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When I was a young lad, growing up in New England, Easter Sunday Dinner never took a back seat to Christmas or Thanksgiving. My parents, and all off their friends, made sure that Easter was given equal billing. It was as if a choreographer had planned the entire day. There was early morning church services, probably some new seasonal clothes, and of course, a corsage for my mother. After church we would all rush home and then the cooking would start. Pre-heat the oven, break out the ham, and get the children out of the way until dinnertime.

My wife and I have not deviated that much from the above scenario, except that we have introduced wine as the beverage of choice to accompany our Easter Dinner. We had to educate ourselves because Ham is Pork, and as such, it is a meat that goes well with a Red or a White Selection. I found a few words of importance on this subject in an article written for the *Chicago Tribune*:

“In the transformation to ham, the pork leg has been cured and flavored with sugar, salt and possibly wood smoke or a fabricated facsimile thereof. As a result, high-acid whites such as Sauvignon Blanc, and astringent reds such as Cabernet Sauvignon, tend to taste bitter or harsh with ham. In addition to this, the cooking process can include glazing the surface, which may be studded with cloves, and covered with fruit juice. The sauce may be dominated by the rich flavor of raisins.”

I see from the above that there can be too much added spices and flavorings, so the first thing to do is GO EASY on the cloves and CUT BACK on the fruit juice. While the ham is in the oven, we are going to give serious thought to the wine. The first wine to consider is a light to medium bodied wine that does not overpower the main course. This could be a Riesling, a sparkling wine, or a Rose. All three selections are readily available locally. If you insist on a red wine, choose a lighter style red such as a Beaujolais or a Pinot Noir. These wines are also easy to find locally. No need to go any place that requires a special trip.

SOME SPECIFICS

The Sparkling Wines could be a Prosecco from Italy, A Rose Champagne from France, or a Cava from Spain. These are always good choices that match well with a ham dinner.

Try a Riesling. I recommend a Riesling from Washington State. From Washington the wine will be fruity, possess the right amount of acid, reveal a slight sweetness and will not overpower the ham.

Maybe try a Gewürztraminer. Some say that this is a perfect match. You will find a slight sweetness to the wine and probably a good deal of spiciness.

OK. Last one. A Rose from Rose d' Anjou from the Loire Valley or a Bandol Rose from Domaine Tempier. (Do not get more than two of the Bandol because it will break the budget.)

Dessert. Cheese Cake with a ten year Tawny Port. Go Ahead! I dare you.

Winespeak

In my humble opinion, Rose Wines, no matter where they are from, are in their element when accompanying cuisine. My personal experience is that Rose Wines are lousy when you're drinking a glass by itself. Serve a Rose with food, however, and I find that it's a terrific accompaniment. I am not alone. I have heard this opinion expressed by many others. I am at loss to explain why this happens.

Happy Easter to everyone! I have a special request. Next Wednesday face to the North and raise a glass wishing me luck, as I am scheduled to interview the Head Sommelier at Blackberry Farms in Tennessee. If I survive, I will report back to you in the next issue.

Cheers

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