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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

Riding the Rails on the Grapevine Wine Train



Holiday Gift Ideas for the
Wine Lovers in Your Life

Pairing Wines With Fare
from Around the World

A Touch of Paradise in
Paso Robles Wine Country

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Savor the Season... With Wine

By Robert Johnson

'Tis the season to be jolly... and to celebrate with good food, good wine and good friends.

Hey, if it weren't for this time of the year, Weight Watchers would go out of business. So, in the interest of full employment at weight control centers across the country, do your part this month by celebrating in style. You have all of 2012 to work off those extra pounds.

This issue of *The Grapevine* includes several holiday-themed features, including a pair of taste-tempting recipes that you'll want to try... perhaps more than once... in the weeks ahead. Matter of fact, the two recipes make great pairing partners.

But before you get to the recipes, be sure to read about the holiday wine excursions that have been planned in Grapevine, Texas. Each includes a reception, a ride on a train, live music, dessert and wine samples from a local wine estate. We love to visit Grapevine any time of the year, but during the holidays, this special place transforms into a true wonderland.

Then check out our "Food & Wine Pairings" department, where you'll

read about holiday delicacies from around the world — including some dishes you may never have had — accompanied by wine pairing suggestions from the Vinesse tasting panel.

Also in this issue, we have the scoop on the upcoming Food & Wine Classic in beautiful Aspen, a new place to eat in the town of Napa, stylish lodging in



the California winegrowing area of Paso Robles, and an amazing vineyard — amazingly steep in slope — in Sonoma County.

Throughout the year, *The Grapevine* brings you lots of tips to help make your wine-drinking experience more enjoyable. During the holiday season, putting this newsletter together is particularly enjoyable, because of the unique experiences — food-and-wine pairing, travel, etc. — that the season brings.

So, enjoy this issue, but more importantly, enjoy the season. As Vinesse founder Martin Stewart Jr. would say, "Cheers!"



Holiday Gift Ideas for Wine Lovers

Is there a wine lover on your holiday shopping list? If so, read on...

A perfect gift for any first-time visitor to France would be the “Metro Wine Map of France” (\$25), created by Dr. David Gissen, who is an architectural historian and wine enthusiast.

The map resembles a public transit map, and that design approach helps put France’s wine regions into clear focus. Dr. Gissen uses a different color to note each of his delineated regions: the Loire Valley, Burgundy, the Rhone Valley, Provence & Corsica, Languedoc-Roussillon, Bordeaux, the south west, Champagne, Alsace & Lorraine, and Jura & Savoie.

Appellations within each region are clearly marked, and the map also indicates each area’s key winegrape varieties. A nice bonus is the wide array of architectural landmarks that are shown.

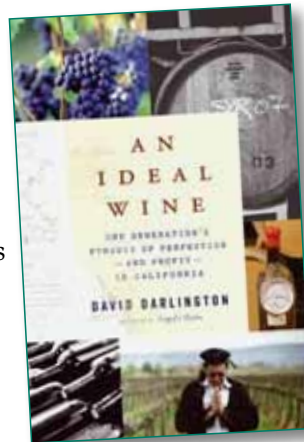
If you’re shopping for a voracious reader, there’s a new book out that provides a

comprehensive look at two very different approaches to wine.

An Ideal Wine: One Generation’s Pursuit of Perfection — and Profit — in California (\$27) is David Darling’s engrossing account of how the California wine industry was dramatically changed by the influence of a few powerful critics and corporatization.

The tale is told mostly through the eyes of two men who are polar opposites when it comes to winemaking: Leo McCloskey and Randall Grahm. McCloskey is the analytical geek who uses technology to predict wine ratings (and, by extension, sales potential). Grahm is the romantic vintner who seeks to elevate underappreciated grape varieties and allow the grapes to speak through the wines. It’s the classic “battle” between technology and naturalism.

Is there a common ground for McCloskey and Grahm? One would think not, but Darling’s dissertation suggests there may be. And wouldn’t that be a wonderful message to embrace at holiday time?



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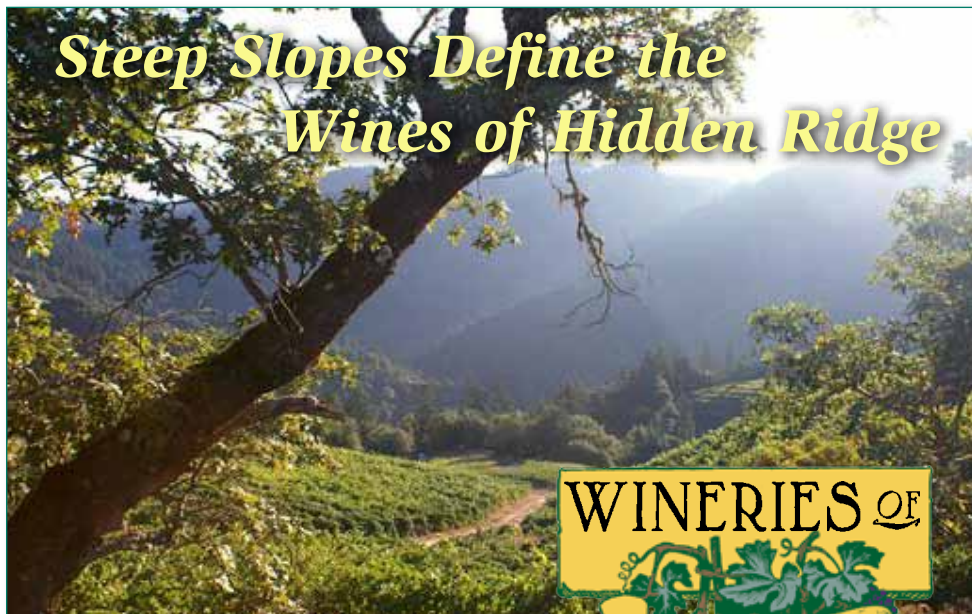
FREQUENCY:

Approximately Monthly

PRICE:

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When Casidy Ward and Lynn Hofacket purchased the Hidden Ridge Vineyard property in 1991, they envisioned the former site of a private hunting club as the perfect location for a home in the country — a place that truly would be away from it all.

Hofacket comes across as a down-to-earth, practical man, with a sharp sense of humor that's often directed at local politics or the powers-that-be in the winemaking world. He does not, under even the wildest of assumptions, seem insane.

But pay a visit to his vineyard, and the slopes he dared to farm, and you might well question his sanity. Then taste his and Ward's wines (back on flat ground), and your assessment may change to "crazy genius."

Hofacket grew up in southwest Oklahoma on his family's wheat and cattle ranch, where he gained hands-on experience in farming, learning everything from agricultural practices to handling and repairing heavy equipment. He was working in real estate when he met Ward in Oklahoma City. The two married a few years later.

Ward was born in Enid, Okla. She credits her parents, entrepreneurs in the natural gas industry, for instilling her with the persevering spirit and inquisitive nature that led her to become an entrepreneur as well.

She played tennis competitively in high school and the first year of college, and studied Political Science and Petroleum Engineering at the University of Oklahoma. After moving west in 1989, she returned to school, and earned an MBA in International Business and Marketing at the Thunderbird School of Global Management.

When Hofacket and Ward purchased the Hidden Ridge property, they didn't realize just how difficult it would be to develop such a rural piece of land for residential use. Ultimately, it proved a better home for grapes than for people, and they found that their Cabernet Sauvignon thrived on the otherwise inhospitable mountain slopes at elevations ranging from 900

to 1,700 feet.

In the early 1990s, Hofacket enrolled in viticulture classes at Santa Rosa Junior College, and visited every mountain vineyard in Napa and Sonoma counties to which he could gain access. He interviewed vineyard managers, engineers and viticulturists.

It wasn't until a few years later, in 1996, that the couple fully decided on planting the vineyard. At this point, Hofacket knew that if they went ahead with the project, he would clear the land and install the vineyard himself.

He purchased the heavy equipment — “buying iron,” as it's called in agriculture — and hired a crew of two men to help. The lessons learned on the farm in Oklahoma during his youth gave him confidence that his investment would not go to waste; he knew how to operate heavy machinery, and how to keep it running. Prices were low at the time, thanks to the Asian market crash of the mid-1990s, which had led to a worldwide surplus of heavy machinery for agriculture.

Thus began six years of what Hofacket refers to as “the ultimate sweat equity project,” working 12 hours a day, six days a week, to carve the terraces, plant the vines and bring in his first harvest of Cabernet Sauvignon.

The challenges were enormous. If it wasn't navigating the steep slopes in a tractor, then it was in the form of “black goo” — a fungal infestation of grapevines that was plaguing nurseries at the time, making it virtually impossible to find clean rootstock. Hofacket shut down production for a full year until he found a nursery in Winters, Calif., with healthy plant material. The rootstock was then field-grafted to Cabernet Sauvignon, with the first vines planted in 2000.

Ward shared Hofacket's determination and curiosity to see a venture through to fruition. While

Hofacket was reaching out to viticulturists and vineyard managers to seek advice on planting mountain vineyards, Ward was calling on some of the most lauded Cabernet winemakers in the region to see if they might someday be interested in buying grapes.

A few were intrigued enough to make the trek up to the site to see the vineyard in person. Marco DiGiulio was one of them. He thought the site was fantastically rare, not to mention the wildest California vineyard he'd seen. He visited in person in 1999 — before any vines had been planted — and continued to stay in touch throughout the vineyard's development.

When the vines bore fruit, DiGiulio was one of the first in line to purchase grapes. Other top winemakers in the Napa Valley also were interested in purchasing fruit from Hidden Ridge, but they could take only limited amounts in order to keep the Napa Valley designation on their bottles because Hidden Ridge Vineyard is located within the Sonoma County political boundary.

Hofacket and Ward thought they'd try to build the vineyard's reputation by bottling some of the wine for themselves, and Hidden Ridge Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon was born, beginning with a small, “experimental” batch in 2001.

Production now is more than 3,600 cases — still very small — with Ward and Hofacket keeping all of the fruit for their Hidden Ridge Vineyard label.

Because of its limited production and remote location, there is no Hidden Ridge tasting room. However, Morton's Steakhouse locations around the country have been serving the Hidden Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon by the glass — a great way to sample a special wine from a very unusual location.



Four Seasons



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Riding the Rails on a Christmas Wine Train



There's no better time to get acquainted with the wineries of the Texas town of Grapevine than during the holidays — when the Grapevine Christmas Trains chug along over three consecutive Thursdays.

Grapevine is a great place for a wine lover to visit any time of the year.

Within the downtown area, there are several tasting rooms within easy walking distance of one another, ranging from basic tasting bars to full-blown visitor centers with gift shops.

But in December, visitors can give their feet a rest and enjoy the gift of the grape while riding in vintage coach cars.

Each wine train excursion begins with a 7 p.m. reception at the Grapevine Cotton Belt Railroad District on Main Street, where local musicians will be on hand to entertain.

Each guest will receive a complimentary beverage in a commemorative Christmas wine glass. Boarding of the coaches will begin at 7:30, and once on board, guests will be treated to dessert and Christmas carols.

A representative of a featured winery will be on hand to serve its wares and educate guests about its selected wines. The relaxing excursion will include more holiday musical favorites, caroling and a visit from

Santa. The train will return to the downtown depot at around 9:30.

The cost? \$36 per person.

Here's a look at the winery and entertainment schedule:

- **December 8** — Rocky Gribble will provide the music, and a number of bottlings from D'Vine Wine of Grapevine will be featured, including Wonderland White (a non-vintage blend of Chardonnay and Semillon); Sleigh Ride Red (a non-vintage blend of Malbec and Tempranillo); Sunset (described as a semi-sweet wine that resembles a peach cobbler in flavor); Sunrise (described as a holiday sipper that's infused with cranberries); and Red Zinfandel (so named to differentiate it from White Zinfandel).

- **December 15** — Rocky Gribble returns for an encore performance, and Su Vino Winery will provide the adult beverages, including Almond Sparkling Wine (made in the traditional Champagne method with just a hint of pure almond added for a creamy, nutty, almost sweet flavor); Island Paradise (a lightly sweet wine with exotic kiwi and lush



TOURING TIPS

pear flavors); Chardonnay (made in an “un-oaked” style to preserve and accentuate the fruit flavors of the grapes); Malbec (the signature variety of Argentina); and Quintetto (a non-vintage blend of Zinfandel, Syrah and Barbera that's aged in Hungarian and American oak).

- **December 22** — Andrew Boyer will provide the music, while Cross Timbers Winery serves up the wine. Among the bottlings to be featured are “My Favorite” Muscat Canelli (a summertime sipping wine that also matches beautifully with cheeses, spicy foods, fresh fruit pastries and creamy desserts); Viv Mi Amor Blush (a non-vintage blend of Riesling, Chenin Blanc and Ruby Cabernet which is crafted to appeal to lovers



D'Vine Wine tasting room

of both white and red wine); Grapevine Red (a non-vintage blend of Sangiovese and Shiraz made in a sweet style); Sangiovese (a 100% Texas High Plains wine made from grapes grown in the Lone Star State's oldest Sangiovese vineyard); and Hot Mulled Wine (with its alluring winter notes of ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg).

Grapevine is home to numerous restaurants, ranging from hubs of old-time comfort food to upscale culinary destinations. It's also a shopping mecca, home to eclectic gift and jewelry shops, clothing stores, home décor and furniture consignment stores, art galleries and more.

And during the holiday season, Grapevine transforms into "The

Christmas Capital of Texas," blanketed with millions of glistening lights, enormous decorations and animated characters.

If your feet are up to the task, it's easy to make a full day of it in Grapevine, beginning with breakfast, followed by shopping and winery tasting room visits, followed by dinner, and topped off with an excursion on the Christmas Wine Train.

While Grapevine is a family-friendly destination, keep in mind that the Christmas Wine Trains are open only to those 21 and over. The trains will run rain or shine, and further information is available by visiting: <https://www.grapevinetexasusa.com/christmas/NPX/WineTrains.html>



Christmas lights decorate the Town Square gazebo in Grapevine

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Napa Valley Boxed Lunch.

If you visit Addendum — which is little more than a shack behind Thomas Keller's Ad Hoc restaurant in the Napa Valley town of Yountville — you just may have an opportunity to taste the best potato salad on Earth. If it's available on the day of your visit, get it, and make it the centerpiece of one of the finest boxed lunches you'll ever have. Get the buttermilk fried chicken, and you may never eat KFC again — and that's mighty high praise in our book.

www.adhocrestaurant.com/addendum

2 Hot Vienna Wine Bar. In

Austria, the wine taverns are known as heurigers, and one of the best in Vienna is Heuriger Wieninger, which is adjacent to a vineyard that has been around for more than a hundred years. The pork-crackling dumplings, or grammelknodel, match perfectly with a glass of homegrown Gruner Veltliner.

www.heuriger-wieninger.at

3 Hot Winery Bistro.

The Cape winelands of South Africa is home to the Steenberg Hotel & Winery, where the 70-seat Bistro Sixteen82 is a wine lover's dream come true. The bistro overlooks the adjacent vineyards, the tapas menu is imaginative and the wine list is inspired — a perfect retreat after a day of golf.

www.steenberghotel.com



Port. A fortified dessert wine made from indigenous grapes in Portugal. While there are vintage-specified bottlings made, most Ports are blends of multiple vintages.

Qupe. A quality-focused winery located in California's Santa Barbara County growing region. It was founded by renowned vintner Bob Lindquist.

Rhone. A valley in southern France that produces some of that country's most affordable and enjoyable table wines. Blends involving Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre can be amazingly flavorful and food-friendly.

Sweet. An impression in the mouth provided by some wines, including some fermented completely dry. In those cases, the impression of sweetness comes from the fruit flavors in the wine.

Tempranillo. A grape that makes a delicious red wine, and is historically linked to Spain.

VINESSE STYLE

PASO ROBLES LODGING

*P*aso Robles has become one of the more popular "getaway" destinations for residents of both San Francisco and Los Angeles — no doubt because it's about half-way between those two big cities.

Over the past 20 years, as vineyard plantings in the area have multiplied, Paso Robles has become "wine country" in every sense of the phrase, with a vibrant culinary scene and a growing number of lodging options.



Among the newer places to stay is Inn Paradiso, a renovated bed-and-breakfast just five minutes from Paso's quaint downtown. The inn oozes rustic elegance, its atmosphere created by mid-century furniture, antiques, art and photography, all selected by the new owners, who happen to be artists.

There are only three guest rooms in the converted barn, but it's a high-tech converted barn, complete with iPod docks. On the low-tech, eco-friendly side of things, much of the morning breakfast is made from items grown in the inn's organic garden.

The views are magnificent (particularly at sunset), the pool is refreshing, and the innkeepers are friendly. What more could one ask for after a long day of wine tasting?

To learn more about this touch of paradise in Paso Robles, visit: www.innparadiso.com

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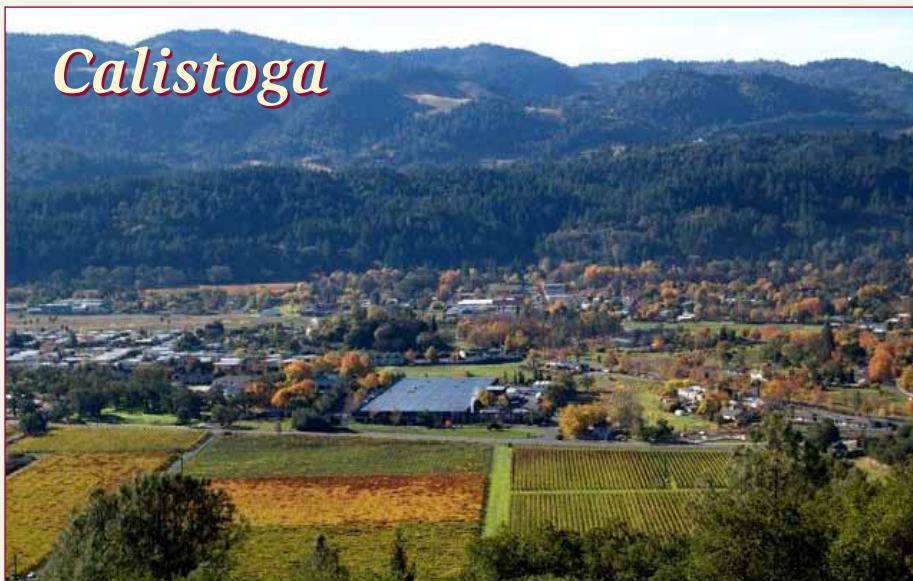
PRICE:

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Calistoga



Calistoga, located at “the top” of the Napa Valley, has been a tourist magnet for decades. But it also is a unique winegrowing area, and in 2009, it finally was granted American Viticultural Area status.

Calistoga has a small-town feel, even though it’s home to a number of high-end spas that are fed by the underground springs. It was those springs that attracted visitors for much of the town’s early history. Today, there also are numerous family-friendly attractions, including the Petrified Forest Museum, Old Faithful Geysers, Bothe-Napa Valley State Park and Robert Lewis Stevenson State Park.

At Calistoga’s Sharpsteen Museum, the permanent exhibits are designed to present the history of the upper Napa Valley from its pre-history to post-World War I, with an emphasis on people and changes brought by the period of U.S. emigration and development.

In addition to its many historical exhibits, the museum uses unique and extraordinarily extensive dioramas to depict Calistoga during its period as the elegant 1860s Hot Springs resort developed by pioneer, promoter, publisher, entrepreneur and millionaire Sam Brannan.

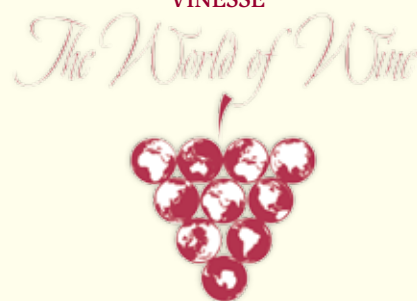
Special exhibits, which change quarterly, reflect the varied interests of the people of the valley, and have ranged from antique silverware to model ships to historical musical instruments.

But what defines Calistoga as a winegrowing region? Its climate is warm to hot, depending upon the time of year. Summer temperatures peak to 90 degrees and fall to the low 50s, the result of marine air from the northwest producing cool afternoon and evening breezes.

Elevations range from 300 to 1,200 feet, and rainfall ranges from 38 to 60 inches annually. The soils are almost completely of volcanic origin, and include rocky, stony loam on the hillsides; gravelly or cobbly loams on the alluvial fans, and heavier clay-silt soils in the valley center areas.

Over time, growers and vintners have identified Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Syrah and Petite Sirah as the varieties that perform best in the unique climate. Hearty red wines are Calistoga’s specialty.

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FREQUENCY:

6 times per year

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Q I've been reading about the many new restaurants in the town of Napa, both in *The Grapevine* and in other publications. Is there one in particular that you folks at Vinesse really like?

A You're right: Napa no longer is the sleepy little town that it once was, and there are numerous places where one can enjoy a memorable meal. Among the newer restaurants, 1313 Main has generated a great deal of buzz with its fireside lounge and other wining/dining spaces. Its name not only is a reflection of its address on Main Street, but also of its beverage concept, which involves an ever-changing list of 13 white wines, 13 red wines and, for those who prefer some carbonation, 13 craft beers. Toss in charcuterie and artisanal cheeses, and you have many reasons not only to visit, but to linger — an ideal climate for a wine lover. Info: www.1313main.com



Swiss chocolatier Lindt has embarked on a campaign to inform the public about wine-pairing possibilities with its fine chocolates. With its Excellence 70% Cocoa, Lindt recommends Shiraz; with its Excellence 85% Cocoa, Zinfandel (red, not white); with its Excellence Touch of Sea Salt, a sweet Riesling; and with its Excellence Chili, Port. We're not so sure about the Riesling pairing, but as the Lindt marketing material notes, "The ideal combination is obtained when the taste notes harmonize and create an exciting new synergy."

“ I remembered my band tours in Europe, riding the bus through rural France and Spain, sitting up by the front window looking out at vineyards. And I looked at the terrain here and I thought, ‘I could do that.’ ”



— *Maynard James Keenan of the band Tool, on why he decided to plant a vineyard in Jerome, Ariz.*
(Source: *Sunset magazine*)

We're not sure how many trees it will save in the short term, but over time, we could be talking forests. It's a more eco-friendly approach to the traditional restaurant wine list, and it's catching fire in Las Vegas. At a number of fine-dining establishments in Sin City, the printed, leather-bound book has been replaced by an iPad, which enables guests to sort not only by wine type, but also by price and region. Among those using the iPad are Alizé at the Palms, Andre's at the Monte Carlo, Wolfgang Puck's CUT at the Palazzo, and Jaleo at the Cosmopolitan. Word is that Caesars Entertainment and MGM Resorts — operators of multiple properties on the famed Las Vegas Strip — will be the next to swap books for screens.



One of the most anticipated wine events each year, the Aspen Food & Wine Classic, has set its dates for 2012: June 15-17. Numerous similar events have sprung up in the three decades since the Classic made its debut, but none has ever been able to top Aspen in one regard: scenery. The Colorado ski resort provides an awe-inspiring backdrop for savoring great food and wine.

39 Percentage you'll save on comparable lodging when you stay in Oregon's Willamette Valley or Argentina's Mendoza region instead of the Napa Valley, according to *Money* magazine. The savings noted was for a mid-week stay in September.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



Curry Devil

GLOBAL HOLIDAY FARE

Tired of the same-old same-old holiday dishes? Are you up to here with ham, and can't handle another serving of turkey?

Then the December issue of *Travel and Leisure* may be right up your alley. The magazine's "Insider" department includes a list of five "savory holiday dishes from around the world," none of which you'd ever find on a "typical" American holiday table.

Since *Travel and Leisure* went to the trouble of tracking down these "festive foods," it seems only fair that *The Grapevine* suggest some wines to accompany them. So, grab your passport, and come along for the ride...

■ **From the Amalfi Coast of Italy: Eel.** "Fried, it's a go-to Christmas favorite," *T&L* says. Eel often is fried in a pan that includes wine, so we suggest pouring a glass of the wine used for that purpose. Rather than an okay Chardonnay, opt for an "un-oaked" Sauvignon Blanc or Chenin Blanc.

■ **From Sweden: Jansson's Temptation.** *T&L* describes this dish as "a casserole of potatoes, herring, onions, cream and bread crumbs." A dry or off-dry, Alsatian-

style Riesling would be a wonderful match. Chill down the wine for a nice "counterpoint" to the warmth of the dish.

■ **From Singapore: Curry Devil.** "Chicken, cocktail sausages, cabbage and cucumbers are stewed in a spicy *rempah* gravy," *T&L* says. Since the gravy pretty much defines this dish's flavor, opt for a creamy, refreshing *blanc de blancs* sparkling wine.

■ **From Japan: Toshikoshi Soba.** A simple plate of buckwheat noodles. Preparations vary, and some include soy sauce. When soy sauce is not used, the wine pairing is simple: Select your favorite kind of wine and enjoy. When the flavor of soy sauce is apparent, try a dry or off-dry Chenin Blanc or Riesling.

■ **From Ethiopia: Yebeg Wot.** *T&L* describes this lamb-based stew as "thick, buttery (and) *berbere*-spiced." This is another dish that often incorporates wine in its preparation. A good choice would be (red) Zinfandel — both in the cooking pot and the wine glass.

Light & Sweet

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FREQUENCY:

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PRICE:

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GINGERBREAD COOKIES

Unlike fruit cake, the cookies made from this recipe, which yields 16 servings, are not likely to be re-gifted. Try the cookies with Hot Mulled Wine (see accompanying recipe) or your favorite late harvest, dessert-style wine.

Ingredients

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup dark brown sugar, packed
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup unsulfured molasses
- 6 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon finely ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Preparation

1. In a large bowl, beat together butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
2. Beat in eggs and molasses.
3. In another bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, baking powder, spices and salt.
4. Stir flour mixture into butter mixture.
5. Divide dough into thirds and wrap each third in plastic wrap. Chill for about 1 hour.
6. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
7. Roll dough 1/8-inch thick between two pieces of waxed paper. Cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Transfer shapes to ungreased cookie sheets. Refrigerate about 15 minutes.
8. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until crisp but not dark.
9. Allow to cool on the cookie sheet for 1 minute, then remove to wire racks to cool completely.

HOT MULLED WINE

When the weather outside is frightful, stay inside and cozy up to a glass of hot mulled wine. The best versions are made with fruit-forward red wines such as Zinfandel or Beaujolais Nouveau. This recipe renders 4 to 6 servings, depending on serving size. Try it with gingerbread cookies, made from the accompanying recipe.

Ingredients

- One 750-ml. bottle of red wine, such as Zinfandel or Beaujolais Nouveau
- One orange, peeled and sliced (note: retain orange peel)
- 1/4 cup of brandy
- 8 to 10 cloves
- 2/3 cup honey or sugar
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tsp. fresh or 2 tsp. ground ginger

Preparation

1. Combine all ingredients in either a large pot or a slow cooker.
2. Warm the ingredients on low to medium heat (avoid boiling) for 20 to 25 minutes. Stir occasionally to make sure that the honey or sugar has completely dissolved.
3. Add zest from orange peel, to taste.
4. When the liquid is steaming and the ingredients are well blended, ladle the mulled wine into mugs, leaving the seasonings behind.

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