

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

from

FOOD & WINE

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WHAT TO DRINK NOW

All-American Favorites

Great wines and whiskeys that will please everyone at your holiday table

By Ray Isle

THANKSGIVING IS REALLY NOT ABOUT SURPRISES. As a holiday, our turkey-centric feast around the table is about comfort, tradition, family, togetherness, and—if your eccentric uncle Nate insists on making it about how there is no actual proof that the Earth is *not* flat—putting up with family, not all of whom are, let's say, grounded. And so with wine.

Springing oddball wines on people for Turkey Day is a bad proposition. My advice boils down to a very simple, classic “give the people what they want.” Sure, a California Cabernet is less edgy than an organic Kékfrankos from Hungary, but with ol’ flat-earther Nate at the table, you’ve got enough edgy right there.

Lastly, why not stick to U.S. wines during the holiday this year (and U.S. sipping whiskeys, while we’re at it)? We’re one of the great wine-producing countries of the world, and if there’s any holiday that’s a celebration of home and hearth, Thanksgiving is it.



FOOD STYLING: EMILY NABORS HALL; PROP STYLING: JULIA BAYLESS

SPARKLING WINES

2024 QUE POP SESSION ROSÉ (\$21)

Low in alcohol (only 7%), effusively sparkling, and a lot of fun, this rosé-hued bubbly, made from Pinot Noir grown on the Sonoma Coast, comes from Marine Layer Wines winemaker Rob Fischer. The clever name (think K-pop) is a nod to his Korean heritage.

ROEDERER ESTATE ANDERSON VALLEY BRUT (\$32)

Year in and year out, Roederer Estate’s multi-vintage sparkling brut is one of the great values in California wine; no real surprise, as its parent company Champagne Louis Roederer has been making great bubbles since all the way back in 1776.

2022 ARGYLE BRUT (\$30)

Argyle, founded in 1987, effectively launched sparkling wine in Oregon and to this day is one of the top producers. (Founder Rollin Soles eventually left to start his own winery, Roco; see below.) This is a great, all-purpose bubbly for toasts or sipping straight through the meal.

2021 ROCO WINERY RMS BRUT (\$65)

Oregon sparkling wine guru Rollin Soles founded Roco Winery in 2003 and ever since has made some of the state’s best sparkling wines there. His RMS Brut shows that Willamette Valley bubbly can easily compete with Champagne for complexity and depth.



WHITE & ROSÉ WINES

2023 CHARLES KRUG NAPA VALLEY SAUVIGNON BLANC (\$23)

Proof that good Napa Valley wines don’t have to cost a fortune, this white glides along on its tropical fruit and zesty lime flavors. It has hints of dried herbs, but not the green-pepperness of many New Zealand versions.

2023 TABLAS CREEK PATELIN DE TABLAS BLANC (\$28)

A mélange of Rhône varieties (Grenache Blanc, Viognier, Roussanne, and more) goes into this full-bodied Paso Robles white. Invite friends over and open a bottle; the word *patelin* is French slang for “neighborhood,” at least in a countryside setting.

2024 FERRARI-CARANO DRY SANGIOVESE ROSÉ (\$24)

Sangiovese, the principal grape of Chianti, gets a California spin in this lightly strawberry-scented rosé from Sonoma County’s Ferrari-Carano. It’s medium-bodied and lingering, with enough presence for roast turkey with all the trimmings.

2023 SOKOL BLOSSER WILLAMETTE VALLEY PINOT GRIS (\$32)

Sokol Blosser, founded in 1971, has seen the Willamette Valley rise from unknown to famed and has stayed one of the wine region’s top producers that entire time. This vibrant, green apple–inflected white is a great pour for holiday parties.

2024 DIATOM SANTA BARBARA COUNTY CHARDONNAY (\$27)

Ripe but not too ripe, with a mouth-coating texture but enough acidity to give it lift, this Chardonnay is floral and full of stone-fruit flavors—white peach, apricot—with a brisk finish. It’s a great one to serve to Chardonnay doubters (or lovers, for that matter).

2023 DONNACHADH STA. RITA HILLS CHARDONNAY (\$40)

Fragrant with lime zest, apricot, and ginger notes, this Chardonnay from an impressive new producer (pronounced DON-nuh-kuh) on California’s Central Coast is made entirely with organically grown fruit from the winery’s estate vineyard.



RED WINES

2023 HAHN PINOT NOIR (\$18)

Great wines play complex symphonies of flavor, but you can't really ask that of an \$18 Pinot. What you *can* ask—and receive, if you're lucky—is that the wine plays its few notes well. That's certainly true with this red's dark cherry fruit and lightly peppery finish.

2022 BANSHEE MORDECAI RED WINE (\$25)

Black-fruited and ripe but still lively, this is a kitchen-sink blend of grapes: Malbec, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Mourvèdre, Tannat, Carignane, Petite Sirah, Zinfandel, Grenache Noir, and 2% "other." But perhaps more crucially, it'd be great with a juicy steak.

2022 GROUNDED WINE CO. LANDFORM WILLAMETTE VALLEY PINOT NOIR (\$28)

There's a savory, peppery edge to this appealing Oregon Pinot. It's light on its feet, the blackberry notes carried on crisp tannins. If you set out a charcuterie tray for a holiday event, this would be a great partner for it.

2023 TURLEY JUVENILE ZINFANDEL (\$29)

Turley was one of the original waiting-list-to-get-on-the-mailing-list producers for its old-vine, single-vineyard Zinfandels. But this sultry young-vine red, abundant with ripe boysenberry and black cherry fruit, is out there in the market and well worth finding.

2024 EX POST FACTO PINOT NOIR (\$30)

In the Sta. Rita Hills appellation, cool winds channeled in off of the Pacific make it ideal for Pinot Noir. This new wine is a particularly fragrant expression, with its scent of wild raspberries and sweet herbs, and its graceful flavors linger seductively.

2022 MARIETTA ROMÁN ESTATE GROWN ZINFANDEL (\$30)

Named for Marietta cellar-master Román Cisneros, who's worked at the winery for 38 years, this light, bright Zinfandel is juicy and palate-whetting, with red berry and licorice notes. Be warned: It's hard to resist another glass.

2022 THE LANGUAGE OF YES CUVÉE SINSO RED (\$30)

Randall Grahm, one of California's most brilliant and irreverent vigneron for many years now, is back with his Language of Yes wines. This red-fruited Cinsaut blend gives California juiciness a southern-French kick of wild-herb intensity.

2021 L'ECOLE NO. 41 COLUMBIA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$35)

The vast Columbia Valley appellation is the largest in Washington, giving managing winemaker Marty Clubb a host of vineyards to use for this poised Cabernet. Its deep blackberry flavors slowly fade into espresso-mocha notes.

2021 STACK HOUSE SONOMA COUNTY CABERNET SAUVIGNON (\$35)

Red- and black-currant notes play against each other in this Cabernet from winemaking husband-and-wife team Mario and Anna Monticelli. There are plenty of firm but ripe tannins on the finish: Bring on the roasted beef tenderloin.



WHISKEYS

SAZERAC RYE 100 PROOF (\$30/LITER)

This new, higher-proof expression of Sazerac's perennially popular rye was launched earlier this year in July. It's modestly oaky, with fruity hints of apple and sweet orange and a faint brown-sugar frosting note on the finish (but without any actual sweetness).

NOAH'S MILL BOURBON (\$70)

Willett is a storied name in bourbon-collector circles, mainly for its rare Willett Family Estate whiskeys. But it also makes this honey-and-toffee-inflected bourbon that you can find in stores. At 114 proof, you'll want to add a splash of water, then sink back into a comfy chair with it.

EAGLE RARE 12 (\$50)

Eagle Rare, appropriately, likes to soar off liquor-store shelves into the cabinets of whiskey collectors, so grab this new expression if you see it. It has a firm, no-nonsense character, the oak notes sweet and polished, with hints of cured tobacco and toasted pecans.

LAWS SAN LUIS VALLEY STRAIGHT RYE BOTTLED IN BOND (\$85)

Aged for seven years, this rye from Colorado's acclaimed Laws Whiskey House glides along effortlessly on its autumnal character—think gingerbread, baked bread, and black tea—before landing on orange peel and dry spice notes.

THE BEVERLY HIGH RYE AMERICAN WHISKEY (\$60)

Master blender Murphy Quint and proprietor Andrew Borenzweig have quickly made a name for themselves with whiskeys like this spicy rye. It has a sweet tarte-Tatin note of caramel and apple and ends with an appealing flick of peppery spice.

PINHOOK VERTICAL SERIES RYE 9 YEAR 2025 RELEASE (\$90)

Keeping track of every Pinhook release would take a spreadsheet, but they're always worth checking out. And this one is stellar, with complex fruit notes that lead into dusky nut, toffee, and honey characteristics.

OLD POTRERO 6 YEAR OLD STRAIGHT RYE WHISKEY (\$65)

San Francisco's Old Potrero was one of the earliest craft whiskey distillers (founded in 1993), and it still tends to fly under the radar. Go figure, because this is a terrific rye, with soft oak notes and tons of presence and texture.

MICHTER'S 10 YEAR OLD RYE, JUNE 2025 RELEASE (\$210)

Beg, borrow, or steal to try this rye. Michter's is at the top of its game, and this might be my favorite release of this always-excellent rye to date: incredibly complex, luxurious, and perfectly balancing its rye spiciness with round textural generosity.