



## A holiday shopping list of wines perfect for entertaining

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By Mary Ross

As you head out the door for holiday shopping, whether to buy gifts or for provisions for merry entertaining, bring this list along to prepare for your season full of wine enjoyment.

**Bubbly:** Make Italy's Prosecco your all-purpose fizz for breakfast, lunch and pre-dinner. With delicate apple and pear fruitiness and creamy texture, Prosecco makes a perfect base for "Champagne" cocktails (especially the Bellini, from Prosecco's home-market of Venice) and an easy-to-enjoy accent to light meals and finger foods. Favorites include **Nino Franco "Rustico"** and **Carpene Malvoti**, both around \$12.

**Crowd pleasers:** For casual occasions, choose wines with light tannin, low alcohol and little or no oak. Turn south for value, such as the south of France (including **La Vieille Ferme**, \$10); southern Italy (including **Cantele** and **MandraRossa**, \$12 to \$15); South America (**Alamos** and **Don Cristobal "1492"**, \$10-ish.) Ask your retailer about multiple-bottle discounts and stock up! For your wine lover's gift, pair a bottle of **Alamos** (or the higher-priced **Catena Zapata**) with proprietor **Laura Catena's** detailed and beautiful book "**Vino Argentino**" (\$27.50 at bookstores).

**Impress your friends:** If there's a snob in the bunch, open a wine publication, choose the highest score and spend the big dollars. Real wine geeks, however, search for finely crafted wines from unique regions and esoteric grapes at affordable prices. Two of my current favorites are Italy's **Palama "Arcangelo" Negroamara**, \$15 and France's **Clos la Coutale Cahors** (Argentina's Malbec in its ancestral home, \$15.) This category is the reason you've nurtured a relationship with a fine wine merchant.

**Tis better to give:** A little detective work insures a successful wine gift. Foremost, does the recipient drink wine? What's his/her favorite style of wine or favorite cuisine? Bring party gifts unwrapped and unopened, but expect that your host may put the bottle aside for post-party enjoyment. For more personal gifts, present the bottle wrapped with a gift card securely attached.

**For you:** When the confetti settles and the long winter lies ahead, you'll want to curl up with warm holiday memories and a delicious sipper. Mine will be a perfectly chilled **Champagne Pol Roger "Sir Winston Churchill."** What's yours?

Y Advanced Sommelier and Certified Wine Educator Mary Ross writes Good Wine twice a month. Write her with questions at [food@dailyherald.com](mailto:food@dailyherald.com).