

Fabulous Food & Wine



Holidays At The Table: Pairings Fit For A Feast

by Amy Zavatto and Tony DiDio

(NAPSA)—You've pored over cookbooks and magazines to create a menu befitting the quintessential holiday celebration. It's a perfect mix of traditional dishes and creative bursts that meld old with new, comfort with pizzazz. Your guests have RSVP'd, your table is set with rich colors, twinkling candles and, of course, your best stemware. But wait! What goes in the stemware? Cabernet, Chardonnay, or maybe Zinfandel? Bordeaux, Tuscany or Napa? And should any wine be served with the plum pudding?

Ah, the classic holiday dilemma. But really, wine and food pairing is the easy part—it's the glaze on your ham, the honey on your struffili, the powder on the soofganiyot. As we say in our book, *The Renaissance Guide to Wine & Food Pairing*, all you have to do is pop the cork and give it a try—and following a few of these easy, surefire guidelines can't hurt, either:

1. Match the main flavors. Usually the safest bet is to pair your wine with your central dish. Keep in mind that you need to match the "weight" of your wine with the "weight" of your food. In other words, a full-bodied, highly tannic Cabernet is a wonderful companion for roast beef or brisket, but a light, floral Orvieto is not!

2. Consider the outside influences. What are the sauces? Spices? Will there be heavy, creamy dishes? If your side dishes have more power on the palate than the main event, consider what influences they will bring when selecting the wine.

3. Think regional. For Thanksgiving, the most American of American holidays, go regional! Think toasty California Chardonnay or spicy Syrah, crisp New York Riesling or an earthy Oregon Pinot Noir.



Pairing wines with holiday foods should be a fun part of the preparation and celebration.

4. Think variety. Always offer more than one selection because some of your dining companions may favor white to red and vice versa.

5. Think varietal! Don't overlook grape variety. You can even mix up the styles of the way a grape is produced. For instance, for reds you might offer a very traditional Bordeaux-style Cabernet Sauvignon and a fruit-forward Napa style Cab just for fun.

6. Don't forget dessert. Dessert pairing got you stumped? With its delicate honeyed, floral influences Muscato d'Asti is an all-around easy-going wine for fruit and pastry-based desserts. However, if chocolate or nuts is involved, port is a dreamy way to end a delectable meal.

Amy Zavatto and Tony DiDio are the authors of The Renaissance Guide to Wine & Food Pairing (Alpha Books, \$18.95), which is available at book-sellers everywhere.