

WINE AND DINE

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Wines you can sink your teeth into

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Halloween is fun. Children are excited about trick or treating for candy, parents are planning creative costumes for their children and some adults are planning Halloween parties for friends and family. The adult Halloween parties have been growing in popularity for years. It's a fun way to step outside your everyday persona and take on a new character for one evening.

Party planning is in full gear this time of year, with elaborate inside and outside home decorations on display and creative menus offered to give their guests a scary good time.

And guests are always looking for a memorable hostess gift.

So, how does wine fit into this picture?

Halloween Wines

We are all on the hunt for unique ways to entertain our family and friends. Instead of standard party fare, why not offer wines that are fun, in-keeping with Halloween's theme and offer intriguing possibilities for your guests? In researching this subject, I found that a number of creative and fun Halloween wines are available. As always, I like to focus on wines that offer good value. While these Halloween wines are not complex, they are fun, festive and affordable. Here are some that are locally available:

Vampire Wines

The company's website offers a whimsical description of a winery with Transylvanian roots that produces wines to "sip the blood of the vine." Binny's Naperville stocks the Vampire series of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir and will be sampling these wines on Saturday, October 23 from 1 - 4 pm. Fans of Twilight have already sunk their teeth into these wines.

Owen Roe Wines

The Sinister Hand wine by Owen Roe, featuring a creepy hand dripping blood on the label, is a Rhone style red wine from Washington. These wines cost a little more, but are consistently good.

Bull's Blood Wine

The name Egri Bikaver translates to Bull's Blood, and is a full-bodied red wine with black pepper and berry flavors. This is a popular selling wine from Hungary that is a blend of three or more varietals. Offering a guest a glass of Bull's Blood will add to your party's festivities.

Toad Hollow Vineyards

While Toad Hollow's Eye of Toad was hard to find, their Chardonnay is readily available. The style of this white wine is unoaked, offering a crisper Chardonnay. Your guests will jump at the chance to have a glass, as this wine will pair well with many party dishes.

Prairie Pumpkin Wine

This seasonal wine, available through Thanksgiving, tastes like a well-spiced pumpkin pie with a kick. The label shares that Illinois grows more pumpkins than any other state and we should have a glass to toast our heritage. Pumpkin Wine could be a good choice with traditional Halloween treats like popcorn balls.

Halloween Food and Wine Pairings

When we think of Halloween fare, candy immediately comes to mind. For the kids, hot chocolate, apple cider or pumpkin juice are the beverages of choice. For adults, the following generalities may apply for a candy and wine pairing:

- Sparkling Wine pairs well with sweets, making this a good choice with sugary treats like candy corn.
- Red Wine and Ruby Port Wine pairs well with chocolate, so this works with candy bars.
- Both Tawny Port Wine and Sherry Wine have nutty and caramel flavors, so either will work with caramel apples.
- Vin Santo Italian dessert wine has a nutty flavor and will pair well with Reece's Pieces or peanut butter cups.

Of course, more adult foods like cheese, bread, crackers and apples are a perfect accompaniment to most wines. The trick is to create a food display with a Halloween touch, such as cobwebs, fake spiders and mice nibbling on the cheese, to create a look that will have your guests carefully reaching for food. So, treat your guests to a glass of Vampire Cab or Bull's Blood, to create an evening they are sure to remember.

Bill's Wine Picks with suggested retails

Toad Hollow Chardonnay	\$12
Bull's Blood	\$8
Vampire Wines Cabernet & Merlot	\$9
Prairie State Pumpkin Wine	\$11
7 Deadly Zins	\$15



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