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HOLIDAY TRADITIONS UNCORKED

Wine Pairings for Global Traditions

CHICAGO – Holidays are all about tradition. That can mean building on traditions you’ve known all your life or making your own traditions. “I love hearing about other people’s holiday customs and borrowing bits and pieces of them for my own,” explains Master Sommelier Alpana Singh. “Plus, so many traditions are built around food so wine is a natural element.”

To offer ideas that will inspire *your* new traditions, Wine Market Council and Alpana Singh share a sampling of holiday food customs from around the world and wine pairings to complement the global flavors.

HOLIDAY TRADITION	WINE PAIRING
Irish Spiced Beef Traditional Irish families prepare spiced beef many weeks ahead of the Christmas season. A large brisket of beef is coated with brown sugar and rubbed thoroughly with a spice mixture every day for nine days. No cooking takes place until the twelfth day of the process. Between the main feasts of the holiday season, families slice the brisket, and serve it cold with fresh bread and butter.	<i>Spiced beef is delicious with a full bodied red wine that will echo some of that spice such as a Grenache or Southern Rhone selection like Chateauneuf-du-Pape.</i>
Scandinavian Smorgasbord Scandinavians celebrate the holidays with food, and lots of it! Swedish for “bread and butter table,” smorgasbord commonly refers to a buffet that consists of a variety of foods. The Christmas smorgasbord is generally the largest of the year and includes foods that are indicative of traditional Scandinavian preserving methods, such as drying, pickling, smoking and salting. Pickled herring and smoked salmon are absolute must-haves.	<i>Pickled foods and foods with a high salt component, such as pickled herring and smoked salmon, are best served with high acid whites wines with a refreshing fruit quality such as Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Blanc and even Champagne.</i>

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<p>Italian Christmas Eve Seafood Feast Many Italians prepare an elaborate, meatless Christmas Eve dinner consisting solely of seafood. Most dinners are prepared with seven, nine or twelve courses. The number seven represents the seven sacraments, nine represents the Trinity, multiplied by three, and twelve represents the twelve apostles. Dishes served during the feast range in preparation methods from elegant platters of simply fried calamari and shrimp, to rustic dishes prepared with more traditional tomato-based sauces.</p>	<p><i>For fried seafood platters try lighter Italian white wines such as Pinot Grigio, Orvieto or Soave. The crisp, citrus flavor of these tart and refreshing wines is reminiscent of the use of fresh squeezed lemon juice on fresh fish. The tomato-based seafood dishes are best paired with a lighter fruit red wine such as a Pinot Noir or Sangiovese.</i></p>
<p>German-Style Christmas Goose Before turkey was king, goose took center stage during Christmas meals in Germany. Whether served Alsatian style, with chestnuts on a bed of cabbage or Bavarian style stuffed with apples and prunes, goose will bring a taste of the Old World to the holiday table.</p>	<p><i>Goose is a very rich bird that needs an equally rich wine. Gewurztraminer is up to the challenge with its opulent and rich texture and over the top floral aromatics.</i></p>
<p>Kwanzaa Celebration Feast The Kwanzaa Karamu takes place on the seventh and final night of Kwanzaa, December 31. The Karamu is a lavish feast celebrating Kuumba, the creativity of Africans and African-Americans. The dishes served during this festive night are plentiful and honor the traditional flavors of Southern cuisine, African dishes and Caribbean specialties.</p>	<p><i>A robust spicy Zinfandel is a wonderful compliment to dishes with an underlying heat like those commonly found in many Southern, African and Caribbean dishes.</i></p>
<p>Southern-Style New Year Southern families dish up Hoppin’ John, a traditional feast of salted pork and black-eyed peas served with rice on New Year’s Day. It is believed to bring good luck throughout the coming year. Northerners have adapted this Southern favorite and serve the salted pork with sauerkraut instead of black-eyed peas.</p>	<p><i>For the Southern version with black-eyed peas try a robust and silky California Syrah. A high acid, dry Riesling is a wonderful match against the vinegary nature of sauerkraut that accompanies the salted pork in the Northern version.</i></p>

For more information and wine pairing advice, check out wineanswers.com.

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