

Wine Wisdom

The Right Wine For The Right Food

(NAPSA)—If you enjoy wine, you're not sipping alone. Americans are drinking more wine than ever, with total sales rising for the past 13 years, according to the U.S. Wine Market Council. During the holidays, this trend is especially evident—and so is consumer anxiety.

Not only are there literally thousands of wines on the market to choose from, there's the vexing matter of matching the right wine with the right food.

But experts say there is an easy way to navigate the tricky terrain: Pick one or more wines from among the most popular varietals and go with the country's most respected wine region—Napa Valley.

"Napa Valley has the quality and the reputation that says, 'This is a special event,'" says Don Clemens, who heads up education for Terlato Wines International, a Lake Bluff, Ill.-based wine marketing firm. "Plus, Napa offers a range of choices, which is especially important when so many dishes are going on the table."

With that in mind, here are four nationally distributed wines perfect for your own holiday table or for presenting to the host:

- **Chardonnay:** The best come from the Carneros area of Napa. "We're at the south end of the valley, where the cool bay breezes help us create elegant Chardonnays," says winemaker Steve Rogstad, whose Cuvaision Chardonnay features layers of stone fruit flavors.

- **Sauvignon Blanc:** This refreshing white variety offers an interesting contrast to Chardonnay's richness and will pair well with most appetizers. The Mark-



When a festive meal offers a series of vibrant flavors, there should be a variety of wines to match.

ham Sauvignon Blanc, with its nicely rounded citrus flavors, is a consistent winner.

- **Merlot:** Flexibility is this varietal's great virtue—it pairs beautifully with roast turkey and the rich side dishes that often accompany holiday feasts. Look for the Rutherford Hill Merlot to fit the bill with its smooth notes of dark cherries.

- **Cabernet Sauvignon:** The King of the Reds has done more to earn Napa its fame than any other grape. "With 350 acres of vineyards, we make a quintessential Napa Cab: bold and balanced," says winemaker Kimberlee Nicholls of the Markham Cabernet Sauvignon. Nicholls adds that in addition to pairing with meat dishes, the wine is a good match with dark chocolate desserts.

Holiday memories begin with a single glass, savored with the fresh, vibrant flavors of Napa Valley. Find holiday recipes and more at www.napavalleyholiday.com.