

# WINE AND DINE

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## Thanksgiving Desserts Can Be Improved With Wine

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By BILL GARLOUGH for Sun Times Media



Ever notice your kitchen is the room where everyone gathers when entertaining friends and family? This is particularly true at Thanksgiving, where the meal's enticing aromas of roast turkey, savory dressing and warm pumpkin pie are sure to attract a crowd.

As opposed to serving dinner by courses, the Thanksgiving dinner typically is served all at once. Your palate can be quickly overwhelmed by flavors ranging from candied sweet potatoes, herb stuffing and tart cranberry sauce, making the wine pairing very challenging. I have read many Thanksgiving dinner wine pairing ideas, including Chardonnay (to match the rich, buttery turkey meat) and Pinot Noir (to match the earthiness of the herb mushroom stuffing). Some folks offer both white and red wine and let their guests choose. My singular choice would be a low tannin red wine, like French Burgandy/Oregon Pinot Noir or a Southern Rhone from France. These wines can stand up to the hearty flavors of a traditional Thanksgiving dinner, while offering a soft elegance that allows the complex flavors to come through.

The role of dessert is to top off a great meal. This column will provide suggested wine pairings for a variety of traditional Thanksgiving desserts.

### Thanksgiving Dessert

When families gather around the dining room table to share a Thanksgiving dinner together, they enjoy each other's company over a meal that includes their family recipes. Meals can vary and Thanksgiving desserts can too. Pairing a sweet wine with your favorite family desserts is a special treat.

**Traditional Pumpkin Pie** – The classic ending to a Thanksgiving meal, pumpkin pie offers aromatic spices of nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves and ginger. It is usually topped off with a dollop of whipped cream. Suggested wine pairings include Prairie State Winery's Prairie Pumpkin wine (slightly sweet, tastes and smells like pumpkin pie), or on the very sweet side, a French Sauterne (pairs well with custardy desserts) or a Semillon Late Harvest dessert wine (difficult to find).

**Pecan Crusted Pumpkin Pie or Pumpkin Cheesecake** – Thanksgiving dessert with a Southern flare, the addition of pecans opens the door to Tawny Ports, with its slightly sweet, nutty and caramel character. This is a tasty alternative to sweet dessert wines.

**Traditional Apple Pie** – Fresh from the Fall harvest, apple pie is another American classic at Thanksgiving. With similar spices of nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon, apple pie also pairs well with sweet dessert wines. Another possible pairing would be German late harvest sweet dessert wines, like an Auslese.

Pumpkin Orange Cake – for orange lovers, this twist on pumpkin pie offers a less dense Thanksgiving dessert. The inclusion of orange opens the door to a favorite dessert wine produced by Quady called Essensia. This wine is made from 100% Orange Muscat grapes and offers aromas of orange blossom and apricot. Quady also makes a Black Muscat dessert wine perfect for pairing with chocolate cake.

### **Pumpkin Cheesecake Topping**

A family favorite at the end of our Thanksgiving dinner is pumpkin cheesecake. We love the recipe found at Epicurious titled “Pumpkin Cheesecake with Bourbon Sour Cream Topping.” To give a store bought pumpkin cheesecake some pizzazz; here is the recipe for the topping:

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 cups sour cream
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon bourbon liqueur or bourbon, or to taste
- 16 pecan halves for garnish

#### **Making the Topping**

In a bowl, whisk together the sour cream, the sugar and the bourbon.

Spread the sour cream mixture over the top of the cheesecake and bake the cheesecake for 5 minutes more. Let the cheesecake cool in the pan on a rack and chill it, covered, overnight. Remove from the pan and garnish the top of the cheesecake with the pecans.

#### **Bill’s Dessert Wine Picks** – with suggested retail pricing (375 ml = ½ bottle size)

750 ml Prairie State Pumpkin Wine (not rated)	\$11
375 ml Peter Lehmann Late Harvest Semillon (not rated)	\$16
375 ml Carmes De Rieussec Sauterne (not rated)	\$18
375 ml Chateau De Myrat Sauterne (rated 96 pts. by Wine Spectator)	\$24
375 ml R.L. Buller & Son Victoria Fine Tawny Port (rated 90 pts. by R. Parker)	\$15
375 ml Yalumba Museum Muscat (rated 92 pts. by R. Parker)	\$17
375 ml Quady Essensia Orange Muscat (not rated)	\$16

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### ***Wine of the Month:***

*Chateau De Myrate Sauterne; Suggested Retail \$24*

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The Wine Spectator rated this 2007 Sauterne 96 pts. and designated it "Highly Recommended". The Wine Spectator's commented: "Darker in color than most Sauternes, showing intense aromas of dried apricot, with toffee notes and an almost smoky character. Full-bodied and very sweet, with a full-blown dried fruit and raisin flavor. Long and superbly rich". The good news, there is plenty of stock available to treat your family and guests this Holiday season with this exceptional wine.



Bill Garlough is the founder and owner of My Chef Catering in Naperville, the winner of the 2007 U.S. Chamber's national Small Business of the Year. Bill is a level 1 master sommelier and pairs food and wine for My Chef's customers. He can be contacted at [www.mychef.com](http://www.mychef.com).