Grapevine

Make Wine a Part of this Holiday Season

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If you like wine, you know how it transforms an ordinary meal into a special occasion. Now, just imagine what magic it can perform during the holidays: A little bubbly with brunch; a friendly glass of white to welcome guests; a toast to family and friends around the dinner table; a special bottle tied with a bow for the hostess or the boss; and, of course, the clinking-in of the New Year. Wine carries celebration to another dimension.

Even if you don't know much about wine, you can make wine a part of your holiday season. How? We will give you a few tips on: what to serve, when to serve it, and in which glasses; how much to buy; and with what food it goes better with. But you still have one big responsibility... the enjoyment part.

We've shared wine with friends and family for dozens of holiday seasons, and we've noticed that the right attitude really enhances enjoyment. Keep these thoughts in mind as you plan the wines for your holidays:

☛ There is no such thing as a single right wine. Lots of different wines can be delicious and appropriate for any particular situation.

☛ More expensive doesn't necessarily mean better. Don't let a low price make you feel insecure about the wine you buy if you enjoy that wine.

☛ An open mind and spirit of adventure help you discover wonderful new wines; if you discover that you don't enjoy a wine... just move on to something else.

☛ Wine is a beverage, not a test. Relax, and enjoy it!

In the future, we would like to dedicate more than a column to wine and food pairings, but for this holiday season here some famous and reliable food and wine combinations:

Oysters: *Chablis*
Lamb: *Red Bordeaux or Chianti*
Walnuts/Stilton cheese: *Port*
Soup: *Dry Amontillado Sherry*
Salmon: *Pinot Noir*
Roasted Almonds or Green Olives:
    Fino or Manzanilla Sherry
Grilled Fish: *Vinho Verde*
Braised Beef: *Barolo*
Grilled Chicken: *Beaujolais*
Dark Chocolate: *Cabernet or Port*

But why stop there? Create your list of favorite reliables and share them with us.

We would like to share with you the wonderful discoveries we've made about Champagne, and how

versatile it is with food. One fabulous pairing is Champagne with eggs. You will be in heaven when you try scrambled eggs – perhaps with bacon or ham, or smoked cheeses and mushrooms, maybe caviar – accompanied by the light, young Brut Champagne. Invite your close friends for a holiday brunch and serve mushroom omelet or quiche with a great Brut. Poached salmon or grilled fresh trout with potatoes in dill, stuffed portabello mushrooms with onions, garlic, and shrimp pairs wonderfully with our favorite champagnes such as Charles Heidsiedck, Pol Rogers, Bollinger, Domaine Chandon and many more that could be in the $10-$75 price range.

And remember Mimosa... if you insist on orange juice with your brunch, make a really good Mimosa. Use 2/3 real Champagne and 1/3 orange juice (preferably fresh squeezed). If you add more than 1/3 orange juice, it dominates the Mimosa, and you cannot taste the Champagne.

This Holiday Season, we would like to remind all our friends and customers these things for Happy, Healthy, and Safe Holidays!:

☛ Always drink moderately; when you drink, make sure eat as well

☛ Do not drink and drive

☛ Teach young people about the benefits of moderate drinking as well as the dangers of excessive drinking.

(For more food and wine pairings, and for wonderful holiday recipes, log on to **www.Valley. ToastNetwork.com** or **www.Winegivers.com**. Need help with the party planning? Email Anthony or Bella at **Zliquorman@aol.com**)