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Wines for the Weekend

Ten Wines For The Thanksgiving Table

Eric Arnold, 11.20.08, 04:00 PM EST

The holiday isn't the time to pair food and drink. It's to relax and enjoy whatever sips you like.



In Pictures: [10 Wines For The Thanksgiving Table](#)

Try a new Thanksgiving tradition this year: Forget about trying to find a wine that pairs as well with a drumstick as it does with a sweet potato. It's pointless.

A better strategy, says Gary Vaynerchuk, host of [Wine Library TV](#) and author of the book *Gary Vaynerchuk's 101 Wines: Guaranteed to Inspire, Delight and Bring Thunder to Your World*, is to look for crowd-pleasers that won't overpower your palate--or your head--during the long meal. To identify these wines, we joined Vaynerchuk at the Monday Room wine bar in [New York City](#).

In Pictures: [10 Wines For The Thanksgiving Table](#)

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His first piece of advice: relax.

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Ignore the traditional wine-pairing rules of the other 364 days of the year (red wines with roasted meats; light whites with salad). Forget about every food that's on the Thanksgiving table, actually.

"All these rules have pigeonholed creativity," he says. "It's OK; try different things. Have fun with it, don't be intimidated by it."

From there, Vaynerchuk says, keep two factors in mind. One, Thanksgiving is a long day. So, if you're going to be drinking wine, be sure to pick varieties or styles you know you can drink all day--in other words, wines that are lower in alcohol and lighter in weight.

Second, drink the varieties and styles that you know you like from past experience--regardless of whether a critic gave it a high score, your in-law recommended it or it was on sale at the wine shop. If you and nobody else coming to dinner likes merlot, for example, there's no point in drinking it on Thanksgiving Day.

Vaynerchuk picked 10 wines he sees as crowd-pleasers, in part because they're lighter bodied and (mostly) lower in alcohol so they can be poured well before the gravy's been made.

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For whites, he chose a mixed bag, all \$21 and under per bottle. Two, the [Valdesil Montenovo Godello from Spain](#) and the [Tiefenbrunner Pinot Bianco](#) from Italy are light and fruity, so they'll be great before dinner (and certainly good with it, especially the cranberry sauce).

Thanksgiving



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Eating

The [Hortus La Bergerie Blanc](#), a blend of several white varieties, and the [Albrecht Gewürztraminer Reserve](#), on the other hand, will be a bit heavier. These wines are likely to be more friendly with the food than the aforementioned two whites, but not too heavy to open up and drink before dinner hits the table. Somewhere in the middle is the [Dr. Karl Christoffel Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spatlese](#), which has a touch of sweetness and lower alcohol, so it works equally well as an aperitif, with dinner and with dessert.

Just remember, when looking at white wines, keep in mind what you like and what your guests like and let that inform whether to get wines on the lighter or heavier end of the spectrum.

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With the reds, Vaynerchuk steered toward wines that are fruity and tangy with acidity. The more acidic the wine, the more you salivate, which is especially helpful with dry turkey and stuffing. But these types of wines are also simple and easy-drinking; no silly wine pontification required here.

Along with [Clone 5](#) pinot noir from California, Vaynerchuk likes the [Starry Night Lodi Zinfandel](#), which he says "sings with food," and the [Bacio Divino Pazzo](#), an Italian-style wine made in California, with a touch of the white variety Viognier blended in to mellow it.

From Europe, he likes the [Pieve Del Vescovo Piovano](#) from Umbria (be sure to open this one an hour or so before you start pouring it), as well as the [Potel-aviron Moulin A Vent Vv](#) from Beaujolais. The latter is not a Nouveau, those cheap, colorful-label, soda-tasting wines released on the same day every year. This is the serious, well-made wine from the region that costs just a

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ouch more than the Nouveau, but over-delivers on flavor--the kind of wine that, Vaynerchuk insists, will make any Nouveau drinker look at Beaujolais in a new light.

Ten Wines That Age Gracefully

"What I like is the flexibility of these wines," Vaynerchuk says of his picks, noting that people in the Northeast eat different types of foods at Thanksgiving than those in the South or on the West Coast. "[The wines] go with all the different cultures."

And if they can satisfy all the different people around the table (always much easier said than done when families get together), that makes for one pretty happy Thanksgiving.

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