

Wine to fit all sorts of occasions from January through December

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Pairing wines with food is fun, entertaining and downright tasty. Many of my 2007 milestones, memories and seasonal celebrations included great food and wine. Here are some of my favorite picks and pairings from last year.

Winter

January is our favorite time to have a party. The holidays are over, everyone is relaxed and there is no better way to spend a snowy night than with good friends. Chinese New Year is a great seasonal theme and everyone likes Asian food. The higher acidity and tropical fruit notes of Rieslings and Gewurztraminers help offset the heat of this spicy cuisine.

Bill's picks: Chateau Ste. Michelle Eroica Riesling, Washington State, \$18; Fitz-Ritter Gewurztraminer, Germany, \$17.

The comes February, and romance is in the air as we celebrate Valentine's Day. Start with an expensive French Champagne and finish with a port, paired with chocolate of course.

Bill's picks: Ruinart Blanc de Blancs Champagne, France, \$60; Rosenblum Desiree Chocolate Port, California, \$21.

Spring

Just a hop or two away, Easter is upon us and the traditional Easter ham. We like to serve either a Chardonnay or a Pinot Gris.

Bill's picks: Trimbach Pinot Gris "Reserve" Alsace, France, \$19; Tapestry Chardonnay McLaren Vale, Australia, \$14; Elk Cove Pinot Gris, Oregon, \$18.

With the weather warming, we often serve Rosés. Lighter colored Rosés pair well with fish, salads and soft cheeses, while darker red Rosés can stand up to spicy barbecue and Asian cuisine.

Bill's picks: Chateau De Trinquedel of Tavel, France, \$16; Cabernet d'Anjou, Loire Valley, France, \$9.

Summer

As picnics and barbecues dominate July, we break out the Zinfandels, Syrahs and Shiraz. Their jammy and slightly sweet fruit is the perfect counter to barbecue's bold flavors.

Bill's picks: Rosenblum "North Coast" Zinfandel, Washington, \$12; St. Francis "Old Vine" Zinfandel, California, \$15; Cycles Gladiator Central Coast Syrah, California, \$12; Mr. Riggs "The Gaffer" Shiraz, Australia, \$24.

The oppressive heat of August calls for Sangria. While a couple of pre-bottled varieties are available, nothing beats the taste of homemade Sangria. Shiraz is recommended for red Sangria, while Muscat, Riesling and Gewurztraminer are all good bases for white Sangria.



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Bill's picks for pre-bottled Sangria: Real Sangria, Spain, \$8; de la Costa Sangria, California, \$10.

Fall

Autumn brings Oktoberfest. Riesling's low alcohol level and high acidity make it an ideal wine to pair with bratwurst, schnitzels and even sauerbraten.

Bill's picks: Röss Kabinett Riesling, Germany, \$13; Dr. Loosen Riesling, Germany, \$32; Studert-Prüfamt Riesling, Germany; \$20.

With our traditional Thanksgiving dinner, I serve the food friendly Pinot Noir

Bill's picks: A to Z Pinot Noir, Oregon, \$18; Jigsaw Pinot Noir, Oregon, \$17; Fiddlehead Pinot Noir "Oldsville" Reserve, Oregon, \$42.

Champagne Cocktails are a festive way to usher in the holidays. For a more affordable "champagne" cocktail, use either an Italian Prosecco or Spanish Cava. Just add a little of your favorite fruit juice, sweet liquor or aperitif to the sparkling wine and you have a grand start to your celebration..

Bill's picks: Zardetto Prosecco, Italy, \$12; de Marques Gelida Cava, Spain, \$13; Mionetto Prosecco di Valdobbiadene, Italy, \$16.

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