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Drink

### What wine to serve with Thanksgiving dinner? Here are a lot of options tailored to your sides.

November 23, 2009 at 11:22 am by Colleen Sachs



Turkey Dinner - Colleen Sachs, c 1995 - collection Nancy Armstrong

This time of year one of the most common questions in wine shops across the United States is what wine goes with turkey? Answers range from full-bodied whites, to light pinot noir, to the just released [Beaujolais Nouveau](#). But instead of trying to come up with a universal answer, the response should be another question: what sides are you serving?

While the turkey is clearly the centerpiece of Thanksgiving dinner, it is a fairly blank canvas when it comes to wine pairing. The side dishes are what set the tone of the meal. Here are some suggestions followed by names of a few producers. Don't worry if you can't find the specific wines mentioned, just look for similarities.

A traditional Norman Rockwell-style Thanksgiving feast includes richness by way of gravy, mashed potatoes and dressing. It also features sweetness in the form of cranberry sauce and sweet potatoes. Lots of flavor is needed to match the richness of this meal. Good options with this type of meal are Spanish tempranillo (like that from [Bodegas Muga](#)) and French Cotes-du-Rhone (E. Guigal, [Chateau de Beaucautel](#)) for reds, or gruner-veltliner (Weingut Eder) and gewürztraminer ([Alexander Valley Vineyards](#)) for whites.

Traditional southern Thanksgiving, which is what I am used to, is likely to include smoked pork products — bacon, ham hocks, etc. That smoky flavor pairs well with an earthy Northwest pinot noir ([Adelsheim](#), [Ponzi](#)).

Southwestern Thanksgiving menus feature chilies and spice. Lighter reds are the key here. Too much tannin and not enough fruit will clash with the spice found in the food. Think a light-bodied malbec ([Chandon Terrazas](#)) from the Mendoza region of Argentina, or barbera d'Alba ([Vietti](#)) from Italy's Piedmont. If you are trying to keep this meal all-American, a light-bodied zinfandel that displays plenty of fruit and spice would be wonderful.

The new traditional Thanksgiving is where the flavor of the turkey is most evident, highlighted by clean herbal flavors. This meal cries out for a crisp wine like New Zealand sauvignon blanc with plenty of citrus ([Kim Crawford](#)). A sparkler would also be wonderful ([Schramsberg Brut Rose](#)).

Of course if you serve more than one course you have a great reason to serve more than one wine. Our family's tradition is to start the meal with a bowl of creamy oyster stew. I like a sparkler like a Spanish cava ([Segura Viudas](#)) with this course. It is a festive way to begin the meal, and is a perfect foil to the richness of the cream, butter and oysters. If you want to match the rich nature of the stew go for a buttery new world chardonnay ([Paul Hobbs](#)).

Don't forget about wine with dessert. If pumpkin pie is on the menu, the raisin and molasses character of PX Sherry ([Lustau](#), [Bodegas Toro Albala](#)) compliments the sweet spice of the pie. With apple pie I like the balance of acidity and sweetness in ice wine ([Inniskillin](#)).

Good food and good wine served in the middle of a weekday. That's a great recipe for sweet dreams during the post-dinner nap. Have a happy Thanksgiving.

To read what and where Colleen Sachs is eating and drinking, follow her on Twitter @colleensachs.

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