

TOWN&COUNTRY

What One of the World's Best Sommeliers Thinks You Should Drink With Your Holiday Meals

We asked Aldo Sohm, one of the world's top sommeliers, to help pick wines for your holiday dinners and parties.

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Ildo Sohm, the longtime wine director at Le Bernardin in New York, has spent decades helping people choose what to drink with their meals. In the process, he's won numerous awards, including Best Sommelier in the World from the Worldwide Sommelier Association. This month, his new book, [Wine Simple: Perfect Pairings](#), written with Christine Muhlke, will be published by Clarkson Potter. In it, Sohm endeavors to explain not just which wines taste good with which food but why. His idea is that once

you learn some basic concepts, you can start matching wines to meals on your own.

Pairing wine at a three-Michelin-star restaurant is one thing, but what about home-cooked holiday meals? The same principles apply, says Sohm. Below, his recommendations for Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve, and a special new holiday.

Thanksgiving

What would you serve with a traditional Thanksgiving meal, featuring roast turkey, stuffing, green beans, and cranberry sauce?

AS: I would start the celebration with a sparkling wine to set the mood. It doesn't have to be Champagne. There's a really great Spanish sparkling wine from Catalonia that costs about \$30 a bottle. It's made biodynamically, and the family behind it has an interesting story. On Thanksgiving, you eat basically all day until you burst. So I choose wines that are easy and quaffable. I would go with a dry Riesling, which is only about 12 percent alcohol. It has a tick of residual sugar, which is just able to hold up to the sweetness of the cranberry sauce. You could always do white Burgundy, though that would be pricier. I would probably stay away from a huge red, like a big Cabernet, because basically it'll just overpower everything on the table.

Sparkling

[Pepe Raventós, Conca Del Riu Anoia, 'Blanc de Blancs' Extra Brut '22](#)

Whites

[Riesling Senior, Lauer, Saar, Germany 2023](#)

[Sonoma Coast Hirsch](#)

Adventurous

[Lambrusco di Sorbara Paltrinieri Frizzante Solco 2024](#)

Christmas

Dinner is a baked glazed ham, sweet potatoes with marshmallows baked on top, brussel sprouts, and sweet desserts.

AS: It's Christmas, so of course there's also Champagne. I would definitely use a smaller brewer, such as Champagne Chartogne. The moment you get sweetness into the game, you have to counter it with something. A regular Chablis, for example, will fail utterly. The sweetness in the food will make the wine seem sour. You have to counter that with some sweetness. For me, glazed ham is always perfect with Gewürztraminer because it always has this tropical peach element to it. You could go with one from Alsace, like a Trimbach, where you get more spice elements, or you stay very clean and go with one from Alto Adige like Hofstätter. I like the one from Alto Adige a tick better because they tend to be drier and they're very clean in the fruit. If you are having a red, use Zinfandel—for instance, an old one from Bucklin. It'll be cold outside, and the weather and the food will hold up to that wine.

Sparkling

Champagne Chartogne Taillet Saint Anne NV

White

Gewürztraminer, Kolbenhof, J. Hofstatter, Alto Adige, Italy 2022

Red

Zinfandel, Field blend Bambino Old Hill Ranch, Bucklin, Sonoma Valley 2023

Adventurous

Grüner Veltliner 'Alte Reben', Bründlmayer, Kamptal, Austria 2023



Aldo Sohm is wine director at Le Bernardin and Aldo Sohm Wine Bar in New York City.

New Year's Eve

It's not a sit-down meal. Instead, it's a mix of things, from crab cakes to oysters to cheeses and at some point there will be black-eyed peas with collards for good luck.

AS: Definitely Champagne to start. I would do a Bollinger, for instance. Then continue with easy wines to drink, a Chablis or an Albariño—wines you won't get tired of. I would steer away from reds, but if a red has to be part of it, probably a light Burgundy. But again, I would just use it for someone who insists, because to me, New Year's Eve is basically Champagne until you collapse.

Sparkling

Champagne Bollinger, Special Cuvée, Brut NV

White

Chablis, Domaine Testut, Côte de Bréchain, Burgundy, France, 2023

Red

Volnay, 1er Cru Champans, Domaine Marquis d'Angerville, Burgundy 2021

Aldo Sohm Day

What if we had a national holiday where you got to pick the wine and then everyone had to decide what food to serve with it?

AS: Turn everything on its head? I love this idea because the same principles about pairing hold true. Lately I am very passionate about *vinos de pasto*. These are unfortified sheries and they are completely overlooked. They have a little bit of that veil of flor [a unique flavor and odor created during a stage of sherry production] but are not as pungent as a typical sherry would be. I have a specific one in mind that is more like a wine than actually sherry. It reminds me of a white Burgundy with its richness, but with not as much oak and maybe not as much acidity. If you have a seafood pasta with it, you're in absolute heaven. Whatever you have in terms of shellfish, whether it's shrimp or lobster, you are right on. Even with very complicated ingredients like artichokes, strangeLY enough, *vinos de pasto* work. It's just absolutely genius.

Unfortified Sherry

Palomino Fino, Ube El Carrascal, Bodegas Cota 45, Andalucia, Spain 2021