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2011 LAST MINUTE Holiday Gift Ideas


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Fruit of the vine

Suggestions for holiday enjoyment

By **Bruce Sinclair**
SPECIAL TO GATEHOUSE MEDIA

Editor's note: For some of us, choosing the right wine, whether to accompany a festive meal or for holiday gift giving, can be a daunting task. Thankfully, there are local experts willing to guide us along the way. Here are a few recommendations from Bruce Sinclair, the owner of A Taste for Wine & Spirits in Cohasset.

Here we are in December and, though it may not feel yet like the holiday season, Christmas and Hanukkah are just a few short weeks away. What a special time for all, with the seasonal parties; festive meals; and family, friends and neighbors to share in the joyous traditions of the season.

This year why not try something exotic to grace your table and refresh your palate along with your family-favorite foods and holiday treats. I'm referring to wine, of course, and not your go-to everyday commercial brands, but something unique, multi-purpose and food friendly! So take a step out of your comfort zone and come in to our store (or your small local specialty wine shop) and try these.

Sparkling Shiraz

That's right, a red bubbly coming from Australia or South Africa. Light to medium in body, made in dry or lightly sweet styles, this bubbly adds

a festive note with its ruby red color. It will be a perfect partner with light appetizers made of cheese, (especially blue cheese) or with main courses including duck, pork or ham; grilled beef or tuna; and turkey. It even pairs nicely with barbecued foods, if that might be a holiday tradition. In its sweeter version, it will accompany any rich chocolate dessert or red berries such as strawberries and raspberries. Several Aussie versions include Emery, Paringa and The Chook. In a lightly sweet style, try Solms Astor Cape Jazz Shiraz from South Africa. These wines are priced between \$14 and \$20 for a 750 mL bottle.

Riesling

Grown in cooler climates in many wine-producing countries (Germany, France, Austria, Canada, U.S.), Riesling is often mistakenly thought by Americans to make only a sweeter style wine. In fact, Riesling is one of world's most versatile grapes, making every style from dry to just off-dry, semi-dry and sweet dessert-style wines. It's the pre-eminent food wine as it will marry to a very broad selection of dishes. A good rule is to pick your Riesling style based upon your food style; with lighter foods that are more savory, the drier the wine. For richer or sweeter foods and desserts, try a semi-dry or sweet style of wine. Here are a few examples: with

soft, rich cheeses pick a Riesling with light sweetness; for main courses such as poached or sautéed chicken or fish, try drier styles. If roasted duck, goose or pork will be served, especially with stewed fruit or sauces, an off-dry or semi-dry will be better. For fruit desserts or tarts (apples, peaches, pears or cherries), custards, crème brûlée and cookies, pick a sweet Riesling or even Eiswein (ice wine is made from frozen grapes). Good U.S. producers include Dr. Konstantin Frank and Lamoreaux Landing in New York (Finger Lakes region), or Brooks from Willamette Valley, Ore. From Germany there are many quality estates from which to choose, including St. Urbans-Hof, Dr. F. Weins-Prum, Gunterloch or the more widely available Dr. Loosen.

Many of these wines are priced between \$15 and \$20 for a 750 mL bottle in both dry, off-dry and lightly sweet styles. For the rarer semi-dry and dessert styles, including Eiswein, you may spend \$50 and up.

Barbera

A light- to medium-bodied red wine, primarily from Italy's Piedmont region but also produced here in the U.S., Barbera has refreshing fruit and acidity (un-oaked or lightly oaked styles), and will pair with a wide range of food types. If antipasti, stuffed mushrooms, or semi-soft and

full-flavored cheeses grace your table as starters, Barbera will be a match. For main courses, it will pair nicely with roasted or grilled meats, including chicken, duck, beef, lamb, veal or pork, and even steak-type cuts of salmon and tuna. For pasta lovers, it will partner with dishes with red tomato or rich cream sauces or pesto, and even risotto. Now I will admit it may not be a match to your favorite dessert, but when you have had enough of all those holiday leftovers and it's time for pizza night, Barbera is just great. Try a Barbera from Coppo, Fuso and Vietti, all from Italy, or, for a full-bodied American style, try Seghesio Family Vineyards. These wines are

priced between \$14 and \$25 for a 750 mL bottle.

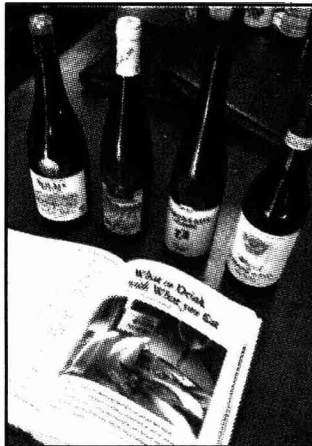


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Your local purveyor of wine can recommend a vintage that will pair well with your holiday meal.