

WINE AND DINE

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Spice Up That Easter Dinner With Wine

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For many Americans, Easter Sunday is a day of reflection with family and friends, gathering around the table, enjoying a special meal together. Wine is often part of the meal and a good wine pairing really enhances this occasion. Let's look at some wine pairings for two popular Easter entrée choices plus suggestions for brunch.

Ham Dinners

Hams are “cured” by either dry aging the uncooked ham in a smokehouse for an extended period of time with a salt, sugar and black pepper coating (country style hams) or placing the uncooked ham in a wet brine solution for a couple of days and then baked (city style hams). The common ingredient in curing is salt, giving this meat its salty character. The pre-cooked hams found in most grocery stores are the city style. These hams are often prepared by adding a sweet glaze before reheating at home, to counter the ham's inherent saltiness.

To help balance the saltiness of ham, a well paired wine should have good fruit flavors upfront and not be tannic (tannins are typically found in big, bold red wines). An easy rule of thumb in wine pairings is to match the color of the meat with the wine's color. For a pink ham, a good choice would be a Rosé wine. A medium dry Rosé would pair well, as some sweetness is needed to offset the ham's saltiness. For white wine lovers, both Kabinett Rieslings and Gewürztraminers are a good pairing, as they offer good fruit flavors and acidity to counterbalance the ham's saltiness. If you add cloves to your ham, Gewurztraminers pair particularly well. For the red wine lovers, there are many fruit driven, low tannin wines to choose from. American Zinfandels, Barbera wines from the Piedmont region of Italy, Nero d'Avola wines from Sicily and French Beaujolais all would pair well with ham.

Spring Lamb Dinners

Lamb is synonymous with springtime and is another popular Easter entrée. Lamb is characteristically both robust in flavor and fatty. To stand up to this combination, a big, bold and tannic wine is in order and Cabernet Sauvignon fits the bill. The tannins found in Cabernets will help cleanse your palate, by cutting through the fatty flavor of this meat, allowing you enjoy the other side dishes of your dinner. The flavors found in Cabernet will compliment the lamb's robust flavor. If you are seasoning your lamb with Rosemary, some wine lovers like to pair this dish with Oregon Pinot Noir, as this picks up earthy notes in both the food and wine.

Brunch

A perfect light, festive beverage for Easter brunch is a sparkling wine. Depending on your personal preference, an Italian Prosecco or a Spanish Cava will give you a bit of sparkle at an affordable price. These can also be mixed with orange juice for a crowd pleasing mimosa.

Recipe

Carrots are a popular Easter side dish since it compliments many entrees including ham, lamb and roasted pork. At My Chef Catering, one of our most requested side dishes is Honey Ginger Carrots which gives your plate a beautiful bright orange side dish with the surprising zing of fresh ginger. It is an easy dish to prepare and be ready to give out the recipe!

My Chef Catering's Honey Ginger Carrots – Serves 8

- 2 lbs Petite Carrots – smallest size is recommended*
- 2 Tbsp Unsalted Butter
- 3 Tbsp Honey
- 1 Tbsp Fresh Gingerroot – very finely chopped

In a medium pan cover carrots with an inch of water. Add 1/4 tsp of salt to the water. Boil, uncovered, until tender (5 – 10 minutes depending on the size of the carrots). In a smaller saucepan, combine butter, honey and gingerroot and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until butter is melted. Drain cooked carrots well and toss with honey ginger mixture to coat. Salt and pepper to taste.

* If you prefer to cut your own carrots, start with 3 lbs of raw carrots, peel and cut into desired shape and size.

Bill's Wine Picks – with suggested retail prices

Mulderbosch Rose, South Africa (85 pts. Wine Spectator)	\$10
Chateau Ste. Michelle Riesling, Columbia Valley WA (89 pts. Wine Spec.)	\$ 9
Trimbach Gewurztraminer, Alsace France (88 pts. Wine Spec.)	\$21
St. Francis Old Vine Zinfandel, Sonoma CA (87 pts. Wine Spec.)	\$16
Damilano Barbera d' Asti, Piedmont Italy (87 pts. Wine Spec.)	\$14
Morgante Nero d'Avola, Sicily Italy (89 pts. Wine Spec.)	\$16
A To Z Pinot Noir, Oregon (90 pts. Wine Spec.)	\$18
Alexander Valley Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma CA (not Rated)	\$16

Wine of the Month:

Chateau Ste Michelle Riesling

Suggested Retail Price: \$9

Chateau Ste. Michelle is known for its value wines and this is another shining example. The Wine Spectator rates the 2009 vintage 89 points and describes this wine as "Bright and jazzy, with a fleshiness to the texture that adds an extra dimension to the lively pear and floral aromas and flavors, picking up a wet stone on the finish. Drink now through 2016." With 647,275 cases made, this wine will be easy to find. Cheers and Happy Easter.



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.