

The holidays are upon us, and whether you're in need of a crisp white wine to pair with a family-favorite meal, a celebratory sparkly to ring in the New Year, or a superb red wine to share in front of a toasty fire, *spark* has assembled a few sumptuous suggestions from four local wine shops.

The Wine Cellar

www.thewinecellarhsv.com

Co-owned by Will Rawson and Rhonda Mitchell

CHATEAU MONTELENA NAPA VALLEY CHARDONNAY (\$41.99)

"This is the chardonnay that beat the French white Burgundies and put California on the map," says Rhonda Mitchell of this popular white. "It is a crisp, clean Chardonnay rather than a heavily oaked one, so it would pair well with heavier seafood or anything with a buttery, creamy finish. It's just a really cool story and a great experience."

CHAPPELLET MOUNTAIN CUVÉE (\$27.99)

"As a blend versus a one-varietal wine, this cuvee has Cabernet, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec," explains Mitchell. "It's just a beautiful wine – elegant, but affordable for a special occasion. I would love to receive it as a hostess gift or attend a party where this is being served. That's what's so good about blends: they cross all boundaries."

A. MARGAINE CHAMPAGNE BRUT ROSE (\$46.99)

"This is so balanced and has so much structure, and the layers of flavors are really good. It made me appreciate good champagne," says Rawson about this hand-crafted, limited-production bubbly. "There's only one distributor who gets these champagnes here in America, and they only distribute it to so many states because their production is so small."

va-va

The Stem & Stein

www.thestemandstein.com

Co-owned by Merrie Jo and Jimmy Graham

SI SOAVÉ ITALIA (\$13.99)

"As an Italian white blend, this is right in the middle and very easy-going," says Jimmy Graham, while pointing out the bottle's unusual comma-like shape. "It goes with everything from spicy foods to cheese and crackers, but I like to consider it more of a starter to the evening. It needs to be chilled to about 57-60F°, which is a great temperature for a crisp white like this."

ADESSO CAGNINA DI ROMAGNA (\$14.99)

"This is a great beginner red wine – a gateway red," says Graham. "It's smooth, it's not too sweet. It would be perfect for a Christmas wedding or to serve at a Christmas party to people who want to get into red wines."

CHOCOVINE ORIGINAL (\$11.99)

"There are quite a few chocolate wines out there, but this is our favorite," says Graham of this Dutch creation that blends fine red wine, rich dark chocolate and smooth cream. "It's very versatile – you can have it after a meal with our Chocolate Panini or on the rocks after Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. It also pairs well with sweets, like little Dove chocolates."



-vino

BY DIANA LACHANCE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GLENN BAESKE

Mary's Grocery

5694 U.S. 431 South | (256) 518-9555

Owned by Maryam Golpayegani;
co-managed by Steve Golpayegani and Shah Emami

THREE PEARS PINOT GRIGIO (\$10.99)

"Pinot Grigio is a very versatile and food-friendly wine, and its minerality makes it a good pairing for salads and light seafood dishes, especially shellfish," says Steve Golpayegani. "I like to think of Three Pears as a side-dish wine, to go with asparagus, sweet potatoes, or a green bean casserole."

T. SOLOMON WELLBORN PINOT NOIR (\$19.99)

"Depending on the style, a Pinot Noir can range from a wine full of ripe cherry flavors to a more earthy, 'Burgundian' style of wine," says Golpayegani. "This particular one would be excellent with a holiday meal at which ham, turkey, or lamb is being served."

SEGURA VIUDAS BRUT RESERVA CAVA (\$9.99)

"Cava is made primarily from Parellada, Macabeo and Xarel-lo grapes. It typically has a soft, creamy acidity, and the finish is bone dry but complimented by gentle fruit," says Golpayegani about Spain's beloved sparkling wine. "Easy-sipping ones like this are best paired with appetizers, and can easily accompany both sweeter appetizers like candied pecans and savory ones like apricot tarragon cookies."

Lyn's Gracious Goodness

www.lynskitchen.com

Owned by Lyn Newcomb Aust

LEFT COAST "THE ORCHARDS" PINOT GRIS (\$17.50)

"I think this wine is very good – not buttery like a Chardonnay, and not crisp like a Sauvignon Blanc, but fruity, with a hint of sweetness," says Lyn Newcomb Aust of this selection from Left Coast Cellars, a Willamette Valley, Ore. winery. "I would pair this with a brie, but it would be equally good with turkey and fresh cranberry sauce or as a ladies' Christmas tea wine."

TANTARA GARY'S VINEYARD PINOT NOIR (\$71.95)

"I could go on and on about this absolutely beautiful wine. It's just a wonderful food wine – rich, velvet, exquisite – and well worth the money," enthuses Aust. "Of all the Tantara Pinot Noirs we stock, and all of them are beyond delicious, Gary's Vineyard is my favorite. We would love to plan a sumptuous holiday meal around this wine!"

DUVAL LEROY FEMME DE CHAMPAGNE (\$150)

"I am so impressed that this winery has been taken over by a woman after the death of her husband, and that she has made such great strides with her wine making," says Aust, referring to Carol Duval-Leroy's management of the family-owned firm. "It has a lovely, enticing nose, great finesse, and great balance. It's very beautiful and feminine – even the wide-based bottle is sexy! I would drink this simply to celebrate and enjoy all of our blessings."

