

NOW! FOLLOW US ON
FACEBOOK & TWITTER!

WINE, SPIRITS & FINER FOODS SPEC'S Update!



Mon-Sat November
23 to 28, 2009

DEFINING VALUE

CALL TOLL-FREE AT 1-888-526-8787

www.specsonline.com

Houston family owned since 1962!

Classes

The Italian Cultural and Community
Center presents Vini d'Italia
see page 4

A Sneak Peek at Our
2009 Gift Baskets
now online
www.specsonline.com

Texas Beer
in a Box
\$32.99



Relax...with Spec's Radio
featuring Spec's Jazz Brunch
every Sunday, 9 to noon.
www.specsonline.com

Now Open!

Bee Cave
13015 SHOPS PARKWAY

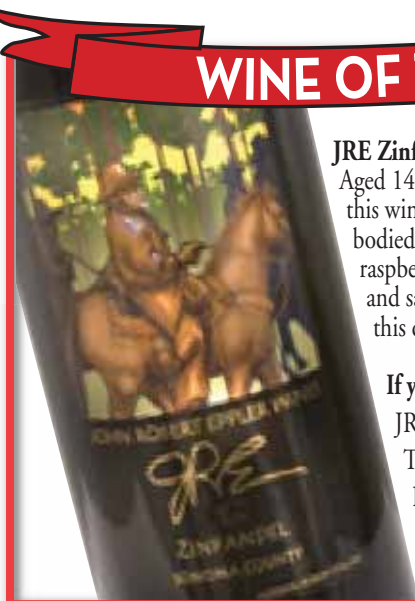
San Antonio
146231 I-35 NORTH, LIVE OAK
Join us for our
GRAND OPENING PARTY
November 21, 10am to 7pm.

Rosenberg
4102 FM 762 Rosenberg

Coming Soon!
WESLEYAN, HOUSTON
Early December

SPEC'S UPDATE is a publication of Spec's Wines, Spirits & Finer Foods. All prices listed are subject to change without notice. ALL PRICES LISTED ARE FOR SPEC'S SMITH STREET SUPERSTORE AND INCLUDE A FIVE PERCENT DISCOUNT FOR CASH. (Many items are available at Spec's Neighborhood Stores at different prices.) All items are offered "first come, first served" and are subject to availability; some quantities may be limited. Spec's reserves the right to restrict quantities. Spec's is not responsible for errors in printing. Typographical errors will not be honored. "Spec's" and the rabbit logo are service marks of Spec's Family Partners and are registered with the State of Texas.

WINE OF THE MONTH!



JRE Zinfandel Sonoma County 2007 - \$14.99 cash
Aged 14 months in a mix of French and American Oak barrels, this wine stains the glass with its deep purple color. Dry, full bodied with balanced acidity highlighting the chunky black raspberry, blueberry, and red cherry flavors. Cedar, tobacco, and savory spice & bacon fat with a very long finish wrap up this delicious wine.

If you enjoyed this selection try some other tasty Zinfandels!

JRE Zinfandel Paso Robles 2006 - \$18.99 cash
Talty Estate Zinfandel 2005 - \$32.99 cash
Bramblewood Old Vine Zinfandel 2006 - \$14.99 cash
Canyon Oaks Zinfandel 2006 - \$4.99 cash

Giving Thanks and Drinking Wine

by Charles M. Bear Dalton

This time of year reminds me that I have a lot to be thankful for. While I don't think of it everyday, I live in good health and enjoy peace and prosperity. I enjoy my family and friends and have a lot of them. I have a great job. I enjoy the freedom to live where and as I want and the freedom to worship as I see fit. I am thankful for the wine I get to drink. I have much to be thankful for and, apparently so do many of my friends and customers. They are already asking me "What wines are you drinking for Thanksgiving?" The general answer is the same every year but the details change. Before I get into the specifics of the answer, let's look at the challenge of the Thanksgiving meal.

Thanksgiving is the most American of all our holidays and its attendant feast may be the most American of all meals. The holiday comes down to us from some of our earliest European settlers. The feast is traditionally centered on the turkey (which Ben Franklin thought should have been our national bird) but offers a place for new foods from the many cultures feeding into the American melting pot. Every year, this Thanksgiving feast presents lovers of food and wine with a dilemma. Do we dial back the wine and let the traditional foods shine? Or do we dial back some of the tradition to make the meal more wine friendly? Is there middle ground?

For some wine lovers, the holiday is a chance to bring out their best wines and dazzle their friends, whether casual wine drinkers or fellow aficionados. As satisfying as this can be, there is also the potential for real disappointment if the wine and food don't pair well or if the treasured bottle is overwhelmed by a traditional menu.



Continues on page 3

Inside This Issue: Collin's Column, Deli Specials, Delicious Mischief,
The 12, Wine and Cheese of the Week & more!

Giving Thanks and Drinking Wine *from page 1*

For many families, the traditional Thanksgiving foods are sacrosanct. Aunt Betty's sweet-and-sour-jalapeno-pickles HAVE to be on the table along with Grandma's buttered-mashed-yams-with-bananas-honey-and-marshmallows. Of course, these accompany Uncle Bubba's Cajun fried turkey ("Kids – keep your distance from both Uncle Bubba and the fryer") with oven-baked jalapeno-oyster-cornbread stuffing and a dozen or so other exotic must-have dishes. How do you pair wine with all that?

In most every Thanksgiving tradition, the turkey is the centerpiece of the meal. By itself, a properly roasted Turkey doesn't cause any wine pairing problems. It tastes great with almost everything from light fruity whites to the fullest-bodied Chardonnays, and from the lightest, fruitiest reds (such as Beaujolais) to an elegant, perfectly-aged red Bordeaux. Season that simple roast turkey with certain spices or push a typical Italian basil-and-pine-nut-pesto between the skin and the meat and you narrow the wine field a bit. The same is true of that flavor-injected, Cajun-seasoned, deep-fried turkey. Add regional stuffing variations and the typical side dishes that grace many Thanksgiving tables and the difficulties are compounded. Many of the traditional garnishes and relishes include salty, vinegary, and/or pickled flavors. Candied yams and cranberry sauce are each sweet enough to cause lots of wine problems. While I never have figured out which wine goes best with deviled eggs, I still eat 'em.

Add to all-of-the-above the fact that Thanksgiving has become a melting pot holiday. As cultural traditions from family and friends are merged into the traditional Thanksgiving celebration, Cajun, Italian, Mexican, African, and Asian seasonings, flavors, and techniques are finding a place as part of this most American feast. Fish sauce finds its way into the marinade. Mole may appear as a sauce for the turkey. Chiles grace the table and may be included in recipes. Pot-stickers, spring rolls, piroshki, egg rolls, or empanadas are as likely as boiled shrimp or deviled eggs to appear as appetizers. Anyone up for Jamaican-jerked-turkey?

Two more challenges to consider: Many who enjoy wine with their Thanksgiving dinner only occasionally drink wine (and may not be used to drinking really dry wines at all). And some (many?) turkeys are, regrettably, a bit dry by the time they're served. It's also good to remember that at this meal, perhaps more than any other, the traditional foods (from whatever traditions) really are the stars. In most cases, the wine - however good it may be - is in at best a costar and is more likely playing a supporting role.

So, what's a wine lover to do? The way I see it, we have three choices. A food and wine free-for-all with no real plan is the easiest ... and you might get lucky. In this case, serve the wines you and your family and friends most like to drink on an everyday basis and let the chips fall where they will. Chances are most people will enjoy the food and the wine - but there will be only a limited possibility for the thrill of a great match.

The second choice is for one person to control all the food choices so that everything works well with the sort of wine served. If a treasured bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon or red Bordeaux is the desired accompaniment, a simple roast bird seasoned with olive oil, rosemary, and a hint of garlic and served with a savory bread pudding (in lieu of soggy stuffing), mashed potatoes, turkey gravy, and a simple green bean dish will do admirably. But beware the cranberry sauce, yams, assorted pickles (I love pickled baby corn at Thanksgiving), Cajun spice, or jalapeno cornbread stuffing. This option may work best for a smaller celebration or for another meal besides the Thursday Thanksgiving feast. It is how I plan my normal dinner parties – but Thanksgiving is a bit different.



The third choice is my favorite: Turn everyone loose to contribute and create. Have a bird or two or three at the center of things and combine it all with a range of wines designed to refresh and accompany the broadest possible range of flavors. Some years back, I hosted a Thanksgiving meal where we had twenty-seven adults (family, friends, and strays) and a double handful of kids in one house. Guests originated from various parts of the US as well as Mexico, Vietnam, China, Russia, and the Middle East – and they all contributed to the mix of food on the table. Our appetizers included lobster and scallop pot-stickers, piroshki, a multi-layered Tex-Mex dip, boiled shrimp, and baked oysters. For the main course, we had a roast turkey, a deep-fried turkey, and a roast goose. I lost track of how many side dishes both traditional and nontraditional were offered. It was a riot of flavor and fun. And the wines were good.

To get down to specifics for this year: At our house, we are going to drink Riesling, Pinots Blanc or Gris, Dry Rosé, and Pinot Noir this Thanksgiving. The whites and the rose will be served starting about 10:30am while the cooking and pre-lunch nibbling is going on. We will continue to offer them through lunch to those who are so inclined but I will switch over to Pinot Noir as soon as I begin to carve the bird. While I like Zinfandel and Syrah, my number one choice for red wine with Turkey is Pinot Noir.

For Thanksgiving dinner, super depth and complexity are not necessary; maximum versatility and an invitingly comfortable, even "glug-able" character with lots of fruit are required. The key to success is lots of fruit and flavor and little, if any, obvious oak character. Fruit and a hint (or more) of sweetness helps offset any spice and makes a better match with any smoky, sweet, and/or vinegary dishes. As tannic and/or oaky wines generally clash with salt, smoke, peppery spice (other than black pepper), and chilies so, I avoid most Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and oak-influenced Chardonnay. Fresh, fruity flavors allow the food to shine and serve to refresh the palate so I generally serve younger wines at Thanksgiving.

So what am I having? Here is my Thanksgiving wine shopping list.

J. WILKES Bien Nacido Pinot Blanc, Santa Maria Valley, 2006

12x750ml \$13.69 \$154.16

Tech: 100% Pinot Blanc fermented and aged in stainless steel with no malolactic fermentation. Straw in color, bright and clear with some legs; dry and medium-bodied, with a fresh acidity, very light phenolics, and a good mineral note. Classic, juicy toasty, lemony, mineral Pinot Blanc. Yummy. Straight forward and classic. *Really Fine. BS: 90HR*

A-TO-Z Pinot Gris, Oregon, 2007

12x750ml \$12.73 \$143.33

Tech: 13.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Gris fermented and aged in stainless steel for 4 months with no malolactic fermentation. Straw in color, with copper highlights, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium light-bodied with fresh acidity and very light phenolics. Juicy, lively, fresh pear fruit, lime and mineral. Classic. Alive in the mouth. *YUM. Excellent. BS: 91.*



Continues on page 4

*Giving Thanks and Drinking Wine from page 3***FRIEDRICH FENDEL Riesling QbA, Rheingau, 2007**6x750ml
\$14.95 \$84.18

Tech: 100% Riesling fermented in stainless steel with no malo-lactic. Pale straw in color, day-bright and clear with green highlights good legs; semi-sweet, medium-to-light-bodied with crisp acidity. Bright, fresh, and lively with lime, apple, and peach fruit, subtle, clean, minerally terroir accented with floral mountain meadow notes. Really very long, clean, and refreshing finish. Delicious, precise, pure; vibrant and alive-in-the-mouth. *Really Fine. BS: 90+.*

DOMAINE MASSAMIER La Mignarde "Cuvee de Oliviers" Rosé, VdP des Coteaux de Peyriac, 2008

12x750ml \$9.76 \$109.95

Tech: 13.5% Alcohol. A blend of 80% Cinsault, 10% Syrah, and 10% Grenache macerated on the skins for one day and then fermented cold for 30 days. Red-pink-salmon in color, bright and clear with good legs; dry, medium-light-bodied with fresh acidity and light phenolics. Lively red cherry-berry fruit with a hint of citrus accented black pepper, subtle garrigue, and a dusty floral note. Very long finish. Fresh, lively, delicious; super refreshing. *Fine. BS: 89.*

CA' MOMI Pinot Noir, Napa County (Carneros), 2007

12x750ml \$19.92 \$222.24

Technical Note: 13.9% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented in open tops with punch-downs and aged 8 months in all heavy toast French oak barrels. Red in color, bright and medium clear with good legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Offers more red than black cherry and berry fruit with dark dusty earth terroir notes, dusty French oak, and accents of black pepper, cola, spice, and coffee grounds. Very long finish. Fresh, integrated, alive-in-the-mouth. *Really Fine. BS: 90.*

BELLE GLOS Meiomi Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, 2007

12x750ml \$23.73 \$267.18

Tech: 14.6% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir given a 3 day cold soak, fermented in open-tops with punch-downs, and aged nine months in French oak Barrels (60% new). Medium red in color with well-formed legs. Dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity, medium phenolics, and a subtle earthy finish. Lovely black and red fruit with notes of cola, cocoa, and black floral. Lots of juicy fruit character with good richness. *Lovely. Excellent. BS: 91.*

**AMPELOS "Lambda" Pinot Noir, Santa Rita Hills, 2005**

12x750ml \$27.99 \$315.20

Tech: 14.5% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir given a 4 day cold soak, fermented using open tops with punch downs, and aged 17 months in all French oak barrels (35% new). Medium purple-red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with fresh acidity and slightly chewy phenolics. Offers developed dusty ripe red & black cherry fruit (black cherry, red cherry, red berry), dusty dark earthy terroir, integrated French oak, and accents of cola, black pepper, and subtle cocoa. Very long, lively finish. Elegant, delicious, complete; alive-in-the-mouth. lovely wine. Great food Pinot. *Excellent. BS: 94.*

AND two splurges ...**BELLE GLOS Las Alturas Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands, 2007**

12x750ml \$37.99 \$212.00

Tech: 14.9% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir given a 3 day cold soak, fermented using open tops with both punch-downs and pump-overs, and aged 9 months in all French oak barrels (60% new). Medium-red-purple in color, bright and clear with good legs; dry, medium-to-full-bodied with balanced acidity and lightly chewy phenolics. Very long finish. Bright and fresh with red and black fruit. Supple and rich but still very much in balance; combines ripeness with focus and freshness. Accented with cola along with hints of cocoa and dark earth. Delicious with a great mouth feel. *Lovely. Really Excellent. BS: 95.*

PATZ & HALL Pinot Noir Hyde Vineyard, Carneros, 2006

12x750ml \$59.80 \$673.44

Tech Note: 14.8% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir fermented in open tops using "punch-overs" (a combination of punch downs and pump overs) and aged 9 months in three-year-air-dried French oak barrels (45% new). Tasting Note: Medium-red-medium-purple in color, and with well formed legs; dry, medium-bodied with balanced acidity and medium phenolics. Offers developed dusty rich ripe spicy focused red cherry and red berry fruit with subtle earthy mushroomy terroir with a hint of coffee grounds and accents of exotic Asian spice, cocoa, cola, & a hint of coffee and a really long finish. Exotic, focused, ethereal, and elegant; subtle but quite delicious. Aromatically stunning and absolutely compelling. *WOW. Outstanding. BS: 98+.*



Italian
Cultural & Community Center

**The Italian Cultural and Community
Center presents Vini d'Italia
Tuscany Part 2: The Majesty of Chianti**

Thursday, Dec 10, 2009 6:30pm
Italian Cultural and Community Center.
1101 Milford Houston, Texas, 77006.

<http://www.iccchouston.com/>

Reservation Required—RSVP at (713) 524-4222
\$40.00 for ICCC members
\$45.00 for non-members.

See full wine menu on
www.specsonline.com