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DISPEL HOLIDAY MYTHS AND ENJOY STRESS-FREE ENTERTAINMENT
Wineanswers.com offers Straight Talk and Recipes from Entertaining Expert Leslie Brenner

CHICAGO – From cocktail parties to costume parties, Americans love to entertain. And holiday entertaining requires some big decisions, such as whom to invite, what to eat and the age-old question – what wine to serve.

Leslie Brenner, expert for wineanswers.com and author of *The Art of the Cocktail Party* and *Fear of Wine*, wants to help make your holidays festive and stress-free by dispelling popular entertaining myths and offering simple but sophisticated hors d'oeuvre recipes and wine pairings.

Most Americans think that entertaining equals anxiety, says Brenner. “The idea that you have to spend a lot of time and money to entertain keeps people from entertaining more often,” she explains. “The truth of the matter is that you shouldn’t get bogged down in all the so-called holiday entertaining rules.” Brenner’s three main holiday entertaining survival tips are: have fun, relax and don’t forget the wine.

Offer Guests Variety

Whether it’s food or wine, it’s great to give your guests choices. According to the Wine Market Council, 65 percent of Americans are white wine drinkers, while 35 percent prefer red wine. And Brenner says don’t sweat it, there really is a wine choice for everyone. “The main thing to remember when entertaining with wine is to offer a variety – this makes it easy on both the host and the guests,” says Brenner. “And regardless of which wine is served, wine should play a major role in holiday entertaining.”

Brenner also says it's important to remember that people's tastes for food also vary widely and shares the following holiday hors d'oeuvres and wine pairings on wineanswers.com:

- **Endives with Gorgonzola and Walnut and Smoked Salmon Canapés** – There is nothing more suitable -- or more festive -- to accompany these delicious appetizers than Champagne or sparkling wine. Whether your taste runs to French Champagne, sparkling wine from California or a Spanish Cava, go for the driest ("Brut") sparkling wine to accompany these hors d'oeuvres as a perfect opener to the evening.
- **Prosciutto and Melon with Port-pepper Sauce and Cherry Tomatoes Stuffed with Smoked Trout Mousse** – The rich flavors of these appetizers can be nicely balanced by a dry but supple and fruity Chardonnay from California or Chile. For those who prefer red wine, an aromatic Pinot Noir or red wine from Burgundy will be a nice compliment that can also serve well as a wine to carry through dinner.

Mix It Up

According to the wineanswers.com, when entertaining, plan for about two glasses of wine per guest. To determine which types of wine, wineanswers.com offers this formula: 60 percent white wine and 40 percent red wine. Champagne, sparkling wine and rosé are considered white wine for these calculations. For a champagne toast, buy one bottle for every eight guests.

Wineanswers.com is a 24-hour-a-day resource created by the Wine Market Council with the help of leading wine experts. The Web site features a searchable archive that will answer any wine-related question in just seconds. Or, visitors can email their questions to a wine expert panel and receive an email answer in two business days or less. For more information on entertaining with wine and to access Leslie Brenner's holiday entertaining myths and facts and featured recipes, visit wineanswers.com.

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Holiday Entertaining Myths and Facts

Leslie Brenner, author of *Art of the Cocktail Party* and *Fear of Wine* offers her top 10 most commonly held entertaining myths to help set the record straight and put the enjoyment back into entertaining.

MYTH: **A formal toast is required when you serve wine at a holiday meal.**

FACT: There's nothing formal about enjoying a holiday meal with family and friends, and a toast is always optional.

MYTH: **Everything must look perfect and run flawlessly in order for your holiday entertaining to be considered successful.**

FACT: Your company is grateful to be your guests; remember that some of the best party experiences happen when things don't go exactly as planned. Just follow the mantra – don't cry over spilt wine.

MYTH: **On Thanksgiving, you must serve white wine with turkey since it's white meat.**

FACT: The great thing about a holiday turkey is that both red and white wines match up well. White wine lovers will find that the rich flavor and supple texture of Chardonnay is great with turkey and the trimmings. Lighter, fruity red wines such a Pinot Noir or Beaujolais are also excellent matches. The best "rule," though, is that you should drink the wines you enjoy.

MYTH: **It is not necessary to always RSVP to a holiday party.**

FACT: Whether you are able to attend a party or not, if the invitation says RSVP, you should reply. The only time you wouldn't need to reply is if the invitation requests a response for regrets only and you are planning to attend.

MYTH: **Red wine should be drunk out of a larger, fuller red wine glass.**

FACT: Just like any other type of wine, red wine can be enjoyed in any type of glass that you have on hand – even a tumbler will do the trick.

MYTH: **It is fashionable to show up late to a party.**

FACT: Don't always assume that your host expects you to show up late to a party. The general rule of thumb is that if the invitation says to arrive by 8 p.m., plan to arrive within half the hour, unless specified on the invitation that it's an open house.

MYTH: **You don't need to bring a gift to a holiday party.**

FACT: Never arrive empty handed. Brenner suggests presenting the host with a bottle of wine. Plenty of bottles cost between \$10 and \$20. And remember to wrap the wine in more than the paper bag you bought it in – many wine shops offer festive gift bags, or consider presenting the wine in a stocking, or tie an ornament around its neck.

MYTH: As a host, it's okay to start cleaning up before your guests leave.

FACT: Not true. This could make your guests feel like you are not enjoying their company or that you want the night to be over. As a host, it is important to make your guests feel welcome and appreciated by giving them your attention.

MYTH: You need to hire a bartender in order to serve drinks.

FACT: Wine serves itself, and most guests prefer to make their own choices. Sampling is in. Offer a variety of wine options; this way you and your guests will have options.

MYTH: You need to spend a lot of money in order to entertain.

FACT: Not true. Entertaining can be as inexpensive or expensive as you choose. Again, your guests are just grateful to be entertained. To keep costs down, choose a variety of under-\$10 bottles of wine to fill your bar instead of spirits, mixers and other drinks, which can run up the tab.

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