

The first Thanksgiving Dinner was held in Plymouth, Massachusetts in the year 1621. I know because I was there. In attendance were about 120 Pilgrims, and many representatives from the Native Indian Tribe known as the Wampanoag. The food served at the dinner represented native selections that the Wampanoag Indians taught the pilgrims how to grow and replenish. Among the foods were waterfowl, venison, fish, lobster, clams, berries, fruit, pumpkin, and squash. The Native Indians and the Pilgrims combined to set a magnificent table complete with the best linen they could find. There was even a "kids' table." There were many and varied conversations going on at the same time because television had not yet been invented; there was no mention of football. The conversations were dominated by religion, politics and giving thanks to the Almighty for survival in the New World.

I became curious about what beverages were at that first Thanksgiving dinner. I knew that beer was a given, but I had it in the back of my mind that mead would also be on the menu. I was wrong. I guess honeybees were not available at the time. While researching this article, I found nothing of note, and so I'm sticking with 'beer' as the only certainty.

Fortunately, we can always fast forward! Specifically, let's look at the 1970s, where we find that wine grabbed a firm foothold on the American Thanksgiving Dinner Table, and has remained there ever since. Since the 1970s, hundreds of experiments have been completed by an equal number of wine experts trying to find the perfect wine to pair with Turkey. The list is comprehensive in scope and shows that just about anything will go well with your Thanksgiving Dinner. Here is a list of suggestions, compliments of *Better Homes and Garden*.

SPARKLERS

Serve a dry (Brut) Sparkling Wine as an aperitif or to accompany the meal.

THE WHITES

Viognier: Floral and fruity with essences of peach, apricot and pear. Low acidity.

Chenin Blanc: Spicy and slightly sweet with high acidity.

Sauvignon Blanc: Light and crisp, with grassy or herbaceous flavors. Higher acidity.

Riesling: Choose one that is dry, some spice, fruity flavors and floral fragrance.

Gewurztraminer: My favorite with Turkey. The spice comes through as clove or nutmeg.

THE REDS

You can serve a red, but I would steer away from serving a Cabernet. It is generally too tart and the high tannins will overpower the turkey. The recommended Reds are . . .

Pinot Noir: The younger wines are fruity with essence of plum, strawberries, cherries and raspberries. Older pinots will carry a slight smokiness.

Syrah: My second favorite choice for turkey. Will carry flavors of spice and black pepper.

Zinfandel: Probably the fullest body wine of all of the selections. Intense plummy and jammy flavors.

Beaujolais: This is not the Nouveau. This is the real deal from Burgundy that is produced from the Gamay grape and pairs quite well with turkey. Serve slightly chilled. I will wager that you will enjoy it!

BETWEEN RED AND WHITE

Must be talking about a Rose. If you choose it, make sure that it is dry and serve it chilled.

DESSERT

Port: Sweet, fairly heavy fortified wine. Serve with dessert or by itself. The younger ports will be fruitier; the older ports are less sweet, tawny in color and carry a nuttier flavor.

Sauternes: Another sweet and fortified wine. Notice the letter 's' on the end of the word Sauternes. This is what you want. Sauterne by itself is a blend of fair to middling grapes. Real Sauternes come from France and carry flavors of peach, vanilla, and pineapple. Terrific with dessert!

It is now the day after Thanksgiving. The fridge is stuffed with leftovers ideal for sandwich making. Your guests are all hungry from Black Friday shopping. So, being the good host that you are, you lay out a spread of gourmet breads and Thanksgiving leftovers. The wine of choice is Sauvignon Blanc.

The wines listed above are all compatible with Roast Turkey. Thanksgiving is normally a huge wine shopping time therefore I would recommend shopping early. With the exceptions of the Port and the Sauternes, I would say that the remainder of the wines are wallet-friendly.

WINESPEAK.

Thanksgiving is truly an American holiday. There may be many like it but this one is ours. In an almost seamless way, alcoholic beverage distributors recognize this and gear up for a holiday season that includes Halloween, Beaujolais Nouveau, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years. Distributors and retailers are ready for whatever questions you may have to make your holiday entertaining a success. Do not be bashful. When shopping for the holidays, I am confident you will find an awesome selection of wines to choose from. Go for it, drink responsibly and drive safely.

Happy Thanksgiving!