshing with some of the red fruit sneaking into the palate.

» 2010 Bishop's Peak (from Talley Vineyards) Pinot Noir, San Luis Obispo County, Calif. (\$14-\$16): Pinot Noir is often called a great food red. This is not universally true these days; many "New

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World"-style Pinots made now are very ripe, lush and high in alcohol. I recommend buying less expensive, simply made, unmolested Pinots and serving them chilled. This Pinot's color is medium intense with bright ruby. You can see through it, which indicates that it is Pinot. The aroma is bursting with Pinot fruit; dark cherry, a little earth and wood. The flavor is lush but attractive with a restrained and clean finish.

» 2010 Vietti Moscato d'Asti, Piemonte, Italy (\$12-\$15) 375ml/half bottle: I cannot say enough good about this particular 5.5 percent alcohol giant. Moscato d'Astis in general are fun, exciting, easy and yummy. If you're looking to quaff, sip and slurp with abandon and never encounter a bitter face because of a bad food pairing, this is the wine for you. This wine has effervescence; the bubbles are light and soft, but they're there. The color is a lovely gold and straw yellow. The aromas are of sweet apple, clover honey and a touch of fresh aromatic cooking herbs. The flavor has all the sweetness of the nose with a nice structure of citrus underneath to keep it clean. It can be consumed at Thanksgiving, at a picnic or out of a shoe.

» Graham's "Six Grapes" Reserve Port, Porto, Portugal (\$12-\$15) 375ml/half bottle: While this doesn't go very well with turkey, it's a fabulous after-dinner drink for fall. The color is as dark as a moonless night with black currant and black raspberries. The aroma is dark berry fruit with baking spice and dried fruit. The flavor has wood and tannin structure and is rounded out by all the nice deep fruit.



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