



By Fred Tasker

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## WINE

### *From vegan quaffs to ice wines, matches for your Christmas feast*

A friend of mine says he once was given a bottle of wine so wonderful the only occasion on which he could think of serving it would be dinner with the pope.

This is faulty thinking, I told him. Christmas is a proper occasion. The meal is grand, the whole family is on hand, spirits are high. If you're ever going to splurge on a wine, this is the time.

My philosophy is to get the best wine I can for the entree, even if I economize on wines for appetizers or dessert. You'll see some grand whites and robust reds in this week's recommendations.

If you're a fan of welcoming champagne toasts, you might want to emphasize the aperitif bubbly. I've got you covered there, too. Or maybe you're a dessert fanatic, fretting over what wine goes best with fruit cake — the dark, dense, homemade kind dipped in brandy or soaked in rum. For this you need that winter miracle called ice wine.

Vegetarians and vegans can find whites to suit their lifestyles. They must be fined, or clarified, with clay rather than animal products like eggs, milk or gelatin — or not fined at all. Frey Vineyards in California's Mendocino County makes red, rosé and white vegan wines. Many kosher wines are vegan as well, but it seldom says that on the label. You have to find the winery website and ask customer service.

#### HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

**Nonvintage Mumm Napa Brut Prestige** sparkling wine,



Napa Valley (45 percent chardonnay, 45 percent pinot noir, 10 percent pinot gris and pinot meunier): myriad tiny bubbles, aromas and flavors of toast, ripe apples and spice; \$22.

**2011 Bear Point Chardonnay**, by Stonestreet, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County: floral aromas, flavors of ripe peaches, voluptuous and rich; \$55.

**2010 Edmeades Zinfandel**, Mendocino County (79 percent zinfandel, 11 percent syrah, 10 percent

petite sirah): hint of oak, concentrated flavors of black raspberries and black coffee; \$20.

**2010 Amoureux Red Blend Wine**, by Lasseter Family Winery, Sonoma Valley (73 percent malbec, 18 percent cabernet sauvignon, 7 percent merlot, 2 percent cabernet franc): aromas and flavors of black cherries, dark chocolate and cloves, rich and full-bodied, soft tannins; \$54.

**2011 Inniskillin Riesling Ice Wine**, Okanagan: Sweet, crisp and opulent, with aromas and flavors of lemon meringue; \$60 per half bottle.

#### RECOMMENDED

**2012 MacMurray Ranch Pinot Gris**, Russian River Valley: lush and rich, with flavors of baked apples and honey; \$20.

**2012 Matanzas Creek Sauvignon Blanc**, "Helena Bench," Sonoma County (99 percent sauvignon blanc, 1 percent semillon): rich and crisp, with aromas and flavors of

sweet oranges and fennel; \$40.

**2012 Silver Palm Winery Chardonnay**, Mendocino County and Alexander Valley: light and crisp, with aromas and flavors of golden apples and limes, tart finish; \$18.

**2010 Clos du Val Cabernet Sauvignon**, Napa Valley (86 percent cabernet sauvignon, 5 percent merlot, 7 percent cabernet franc, 2 percent petit verdot): toasty oak aroma, flavors of black plums and black pepper, full-bodied and smooth; \$38.

**2011 Freemark Abbey Merlot**, Napa Valley (83 percent merlot, 9 percent cabernet sauvignon, 7 percent petit verdot, 1 percent cabernet franc): aromas and flavors of black cherries and bittersweet chocolate, smooth and rich; \$34.

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