

Holiday wines to help your party sparkle

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 By **BILL AND KAREN GARLOUGH For GO**

The holidays are a wonderful time to renew ties with family and friends. This year it may be particularly important to strengthen these bonds, as the economy weighs heavily on most of us. We offer ideas on casual entertaining with items that you can keep on hand in your pantry and refrigerator. Karen provides two quick and easy appetizer recipes that will make your guests feel special. Bill suggests two wines that work well with these and most other holiday dishes.



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Courtesy of My Chef Catering

Wine facts

The first suggested holiday wine is sparkling, known as champagne if the bubbly is from the Champagne region of France or "sparklers" if it is made outside the Champagne region. Italian Proseccos, Spanish Cavas and American sparklers are all quality options that are more reasonably priced. Sparklers are the quintessential beverage when people come together to celebrate or share a special moment. This time of year is when approximately 80 percent of all champagne/sparklers are consumed.

The second wine is Riesling. Rieslings are to Germany what Champagne is to France. German Rieslings range from bone dry to super sweet. German Riesling is divided into six different designations, based on sweetness levels. Germany harvests its Riesling grapes at different times in the fall and winter.

The longer the grapes are left on the vine, the more concentrated the sugars become. Kabinett is the driest wine of these six designations and Eiswein is typically the sweetest. Other regions producing quality Rieslings include the Wachau region of Austria, the Alsace region of France and the Pacific Northwestern region of the United States.

These two wines have several attributes in common. Both are white wines (easier on your carpets when entertaining), are grown in cooler climates and both offer good acidity levels. Good acidity is important as it cleanses the palate, pairs well with many dishes and has you salivating for the next bite of food. Rieslings have an added bonus of low alcohol levels.

Bill's Wine Picks
 (with suggested retail prices)
 Ress Kabinett Riesling \$15
 Dr. L (Loosen) Kabinett Riesling \$12
 Zardetto Italian Sparkler \$14
 Nino Franco Rustico Italian Sparkler \$15
 De Marques Gelida Spanish Sparkler \$13

WINE OF THE MONTH

Dr. L 2007 Riesling, Loosen Brothers, Germany Retail price: \$12
 This month's selection is Dr. L (Loosen) Kabinett Riesling, a food-friendly wine from one of Germany's favorite wineries. Dr. Loosen's newest offering is eagerly anticipated and is just hitting the retail shelves. It represents a terrific value as his Rieslings typically run from \$25 - 38 per bottle. Riesling's low alcohol and high acidity make this a great choice for holiday hors d'oeuvres and light dinners.

Holiday recipes

At a recent gathering with "foodie friends," we brought both a Riesling and Prosecco to try two recipes (these recipes can be found at the Web site). The group was split. The majority liked the Riesling with the smoked trout pâté and liked the Italian sparkler with the shrimp canapé. These wines give you the flexibility of offering your guests either a sparkler and a still wine (or both!) at your holiday gathering. These wines are both versatile and go with a broad

variety of food, making them a good choice for the holidays.

Smoked Trout Pâté

Don't shy away from smoked trout, which, when mixed with a few simple ingredients, is a unique and special treat. You can find smoked trout with the refrigerated packages of smoked salmon in most large or specialty grocery stores. Unopened, it will keep for several weeks.

Ingredients

2	Tbsp	Shallot – finely chopped
2	Tbsp	Lemon Juice – fresh
¼	tsp	Salt
8	oz	Cream Cheese – room temperature
½	tsp	Pepper
8	oz	Smoked Trout – skin removed and chopped
3	Tbsp	Fresh Chives – finely chopped

Mix together shallot, lemon juice, salt and cream cheese. Add the trout, pepper and mix well. Stir in the chives. Place in a crock or serving dish and garnish with fresh chives. Serve with plain water crackers and a chilled Riesling. Makes about 1 ½ cups.

Shrimp Remoulade on Molasses-Buttered Toast

This recipe is especially simple if you purchase ready-made Remoulade. Whole Foods makes a fresh Remoulade; look for it by the seafood case.

Molasses Butter Toast

6	Tbsp	Butter – room temperature
2	tsp	Light (Original, not Dark) Molasses
¼	tsp	Chili Powder
24	slices	Cocktail Pumpernickel

Preheat oven to 425°. Mix butter, molasses and chili powder – set aside. Take 24 slices of cocktail pumpernickel and trim off sides for a uniform look. Spread molasses butter on the bread and place single layer on a baking sheet. Bake until bread begins to firm up, about 10 minutes. Cool.

Shrimp Remoulade

½	lb	Shrimp – cooked, peeled – cut in chunks
6-8	oz	Remoulade – ready-made
2	Tbsp	Fresh Chives – chopped

Toss shrimp with Remoulade, enough to thoroughly coat the shrimp. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Just before servings, top molasses toast with shrimp mixture; garnish with fresh chives. Serve with a chilled Prosecco.

Bill and Karen Garlough are the founders and owners of My Chef Catering in Naperville. My Chef Catering is the 2007 U.S. Chamber of Commerce Overall Small Business of the Year. Bill is a level one master sommelier. They can be reached at info@mychef.com.