

Wines for Your Easter Basket



Easter Sunday is usually a day that begins with an egg hunt for the kids and ends with a wine hunt for the adults. Searching for the right wine to serve with Easter dinner can make you as crazy as forgetting where you hid the last Easter egg – until the smell reminds you a week or so later.

It seems like every family has their own main course tradition, ranging from ham to turkey to spring lamb. And with all of the side dishes competing for space on the plate, making room on the palate can be a challenge.

Versatility is the name of the game this Easter. Start with picking out a wine that will play well with your main course and then refine your selection based on a few key side dishes. For example, if you plan on having ham, consider a wine that will support the richness of the meat while counter-balancing the saltiness. Or if turkey is the centerpiece of your holiday table, grab a bottle that will liven up the mild flavors of the bird. Here are a few wines I plan on putting in my basket when I hop over to dinner this Sunday. Retail prices are approximate.

Of course, no celebration is complete without starting off with a little bubbly in the glass. And no matter how many times I tell my friends that New Mexico – yes, New Mexico – makes a delicious, value-oriented sparkling wine, I still have to actually pour the **Non-vintage Gruet Blanc de Noir** to convince them. This wine is a white wine made from pinot noir grapes. Aromas of strawberry and rose petals dominate the nose while flavors of strawberry, ripe apricots and baked bread glide over the tongue on a crisp frame. The bright finish delivers notes of toasty oak and vanilla. **\$19**

If you're planning on serving ham for Easter dinner, try the **2012 La Crema - Pinot Noir Russian River Valley** from Sonoma, California. This pinot is not too brooding but it has an intense nose showing an attractive bright berry fruit profile. In the mouth, the wine displays good concentration of herb-tinged red berry fruit that can stand up to the flavorful meat. The finish is well-balanced, showing notes of dark cherry and a touch of violets. The hint of cinnamon on the tail end of the finish will pair nicely with sweet potato casserole. **\$25**

Turkey loves the touch of a delicately sweet Riesling, as long it has enough acidity to keep the wine from being too cloying and drowning out the poultry. My recommendation is the **2013 Poet's Leap Riesling from the Columbia Valley in Washington State**. Inspired by the greatest wines of Germany and crafted by one of Germany's most highly acclaimed Riesling producers using Washington State fruit, it displays kumquat and white floral characters on the nose and bright, zesty flavors of melon, peach, and lemon/lime notes in the mouth. The crisp acidity keeps the pitch-perfect sweetness in check as well as cleansing the palate after each sip. **\$19**

Spring lamb is a popular center piece on many Easter tables, and a classic pairing is, of course, Syrah. The beautifully balanced **2012 Chevalier Crozes Hermitage "Voleysse"** is made from 100% Syrah from the northern Rhône valley wine region of France and is just rich, full and spicy enough to compliment the flavor and texture of lamb. Flavors of black cherries, dried herbs and tobacco lead the way to a slightly peppery finish. It has excellent balance and structure and drinks like a wine twice the price. **\$30**