

Thanksgiving is all about family, friends and portions of food so gigantic even Beowulf would get his fill! Pairing wine with such epic feasts can be a daunting task. Alas, even the faint of heart can achieve wondrous excellence on Thanksgiving with a little help from those devoted to seeking out the finest wines for each special occasion.

Though the plethora of side dishes likely served today may be a bit more plentiful than a millennium ago, it is still a matter of knowing what to look for when pairing wine with food. And such a feast as we are all about to consume calls for two things in the appropriate wine: fruit and acid.

Riesling and turkey are two peas in a pod. The high acid, fruit-driven white wine will meld well on your palate in the midst of rich, creamy or spicy sides. Riesling is grown all over the world of wine and vinified dry, sweet and anywhere in between. Contrary to popular belief, Riesling is most often fermented dry.

Another fantastic alternative white wine is Gewurztraminer. Its inherent fruitiness and spice adds a pretty floral note to your meal and gladly cleans your palate with every sip. Like Riesling, this grape is vinified dry or sweet but is lower in acid than Riesling. Gewurztraminer tends to be higher in alcohol and more extracted than Riesling.

Pinot Noir is the first choice for red wine and turkey. If you are up to speed on the latest trends in the wine industry you will undoubtedly have tasted a wine made from this velvety, low tannin grape. At home in Burgundy and comfortable in California, Oregon and New Zealand, Pinot Noir has the ability to bring your holiday meal together. Its subtlety and nuance make it a dynamic part of the meal and not the centerpiece among myriad flavors as you will find on your plate.

Grown in Piedmont, Italy (near the site of the last Olympic Games), Barbera is a workhorse grape that pays the bills while the big boys, Barolo and Barbaresco, are quietly aging in wooden barrels. This medium bodied and velvety wine with high acidity renders itself to be a delightful match for a variety of dishes.

For those of you brave souls that may have actually found yourself accompanying Beowulf on his way to hunt down Grendel-had you lived so many years ago-try drinking sparkling wine with your meal. The high acid and fruitiness of Champagne, or any bubbly, will be a wonderful-and non-traditional-pairing for your holiday meal.

The wine folks here at Liquor Mart are highly motivated to suggest the best wines for your holiday feast. So when you are graciously accepting compliments from your guests on the tantalizing wine selections, tilt your glass our way!

Best,

Padraic C. O'Neill and Bob Johnston of Liquor Mart's wine department