



Sips: Make Thanksgiving a celebration of Pinot Noir

By Jerry Shriver

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Choosing the wines for the Thanksgiving meal presents a delicious challenge for hosts because of the special culinary and emotional components of the gathering.

One school of thought says that because so many contrasting flavors are represented at the feast — from musky Brussels spouts to sweet-sour cranberry jelly — the wine should stay in the background and do its best to harmonize. This sensible approach calls for versatile, light-bodied and refreshing wines such as dry Rieslings, sparklers, Sauvignon Blancs, Pinot Gris, Beaujolais, Cabernet Francs and Chiantis. (And cider and medium-bodied ales, for that matter.)

But some hosts, myself included, believe the best Thanksgiving wines are those that reflect a connection to family and friends or speak to the larger ideals of the holiday.

Over the years, I have recommended serving wines made in your home state, or wines from "the old country" to honor your ancestral heritage or wines from places that hold special meaning for those in attendance.

My advice this time, as we conclude a particularly volatile year: Choose the type of wine that has brought you the greatest pleasure and peace of mind — the one for which you're most thankful.

In my case, that's Pinot Noir.

\$35-\$55

2006 Lynmar Estate, Russian River Valley, Calif.

Over the past 10 months I have sampled hundreds of wines from around the world, popular and obscure alike, during wine competitions, in restaurants and at home, and Pinot Noir consistently has held my interest and stirred my soul.

This is no small thing — I'm a fickle wine drinker who falls in and out of love quickly. But Pinot Noir, no matter where it's grown or in what style it's made, has won my heart and wallet.

If you decide to follow my lead, you'll have to decide which style of wine you prefer. In the case of Pinot Noir, the classic light, delicate and silky versions will pair more successfully with more dishes, while the richer, fruitier, high-alcohol versions will make a statement that may overshadow the food but spark conversation.