

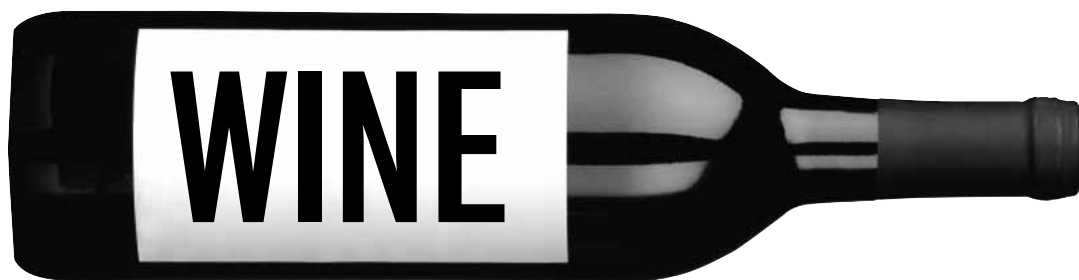


## WINE TASTING

Partake in the Icon Wines of the New World from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday at the Woman's National Democratic Club, 1526 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington. Cost is \$120. Call 301-841-7609 for more information.

## CINDY GREENBERG *Vine Gal*

# What to do with leftover ...



Leftover wine? To quote a line from one of my favorite movies: "That's inconceivable."

It is not an intuitively obvious option to me. I know that there are a lot of leftovers the day after Thanksgiving: desserts, side dishes and, of course, turkey. But wine? I just can't believe that there would be any leftover wine. However, given our philosophy of enjoying multiple wines throughout the evening, I guess it's possible to end up with a sip or two left in the bottle at the end of the night.

So what to do with leftover wine? The following advice has been collected from various friends and colleagues over the years.

First, it's important to remember — or learn — that air is both wine's best friend and worst enemy. Most wines improve with some exposure to air. A wine that has been decanted for, say, 15 to 30 minutes will probably taste a little softer and rounder than if sampled straight out of the bottle. But too much exposure to air can overoxidize the wine and turn it into an objectionable beverage.

Second, there is no perfect solution to removing the oxygen and keeping it out of the wine once a bottle has been opened. So once it is open, the name of the game is to limit the exposure to air or slow the oxidation reaction.

Some methods are better than others and may buy you a few days or even weeks, but ultimately, once the cork — or screw cap — is off the bottle, the wine's days are numbered.

My favorite option is to simply consume the contents of bottle after you open it. I find that inviting friends over usually does the trick. But I also look for half-bottles of my favorite wines so there's less to waste.

A popular option is to use a device to extract air from the bottle. Most products consist of a pliable rubber stopper that is inserted into the top of the bottle. A handheld pump is then used to suck the air out of the bottle and produce a vacuum seal. A reasonably priced unit runs around \$20 and can be found at most wine shops and home goods stores.

Specialty stores and online catalogs carry small cylinders of pres-

### LEFTOVER WINE? NO PROBLEM!

There are many ways to protect that leftover wine. Remember that air is both wine's best friend and worst enemy. Here are a few products to help save that wine until the next tasting.

» A popular option is to use a device to extract air from the bottle. Most products consist of a pliable rubber stopper that is inserted into the top of the bottle. A handheld pump is then used to suck the air out of the bottle and produce a vacuum seal.



» Or you can splurge — \$200 — on a self-contained pod that uses argon gas in a pressure- and temperature-controlled capsule. Simply place your open bottle in the Pek Supremo Wine Steward chamber, add the argon gas and set the thermostat, and your wine is good for up to two weeks.

surized inert gas, such as argon, that you can spray into an open bottle of wine. In theory, because the inert gas is heavier than the air in the bottle, it displaces the air away from the surface of the wine and forms a protective layer between the wine and oxygen. The cylinders I have seen are good for 10 to 15 uses, so the cost of protecting your leftovers can get pricey.

Or you can splurge — \$200 — on a self-contained pod that uses argon gas in a pressure- and temperature-controlled capsule. Simply place your open bottle in the Pek Supremo Wine Steward chamber, add the argon gas and set the thermostat, and your wine is good for up to two weeks.

Probably my second-favorite technique is a relatively inexpensive, low-tech option that works very well. After you open your chosen bottle, immediately decant half of it into an empty half bottle. Fill the smaller bottle up into the neck, but not quite to the point where it will touch the bottom of the cork you just removed. Use your thumb to push the cork into the half bottle — the imprint on the cork will remind you of what is in the bottle. This will leave very little air in the bottle.

You can also put the filled half bottle in the refrigerator to slow the oxidation reaction. When you want to drink it, set it out for about 30 min-

utes beforehand.

A slightly more extreme alternative is to place the half bottle in the freezer. Yes, I said the freezer. And if that didn't seem improbable enough, defrost the wine by placing the bottle in the microwave (oh my gosh!) for two 30-second intervals, then let it stand on the counter for about 10 minutes. We've tried this technique with some trepidation (and a less expensive bottle of wine), and it actually works!

A practice that is gaining popularity — due to an increase in quality — is using "box" wine. A spigot at the bottom of the box is used to dispense the wine while the collapsible airtight bag inside keeps the wine fresh for several weeks.

But in the end, the best method is to have no leftover wines. Happy Thanksgiving.



Do you have a favorite royalty of wine? E-mail scott@vineguy.com.



## HOLIDAY 'CHEERS'

# No need to whine if you're bringing wine

By Tanya Bricking Leach

It's a look wine shop clerks know well. That overwhelmed, glassy-eyed stare that afflicts people as they wade through aisle after aisle of wine in search of the right bottle to bring to a party.

But arming yourself with a little advice and doing a bit of planning can make it easy to break out of the wine shop stupor and get the right wine for the right event for the right price.

Step 1: Relax. It's just wine. And most shops are jammed with great \$10 bottles, so it's hard to make an awful choice.

Step 2: Think about where you're going. Is it a formal dinner where your wine will be considered and discussed? Or is it a party where your offering might be one of a dozen bottles opened for the crowd?

Step 3: Think about how much you want to spend. Dinner with the boss might merit a different spending limit than a casual evening with friends. In either case, you can get very nice wines for under \$25.

Step 4: If possible, find out what's on the menu. If you can't, think about your hosts. Do they favor ethnic foods or are they more meat-and-potato types?

Step 5: Take your answers to Steps 2, 3 and 4 to a wine shop and talk to the people who work there.

"Trust them rather than trying to shop yourself based on price or what bottle has the prettiest label," says James O. Fraioli, editor-at-large for *Touring & Tasting* magazine.

Still feel you're in rugged territory? For just about any holiday event, it's hard to go wrong with a pinot noir (red), riesling (sweet or dry white) or anything with bubbles. And here's some event-specific advice from the experts.

### FOR A BRUNCH

"Brunch is honestly the easiest," says Mary Ewing-Mulligan, president of the International Wine Center, a New York wine school that trains wine professionals and serious consumers. "A sparkling wine is perfect for brunch."

Champagne is great with eggs or toasted bread flavors, she says. And if your budget isn't quite that generous?

"You can't go wrong

with a prosecco or a good cava," says Brian Freedman, a food and wine writer and director of wine education at The Wine School of Philadelphia.

A prosecco is a light sparkling wine from Italy; cava is Spain's answer to prosecco. Both go down easily and are less expensive than champagne, which is produced only in France.

### FOR A DINNER

"We think you should really be driven by the type of food being served," says Karen Page, co-author of "What to Drink With What You Eat." "If you don't know what the food is, go for bubbles or rose."

Other good, all-purpose, food-friendly options are rieslings and pinot noirs, she says.

"Riesling is the single most food-friendly white wine there is," she says. This low-alcohol wine has a hint of sweetness and goes well with spicy cuisines, such as Indian, as well as Asian foods, such as sushi.

Ewing-Mulligan, who calls rieslings the next hot thing in white wines, suggests choosing one from someplace unexpected, such as the Finger Lakes region of New York.

If you'd rather go for something red, pinot noir is considered highly versatile when it comes to pairing with food, doing as well with a hearty red meat as with a delicate seafood.

### FOR A PARTY

For parties where the food is likely to be hors d'oeuvres — which often results in an amalgam of flavors and cuisines — consider going with bubbly, Ewing-Mulligan says.

"Everybody always appreciates bubbles during the holidays," she says. "It makes everything more festive."

### MISCELLANY

» Don't expect your gift bottle to necessarily be opened at dinner, says Ray Isle, senior wine editor at *Food & Wine* magazine. There's no etiquette that dictates your host (who may have chosen wine for the meal) must open your bottle.

» Consider wines with a story. Perhaps the wine is from a region you recently visited. Or you drank it on a special occasion. Or purchase from a winery that is local to you. — AP

