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HUNGRY BEAST

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Holiday Wine and Booze Gift Guide

by [Ratha Tep](#)



Ratha Tep was an editor at Food & Wine for seven years and now splits her time between Switzerland and the U.S.

Top sommeliers and bartenders from around the country tell Ratha Tep about the best under- and over-\$20 wines and booze to give and drink this holiday season. Cheers!

Nothing sets a festive mood over the holidays like a terrific bottle. Aldo Sohm, Bobby Stuckey, and five other top sommeliers and mixologists share their favorite \$20-and-under and over-\$20 wines and spirits to give for Christmas.

Bobby Stuckey, wine director and co-owner, [Frasca Food and Wine](#), Boulder

2008 Vietti Barbera D'Asti Tre Vigne DOC (\$18)

"Barberas are really juicy, full-bodied wines but aren't loaded in tannin so they pair well with holiday birds like goose and guinea hen. Luca Currado at Vietti makes world class Barolos as well as polished, food-friendly Barberas like this one that are easy on the pocketbook."

Pierre Péters Cuvée Reserve Blanc de Blancs Champagne NV (\$53)

"Walking into a holiday party with a bottle of small-grower Champagne sets the right mood. Champagne is one of the great food wines, so you'll always pour the perfect glass no matter what your host is serving, from a plate of prosciutto and salumi to a Feast of the Seven fishes dinner."

Aldo Sohm, wine director/chief sommelier, [Le Bernardin](#), New York City

2009 Botani Dry Moscatel de Alejandria (\$19)

"This crisp, fresh wine has a little fruit flavor and would be a real crowd pleaser at Christmas parties. It pairs well with cold appetizers and all types of seafood, especially smoked salmon and oysters."

Pol Roger Brut Reserve "White Foil" Champagne NV (\$47.50)

"Christmas-time is always Champagne time. Pol Roger's Brut Reserve is mineral-driven, elegant and fairly versatile. It can go with any type of food except for a heavy stew."

Shelley Lindgren, wine director/owner, [A16](#) and [SPQR](#), San Francisco

2007 Poderi Foglia Concarosso (\$18)

"A wine with balanced tannins and verve. Flavors of red plums, juniper, and star anise make it the perfect holiday party red to go with cheeses or chocolate truffles. After the party, curl up with a pasta with ragu and



this is the ideal accompaniment.”

2004 Bressan Schioppettino (\$40)

“This elegant wine has great structure, baking-spice and black pepper aromatics, and juicy blackberry flavor. It makes a wonderful holiday red and would be excellent with a roasted leg of lamb with rosemary, garlic, and lemon.”

Sebastian Zutant, wine director, [Proof](#), Washington, D.C.

2008 Triton Tempranillo (\$20)

“This wine from Toro, Spain is one of the unbeatable value wines right now. It’s big, bold and has a great level of earth-to-fruit balance that makes it work very well with roasts.”

2007 Coudoulet de Beaucastel Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$30)

“2007 was the perfect year for the Southern Rhône and this Côtes du Rhône is just really unbelievable. It’s full-bodied, earthy, gamey, and lends itself well to holiday foods like duck, goose, and cassoulet.”

Jeff Grdinich, bar manager, [White Mountain Cider Co.](#), Glen, NH

Old Monk Rum (\$11)

“Aged for seven years, this mildly spiced rum from India has a touch of sweetness but is well balanced. It’s nice to sip, but also makes a fantastic mixer, especially when you might not want a full-spiced rum.”

Amaro Nonino (\$42)

“A grappa-based digestif from the family who pioneered single-varietal grappa. It has a never-ending depth of flavor from a combination of herbs and aging in French oak.”

Greg Best, co-owner/head barkeeper, [Holeman & Finch Public House](#), Atlanta, GA

Cocchi Americano (\$19)

“One of my favorite value spirits. It’s a great replacement for the no longer available Kina Lillet, and makes a great Vesper and drinks incredibly well on its own over ice with a twist of lemon.”

Maison Prunier Family Réserve Cognac (\$75)

“This worth-the-price-tag spirit is a true pleasure to sip and savor, but it’s equally impressive in spartan drinks like the Ray Long.”

Eric Alperin, owner, [The Varnish](#), Los Angeles

Luxardo Maraschino Cherries (\$19)

“These cherries are great in a Manhattan. They’re just sweet enough and have a crunch to them when you bite in.”

Del Maguey Mezcal Vida (\$36)

“The whole Del Maguey line is stupendous and mezcal is really making a huge effect on cocktail culture presently. The Vida is distilled with a little bit more backbone so it mixes well in a wide range of cocktails.”