

When I was in the sixth grade my history class drew the assignment of "Writing the History of (fill in the rest)." I decided that since I liked War History, I would write the History of WWII. The good Sister that read my choice of subject must have gone back to the convent that evening and laughed until she was blue in the face. She finished laughing and realized she was going to have to deliver the bad news to me that a subject so big in scope cannot be explored in 900 words. The subject would have to be reduced to maybe one single event. I was crushed, but after listening to her explanation, I realized that Sister Margaret Mary was correct.

Here it is many years later and I now find myself facing a similar predicament. Not War but Wine! If Sister Margaret Mary were with us today, she would explain that since Christmas has been with us "in some form or fashion" for over 2000 years; folks from all over the planet have been drinking wine since way before that. I would wager that in 2000 plus years, all that can be said or written about wine for the Christmas Season has been said. (I would hope to lose that wager or I am out of a job.) Seriously, it has become increasingly difficult to find that one unique Christmas wine story that no one has ever heard. So what I would like to do is just talk about a few of my favorite beverages for the season, and if you try them, I hope that they will brighten your Christmas season.

Hot Spiced Wine. Gather together 2 oranges, 2 bottles of red wine (I would use a Burgundy), 1 bottle of white wine (Maybe a Sauvignon Blanc) 1 3-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced, 3 cinnamon sticks, 1/2 teaspoon of ground cloves, 1/3 cup of brown sugar and 1/4 cup of brandy.

Use a very sharp knife or vegetable peeler to remove the zest from the oranges in stripes, being careful to remove only the orange part, leaving the pith behind. Juice the oranges into a large heavy-bottom pot.

Pour the red wine and the white wine into the pot with the orange juice. Place the stripes of orange zest, ginger, cinnamon sticks, cloves and brown sugar into the pot with the wine mixture and stir to dissolve the sugar.

Cover and heat over medium-high until heated through but not boiling. Reduce the heat to medium-low and heat for an hour or longer to bring all of the flavors together.

My all time favorite wine for the Christmas Season is **Cabernet Sauvignon**, preferably one from the many wineries in California. This year I am going to go with a

Cabernet from Trefethen

for just casual drinking or to serve with Christmas dinner. I admit this wine is top shelf but it is only once each year, at Christmas time, that I ignore the budget. The wine opens up with a complex aroma of cocoa powder, tobacco, black cherries, and plum. The rich fruit features savory notes combined with these intense fruit flavors. The integration of oak and tannin from the grapes creates a mouthful that is smooth and long-lasting. I met Michael Baldini at the Trefethen Winery who gave me the above description. If you go to the winery I would strongly suggest asking to meet Michael. He is very knowledgeable and has been with Trefethen since his teenage years. Once again, this would be the wine to have with your Christmas dinner roast beef. We are matching a full-bodied wine with a heavy meat dish.

If Turkey with all of the trimmings is on your menu for Christmas dinner, I see a full-bodied **Char donnay from Cakebread Cellars**

from their Cutting Wharf Vineyard. This wine is a single-vineyard selection. The winemaker at Cakebread Cellars is Julianne Laks. She is presenting a wine that carries sweet apple, citrus and stone fruit aromas, augmented by subtle oak, yeast and mineral tones. The wine is rich, concentrated and beautifully structured on the palate, with a deep core of expressive fruit. The finish is long and vibrant and features bright acidity, a touch of oak spice and a refreshing minerality.

Dessert calls for Pumpkin Cheesecake served with **Dolce**. Dolce is a dessert wine that comes to us from Far Niente Winery. It is a classic combination of late harvest Semillion and Sauvignon Blanc. The bottle is 375 ml and the cost is \$85. Use sparingly as it very rich. I would go for it. Your guests will love you.

WINESPEAK

I am well aware that I have spent all your Christmas money on Christmas dinner. Please do not hate me for it because I am going to do it again next year. I really do not feel bad because most of the time I am cautioning people to watch their costs and to shop carefully. Part of the fun in shopping for wine is discovering bargains.

Allow me to wish everyone a Merry Christmas. Since relocating from Boston, I have found that Beaufort is a terrific place to be during the Holiday Season.

Cheers!