

MAKING THE CASE for Quality Time with Quality Wine (and special people)

By TOM FIRTH

Come December, we often internalize a desire to set aside the old year and bring in the new. We think of the past year, and likely think on how the year ahead could be – or should be better. There have been a few tough years recently, and in many ways, we are likely staring down a tricky year or two ahead.

Over the holidays, it is my sincerest hope that somehow, you manage to spend some quality time with special people, friends, colleagues, family – however your circle looks. For many, it wouldn't be the holidays without a turkey and all the fixings, but... there also aren't any rules!

This month, we have an assortment of sparkling wines, but also a handful of reds and smattering of whites to cover the bases, and maybe just enjoy a good glass or two.

Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season...

Find these wines by searching the CSPC code at Liquorconnect.com; your local liquor store can also use this code to order it for you. Prices are approximate.

Stag's Hollow 2019 Shuttleworth Creek Vineyard Dolcetto, Okanagan Falls British Columbia

Dolcetto is a grape that is rarely seen outside of Italy, but there are a number of places it seems to be perfectly at home – including at Stag's Hollow in Okanagan Falls. A fine balance of earthiness (and a whiff of smoke at first) on the nose with good support from black plums and spiciness. On the palate things start to sing with brightness to the fruits and a crisp, thoughtful finish. A fine alternative to a pinot noir this season.

CSPC +881706 \$30-35

Tom has been waxing on (and on) about wine, beer, and spirits for more than 25 years and freelances, consults, and judges on beverages all year long. He is the Managing Editor for Culinaire Magazine, and the Competition Director for the Alberta Beverage Awards.



Love Oregon 2018 Chardonnay McMinnville, Oregon

A big and stylish chardonnay that is almost peppery on the nose, with almond, tropical fruits and butter making appearances too. Very little oak flavour on the palate, but plenty of those autolytic characters of biscuity, breadly flavours on the palate supporting clean fruits. Very nice, very versatile chardonnay to match with fuller seafoods or lightly grilled poultry dishes.

CSPC +851203 \$30-35



Clover Hill NV Tasmanian Cuvée Rosé Tasmania, Australia

A stand-out-drop-dead-gorgeous bottle of rosé bubbly. Rather delicate berry fruits tread lightly on the toasty and almost creamy flavours and textures, and a completely full-on finish, but what really makes this stand out is that it's coming from Tasmania, that little-ish island south of the continent – and closer to Antarctica! A completely stunning bottle – sure to impress.

CSPC +870310 \$44-47



Noble Ridge 2017 The One Okanagan Falls, British Columbia

A dynamite sparkling wine from Okanagan Falls and made in the traditional method, using traditional grapes – chardonnay and pinot noir. The current, 2017 vintage strikes the right balance of structure and opulence, sharing tart fruits, sleek mineral character, and a rich, toasty finish. I'm continually surprised how much The One compares to far more expensive sparkling wines. If possible, share a glass with your special one.

CSPC +769194 \$45-50





**Isola Augusta NV Prosecco
Friuli, Italy**

Great prosecco is a fine treat indeed! Rife with pear and nectarine style fruits with candy sticks rounding out the nose, the silky textures, zesty acids and fine mousse are all well balanced and well integrated. A better drinking prosecco than most weeknight quaffers but would also be darn good while the sun is shining with a drink in hand – you know you want to.
CSPC +869888 \$24-27



**Clover Hill NV Tasmanian Cuvée
Tasmania, Australia**

When you think about it, cool-climate Tasmania is a perfect fit for making traditional method sparkling wines. A blend of the traditional champagne varieties, chardonnay, pinot noir, and pinot meunier, it's bursting with salinity and mineral characters, tightly wound citrus notes, and a wickedly crisp finish that goes for miles. Beautiful, quaffable bubbles for sure.
CSPC +870308 \$44-47



**Pievalta 2021 Tre Ripe Verdicchio
Le Marche, Italy**

I've never met a verdicchio that I didn't like, but this one from Pievalta might be my new favourite one. Tre Ripe (or three hills) is tightly wound with intense citrus flavours, stone fruits, a mild nuttiness, and a silky texture on the palate leading in to a zesty, slightly bitter finish. Serve with fish, fresh cheeses, shellfish, and even lightly salted appetizers. So very, very good.
CSPC +793700 \$35-39



**Gardet NV Brut Traditional
Champagne, France**

A fine combination of pear and apple dominant fruits, coupled with a rich, toasty/brioche character supporting a fine, flinty mineral tone and a long crisp finish. While champagne truly does pair with anything, this gem is perfect on its own as a glass, or as a toast. If food is in the cards, something simple like fresh strawberries or fine cheese, would be just lovely for this very classic wine.
CSPC +589788 \$52-59



**Wild Goose 2020 Riesling
Okanagan Valley, British Columbia**

A long-time producer of quality wines in the Okanagan, Wild Goose's riesling is one of the best I've had in recent memory. A fine balance of sweeter fruit presence – but still wonderfully dry and crisp, with loads of stone fruit and crushed stone minerals. One of those memorable glasses that was empty before I knew it. Drinking very well now and perfect with all sorts of rich, holiday dishes.
CSPC +414730 \$21-24



**Liquidity 2020 Reserve Pinot Noir
Okanagan Valley, British Columbia**

Liquidity occupies a wonderful place – rent free in my wine mind. Relatively hard to find, always a well-made selection, and last but not least, authentic wines. The reserve pinot is a bit of a throwback pinot with earthy, dirty cherries, woody characters, and a bit of smoke on the nose and palate. A bit more than medium bodied for pinot noir, this will be stunning with duck confit if you can manage it, or a prime rib.
CSPC +826668 \$65-70



**Pievalta NV Perluogo Zero Spumante
Le Marche, Italy**

Something completely new under the sun (at least for us in Alberta) comes a 100 percent verdicchio, zero dosage, sparkling wine with up to 24 months on the lees. Completely alive with tart green apples, evoking an almost cider house setting, with creamy brioche and toasty nuances. On the palate, zesty, dry, and rather spicy, this wine over-delivers in every regard. Try with shellfish, but this would also be fine indeed with snacks or a toast with friends.
CSPC +793701 \$45-49



Cecci 2017 Chianti Riserva, Tuscany, Italy

It's continually amazing how wonderfully suitable chianti can be at almost any table. Reasonably priced, oozing authenticity (it tastes Italian!) and good. A wine that gets right to the point, the Cecci is all about tart cherry style fruits with a mild cedar tone, supported with a clean herbaciousness. Mid-weight on the palate with pretty loud tannins and great acids, this would be just as at home with grilled red meats as well as rich, Bolognese sauces or even a night in with great pizza and a few laughs.
CSPC +799169 \$23-26



**Bruno Paillard NV Dosage Zero
Champagne, Champagne, France**

This bottle has zero dosage – normally the sweet, reserve wine added that among other things, balances the wine with a little sweetness to offset the carbonation. Here, the wine has to be made right on the razor's edge of intent and quality with no margin for error. A quite dry bottle of bubble with sleek mineral tones, a lifted toastiness, and a finish that goes for miles. Pair with oysters, great quality seafood, or a hot date.
CSPC +856057 \$100-110