Fall is finally in the air, and it’s a relief after such a long and very hot summer. It’s my favorite time of year; I love thinking about wines with flavors suited to the cooling weather. Medium- to full-bodied reds and whites (and even a few rosés) are on my short list. I love the wines from the Rhône and the Loire for this season—Gigondas with its spicy flavors and Vouvray with its rich roasted apple and pear characters are fall in a glass.

And of course, Thanksgiving lands in the center of the season, presenting myriad dishes and wine-pairing choices. Our buying team is very excited to help you navigate your options! The beauty of Thanksgiving is its easy inclusivity for both traditional and innovative dishes. My favorite addition to the standard turkey-and-stuffing fare is a Thai-based Tom Yum soup with sour and spicy flavors. I use turkey stock, Thai chili paste, and a little coconut milk. With this dish, I reach for a German Riesling to cool down my palate for the next course.

In the following pages, we have favorites from California, Burgundy, Austria, Bordeaux, New Zealand, Italy, and beyond. We hope you’ll share some of our top picks with your friends and family—just like we’re all sitting around the table together, waiting for that next course and next pairing. Happy Thanksgiving!

Talking Turkey
By Keith Mabry, Rhone and French Regional Buyer

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No-Fail Wines for Your Thanksgiving Spread
By Keith Mabry, Rhone and French Regional Buyer

2018 Domaine Vincent Carême “Le Clos” Vouvray Sec $34.99
93WS
Vincent Carême is one of the new icons of Vouvray, producing vibrant, mineral-driven wines that lean to the drier side of Chenin Blanc. Le Clos is one of his top bottlings and is all aged in neutral barrels. Its rich, creamy texture is accompanied by bright acidity, balancing the whole expression. It exudes fruit flavors of roasted pear, persimmon, and baking spices. I will definitely be serving this with turkey.

91WS
Who says rosé is a summer wine? Not I. Tavel, one of the oldest wine regions in France, produces richly colored rosé that looks like light reds—perfect for holiday meals! Ripe red cherry, a touch of herbs, light tannins—this is fresh and yet oh-so complex. Our friends at the Cave Tavel have been making the Cuvée Royale for us for years, and it continues to be one of the best in class at one of the best prices in the category!

There are very few wines that manage to jump out of the glass quite the way the Pierre François does. Based on Pineau d’Aunis, an heirloom red grape from the Loire Valley, Colin’s wine strikes an aromatic pose with aromas of incense, red plum, strawberry, and nutmeg. It is an absolute beauty with its medium-bodied texture and always ranks as one of my favorite reds for the holiday season.
Gamay from California and Oregon Is T-Day Magic

By Ryan Woodhouse, Domestic Buyer

The Thanksgiving table is often dominated by Pinot Noir, but Pinot’s Burgundian stablemate Gamay is also a perfect accompaniment to turkey and trimmings. I love Gamay, often with a very light chill, as a bright and juicy alternative to Pinot Noir. While most commonly associated with its historical homeland in Beaujolais, there are some wonderful examples grown and made in the U.S.A. Here are a few of my favorites that we have in stock.

2021 I. Brand & Family “Escolle Vineyard” Santa Lucia Highlands Gamay $34.95 From a well-regarded, cool vineyard site in the Santa Lucia Highlands, this bright and fresh Gamay weighs in at just 12.2% ABV. The wine is wonderfully aromatic and vibrant with spice, red fruit, and rose petal. Ian employs a longer maceration (two weeks post-ferment) than typical for the variety, which adds body and depth beyond Gamay’s inherent fruity/crunchy persona. A beautiful alternative to Pinot Noir and superbly versatile at the dinner table.

2019 Ridgecrest Vineyards “Old Vine - Estate” Ribbon Ridge Gamay Noir $24.95 Ridgecrest Vineyards was the first estate planted in the now famed Ribbon RidgeAVA in the Willamette Valley. To this day the father-daughter team behind Ridgecrest is putting out some of the finest wines in the state. This Gamay is from own-rooted vines planted in 1985 (some of the oldest Gamay in Oregon). The cool growing season in 2019 allowed winemaker Wynne Peterson-Nedry to pick the grapes with excellent flavor development, and the wine is a very modest 12% ABV. It’s like walking from a wildflower meadow into a deep forest. The floral tones on the nose morph into something much more savory on the palate with dusty berry fruits and undergrowth. The juicy acidity begs for food and will be a winner on the Thanksgiving table.

2021 Hundred Suns “Tualatin Estate” Willamette Valley Gamay Noir $32.95 From my favorite Oregon producer, and sourced from just one acre of old vines planted in a mix of weathered basalt and marine sedimentary soils. Winemaker Grant Coulter employs several techniques by breaking the yield down into three micro-ferments: one is fully destemmed one is whole-cluster with foot-treading to crush some berries; the third is whole-cluster fully carbonic. The wine is also aged in different vessels—some in neutral French oak and some in terracotta amphora.

The results speak for themselves. At once fruity, floral, savory, wild, and earthy. I taste plenty of wines that have great fruit and lifted aromatics, and plenty of earthy, savoury wines, but very few that combine all these elements so perfectly. A great bottle of wine that will for sure be on my Thanksgiving table.
If you haven’t discovered the wines of Union Sacré already, now is the time. Proprietor/winemaker Xavier Arnaudin was raised in Alsace, but found his home along California’s Central Coast. California captivated him, and eventually he set down roots. He founded Union Sacré winery to express his love for Alsace with distinctly unique wines. We’ve got a roster of his wines in stock but the following three are perfect for Thanksgiving dinner. Not only are they unique, delicious, and food friendly, their exceptional values as well, so grab a couple of bottles of each!

2021 Union Sacré “Rancho Sisquoc” Santa Maria Valley Sylvaner $16.99 Sylvaner may not be a household name in the U.S but is commonly found in Alsace and parts of Germany. I’ve been a major fan since taking an extensive trip through Germany’s wine country many years ago. It’s immensely likable, easy to drink, and exceptionally food friendly. It’s got notes of green apple, a touch of herbs, and a dash of minerality. This might be the only planting of Sylvaner in the U.S. It weighs in at a refreshing 12.3% alcohol, and a mere 147 cases were produced. It is the perfect aperitif!

2021 Union Sacré “Ositos Vineyard” Arroyo Seco Skin Fermented Gewürztraminer $16.95 Xavier allows the juice to ferment on the skins for 40 days. The result is a wine with a golden orange hue that picks up additional texture from the extended skin contact. This makes for a white wine that can stand up to more boldly-flavored foods, like a turkey with all the sides. You get just a touch of the telltale spicy Gewürztraminer notes on the nose, but there’s plenty of refreshing orange blossom, white flowers, and a hint of potpourri. A fabulous white for the table.

2020 Union Sacré “Spanish Springs Vineyard” Edna Valley Pinot Noir $19.99 Here’s the star of the lineup! We’ve carried this wine for multiple vintages, and it’s always been part of our “best buy” program. Though we’ve long been a fan, the 2020 finally caught some critical attention with a 94-point rating from Wine Enthusiast. It’s great to see Xavier and team finally getting the critical recognition they so well deserve.

The wine is light on its feet and embodies all we love about Edna Valley Pinot. It’s a cool growing area so expect high-toned red cherries, a touch of cranberry and matching spice notes, a touch of tobacco leaf, and a hint of baking spice. There were 112 cases produced, and we bought most of them!

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday of the year. Nothing beats the time with friends and family around the table and a whole nation counting their blessings in unison.

For me, when I think of people that I am grateful to have in my life, the Ariston family of Champagne Aspasie always comes to mind. Almost every year, we enjoy their Champagne with our feast—not only is the autumnal style of the far-north vineyards of Brouillet perfect for the food, but the generosity and kindness of this family align perfectly with the spirit of the holiday. Those of you who have met them at our big tastings or who have visited them in Champagne do not need an explanation; they are simply some of the most genuine people on the planet. And they make crazy great wine!

For the aperitif, nothing beats the Ariston Aspasie “Réserve” Brut Champagne $34.99, aged for a full five years on the lees and composed of 40% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, and 30% Meunier. This has the classy sourdough toast aromas that one can only get from long aging. It has a crowd of tiny bubbles because Paul Vincent Ariston takes the wine up to seven atmospheres of pressure rather than the traditional six. You always get a good pop from opening his bottles! While the wine has richness and texture, the back end is dry and snappy. You will be blown away!

One of the most complicated things about pairing wine with the Thanksgiving feast is the variety of flavors on the table, and, for me, nothing works better than the Ariston Aspasie Brut Rosé Champagne $39.99. It has been a constant at our feast for decades. The combination of round, red fruit and structure from bright acidity, the lack of tannin, and the vivaciousness of the bubbles make this go with everything that you make and everything that your crazy relatives bring. It is made in the most difficult, expensive way possible, with half of the juice macerated with half of the skins and also an addition of dark red wine from their oldest plot of Meunier. Composed of equal parts Pinot Noir and Meunier, it comes off surprisingly elegant and bright for not having any Chardonnay. A beautiful dark strawberry color, a nose of fresh baguette and wild fruits, and a stately finesse on the mid-palate— but the best part is the long, chalky, dry finish, which cuts buttery stuffing like a knife, while still feeling round next to the sweetness of the cranberry. A special Thanksgiving toast to you!
**Versatile Garnacha to Match the Myriad Flavors at the Table**

By Kirk Walker, Spain Buyer

I know the first adjective we think of for Thanksgiving should be “thankful,” but for me it is “versatile.” When I think about this holiday, I immediately think about the meal. How do I want to prepare the turkey? What ideas have inspired me this year? Then I think of my guests: What do they like? More importantly, what don’t they like? What must be on the table; what traditions must be kept? Which traditions can be altered? There are so many flavors on the table, the person(s) preparing the meal must be equally versatile.

And then: what to drink? Garnacha! Garnacha is an incredibly generous varietal. It has body, but not too much. It has great fruit, but not too much. It has spice, but not too much. It has moderate tannins and acidity. It is perfectly suited to holiday dinners. It is lighter than a Cab, but bigger than a Pinot and can satisfy almost every red wine drinker at the table—for those it will not, they were not going to be satisfied anyway. We currently have three delicious Garnachas that have just arrived and are ready to show off their versatility.

2020 Vinos del Viento Garnacha Campo de Borja $12.99 Vinos del Viento makes some of the easiest-drinking, delicious wines that we directly import. Now that is a statement of versatility! Campo de Borja is located down river from Rioja, and it could be the birthplace of Garnacha. For this wine, the person(s) preparing it have the freedom to focus on the fruit and the soil to freely express themselves. This wine is vibrant, it is from old bush-vine Garnacha. It is lightly colored and aromatic. It has bright berries, subtle spices, with mountain flowers blossoms spring from the glass. It is a wine that is way more serious than the price point would suggest.

2019 Pedro Martinez Alesanco Garnacha Rioja $34.99 This is a bottle of Garnacha that is ready to go toe to toe with the Grenache-dominated wines from the Southern Rhône valley. This is from a cooler, high-elevation site in Rioja. The youngest vines in this vineyard are 90 years old! It flirts with being a little dark and brooding, the iron-rich soils give it a subtle savory tone, which makes it even better at the dinner table. Darker fruits than the wines above. Layers of fruit, herbs, subtle oak, and that hint of umami. My mouth waters just thinking about it.

2020 Laventura Garnacha Rioja $19.99 93WA Bryan MacRoberts makes some of the more exciting expressions of Rioja that we carry. What I love about the Laventura line is that they express a new vision for what is possible from this region, while still being reasonably priced. What is that new vision? Fresh. His wines do not carry the heavy oaky signatures that most people think of Rioja. It is a chance for the fruit and the soil to freely express themselves. This wine is vibrant, it is from old bush-vine Garnacha. It is lightly colored and aromatic. It has bright berries, subtle spices, with mountain flowers and herbs. Mouthwateringly structured, this is a wine that is way more serious than the price point would suggest.

**A Trio of Turkey-Friendly Wines**

By Alex Pross, Burgundy/Alsace/Austria/Germany Buyer

Red Burgundy is great with almost everything, but Thanksgiving really provides an opportunity for these wines to shine. The 2020 Domaine Frédéric Esmonin Bourgogne Rouge Hautes Côtes de Beaune $23.99 is once again a fabulous winner from this small, family-run domain in Gevrey-Chambertin. Plump and richly textured, this beautiful Pinot Noir is dominated by spice and red-berry fruit with all the purity and finesse for which the 2020 Burgundy vintage has been lauded. This is a truly great red Burgundy that easily drinks two-to-three times beyond its incredibly affordable price point.

We have so many great offerings of Beaujolais, it was tough to select just one, but I decided to go with one of the most consistently great offerings year-in-and-year-out, the 2020 Domaine Jean Foillard Morgon “Côte du Py” $44.99 95WA 95JS. This represents the best of Beaujolais, with intense dark berry fruit layered against firm tannins, bright acidity, and mineral, earthy, dried herb notes. The depth here is reminiscent of a 1er Cru red Burgundy while retaining the tell-tale Gamay characteristics. Truly a masterpiece that represents the best-of-the-best from Beaujolais.

It would be so easy to go with a nice white Burgundy or an Alsatian Gewürztraminer here, but I find the best white wine match for Thanksgiving foods to be Austrian Gruner Veltliner. Its balance of tannin, acidity, and phenolic feel makes it a better match, while being extremely crowd-pleasing.

The 2021 Bründlmayer “Kamptaler Terrassen” Grüner Veltliner Kamptal $22.99 comes from an amazing vintage in Austria. It is readily apparent from first sniff that something special is going on here. Aromas of crushed stone, white flowers, and peach blossoms spring from the glass. The full-bodied palate rolls out peach, lime, and white flowers, with lively acidity and zippy tannins. Plump and juicy with excellent structure, this will become your new go-to Thanksgiving white.
New Zealand Pinot Noir Delivers Amazing Value for Your Feast
By Thomas Smith, New Zealand Buyer

For me, there's nothing that says Thanksgiving like Pinot Noir. From turkey to cranberry sauce to sweet potatoes, Pinot Noir’s aromatic elegance and bright, crackling acidity always brings the whole meal together. And this year, like every year, I’ll be serving New Zealand Pinot Noir at our holiday table.

New Zealand Pinot may not be the first wine to come to mind for this iconic American holiday, but it ticks every box on my Thanksgiving wine list. Outstanding quality? Check. Exceptional value? Definitely. True to place? Every time. Year after year, my family continues to be blown away by the quality and the value that New Zealand Pinot has to offer. Here are some of my favorites:

One of the best values in New Zealand Pinot Noir is the 2020 Greystone “Nor’Wester” Pinot Noir North Canterbury $13.99. Grown on the grey, limestone soils in North Canterbury’s Golden Mile, the Nor’Wester has plenty of old-world sensibility. With dried cherry, forest floor and savory undertones, this is an excellent New Zealand Pinot Noir that punches well above its weight.

Among most exciting New Zealand Pinot Noirs we currently offer is the 2020 Matt Connell “Rendition” Pinot Noir Central Otago $21.99 95SK 93BC. After years of making wines around the world, Matt returned to his native New Zealand and founded his eponymous label in 2015. The 2020 Rendition is his best wine yet, with powerful, concentrated flavors of cranberry, blackberry and black cherry fruits complemented by a gentle nuance of clove and spice. The 2020 Rendition has lift, cut, power, and focus. This is an exceptional Central Otago Pinot Noir that won him New Zealand winemaker of the year in 2021.

Moving north to Marlborough, one of my favorite wines of the year is 2019 Fromm “La Strada” Marlborough Pinot Noir $29.99 94SK. Sourced from some of the best organic vineyards in Marlborough’s southern valleys, the Fromm La Strada is a gorgeous expression of Marlborough Pinot Noir. With aromas of Bing cherry and wildflowers, the palate follows with bright, crunchy red fruit.

Back in Central Otago, Grant Taylor is arguably New Zealand’s most iconic winemaker. He pioneered the region of Central Otago as the founding winemaker for a who’s-who list of the best producers in the region, including Felton Road and Mt. Difficulty. Valli is his passion project. Under this label he crafts Pinot Noirs from different subregions throughout Central Otago. The 2019 Valli “Bendigo” Pinot Noir Central Otago $36.99 97SK 96BC is one of his best. Muscular and intense with a powerful fruit profile of tart blackberry, black cherry, and plum and a gorgeous sweetness of fruit—all balanced by a crack of acidity and supported with nuances of cedar, spice, and black tea.

Finally, in my opinion, the best New Zealand Pinot being made today is from Ata Rangi, produced in Martinborough. Made from the oldest vines from their organically farmed vineyards, nearly 70% is planted to Abel Clone, a New Zealand suitcase clone that was smuggled into the country from DRC. The 2018 Ata Rangi Pinot Noir Martinborough $43.99 97SK 96BC 96JS is a dark, powerful, and complex Pinot Noir with notes of black cherry, cedar, and forest floor that rise above an exquisitely built and highly structured palate. Whether you have a soft spot for New Zealand, or just love outstanding quality Pinot Noir, Ata Rangi is a global benchmark you can’t miss.

End on a Sweet Note with a Staff- and Fan-Favorite Sauternes
By Clyde Beffa Jr., Bordeaux Buyer

The 2005 Guiraud, Sauternes $59.99 97WS 97WE is the biggest selling Sauternes in K&L history (with more than 9000 bottles sold to date). The fans are on to something: this wine displays wonderful balance with a very rich mid-palate and fine acidity. It’s chock full of pineapple and coconut and everything nice. It received glowing praise in Wine Spectator: “Delivers lots of botrytis spice, with lemon tart and cooked apple. Full-bodied, with loads of cream and vanilla and an intense tropical fruit and honey aftertaste. Long and viscous, with a layered and beautiful spicy finish.” **#4 Top 100 of 2008, Highly Recommended** (JS).

If you’re looking for something to pair with your pies, this beauty has aged to its sweet spot. Whether you go with apple or pumpkin, it’ll be a glorious end for the festivities.
Come Thanksgiving, there’s always a lot of advice floating around about classic food and wine pairings. Then there’s advice that stretches the envelope with recommendations for new varietals and quirky menus. But I suspect there’s a certain percentage of you who just want to drink good wine and not fuss about the particulars! I say, just go for it! Whether traditional or adventurous, it’s always delicious… turkey is like a blank canvas for wine pairing. Plus the variety of flavors and the sheer amount of side dishes give you so many ways to go. So I say, just go ahead and drink something that’s good!

Italian wines are perfect matches for the Thanksgiving table. My first choice is the 2020 Cantina Terlan “Terlaner Cuvee” Alto Adige $24.99 94JS 93RP. Cantina Terlan’s over 100-year-old tradition of blending 60% Pinot Bianco, 30% Chardonnay, and 10% Sauvignon Blanc has truly stood the test of time. The nose shows a lot of floral aromatics; right now the Sauvignon shows a little more. On the palate the Pinot Bianco is the backbone of the wine, giving it the structure balance and longevity while the Chardonnay adds a supple layer of richness. Exceptional palate presence and finish—a guaranteed favorite for anyone who tries it.

Your go-to turkey Super Tuscan should be the 2018 Tolaini “Al Passo” Toscana $21.99 95JS 93VN. Made from equal parts of Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot, the nose shows a bit of plummy ripeness and chocolaty overtones while baring its Tuscan soul with hints of dried sage and rosemary. There is great balance and lift on the palate, revealing a savory umami flavor profile, yet it still showing a plump mid-palate that beckons a forkful of something delicious to pair with it.

When I think of food in Italy, I always think of Piedmont first, and what better meal to show off the depth and character of their wines than those Nebbiolo superstars Barbaresco and Barolo? The nose of the 2019 Ca’ del Baio “Autinbej” Barbaresco $36.99 94JS opens with lots of spice, coupled with the more traditional rose, leather, and earth aromatics. On the palate the wine comes alive bursting with flavor—broad, rich fruits, with black tea, porcini, and wild strawberry confit. When structured with ultra-fine grain tannins, it shows a lot of supple richness that makes it easily drinkable now but will give you a “woohoo” moment with your turkey.

The nose of the 2017 Damilano “Lecinquevigne” Barolo $34.99 94JS says drink me now, a combination of easy strawberry compote and citrus peel with hints of five-spice. On the palate the wine is lively, while still saying Barolo, it isn’t a tannic monster needing a decade in your cellar. Refreshing, complex, and easily balanced on your tongue, the wine flows with sumptuous body and no harsh, angular edges. The finish shows lots of lift on the backend with vague whispers of leathery tannin and excellent balance. I love this wine—drink it cellar temperature with Burgundy glasses if you have them, and add a little wild mushroom to your stuffing—you’re sure to love it, too.