

LAPALME

A woman with short, dark, wavy hair is shown from the waist up, wearing a white strapless dress. She is looking over her right shoulder towards the camera. Her hair is styled in a short, textured bob. She has a small green earring. The background is plain white.

JAIMIE
ALEXANDER
TAKING THE LEAD

WHIMSICAL WINTER WINES

Wines that make amazing gifts
and warm your palate

Written By
ALLISON LEVINE

As we head into the winter months and the holidays loom just around the corner, wines are at the forefront of the seasons festivities!

After having spent the year traveling around the world visiting wine regions and sipping from global vines, we are excited to share a list of whimsical winter wines that will get you ready for the holidays ahead. With an abundance of varietals to choose from, it comes down to what your palate is thirsty for: white, rosé, red, sparkling, or something entirely new. Do you want dry or sweet? Old world or new world?

Knowing there are thousands of grape varietals and hundreds of wine regions to explore, the choices are endless so we figured it might help to narrow down some of the choices.

Whether you're still missing summer or are happily diving into a brisk winter, here is our list of wines that inspire whimsy and welcome in the season one happy toast at a time and the best part? They're all under \$65 a bottle!

So as winter creeps in with an icy chill, get playful with some new whimsical wines meant for giving and consuming!



BUBBLES

An ideal gift on any occasion is, hands down, champagne! Bubbles scream celebration and friends always “ooh and ahh” when given a bottle. This time though? We’re encouraging you to think outside the box. Instead of going with one of the brands that everyone knows, try a “Grower Champagne,” (a wine made by the family that owns the vineyard).

Vazart-Coquart Brut Reserve: Blanc de Blancs NV (\$44) – Made from 100% chardonnay, which makes this wine a “blanc de blancs”. This light-yellow wine smells like white flowers and lemons with mineral undertones. On the palate, it is fresh and crisp. At this price, you will not have to spend too much money to wow your friends.

Rosé Champagne: Once you pick out a Grower Champagne to give as a gift, pick out one for yourself to enjoy. But, for personal enjoyment, pick a rosé Champagne because there is something about a pink wine with bubbles that cannot help but make you smile.

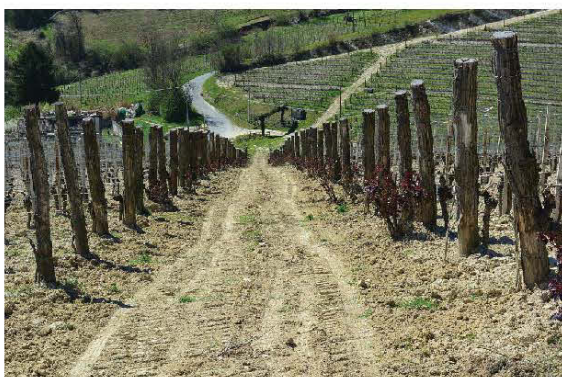
Bruno Cobillard Mlle: Sophie Brut Rosé NV (\$52-\$62) – The Cobillard family has been growing grapes since the 18th century and began producing their own wine in 1858. The rosé is a blend of 50% pinot noir, 30% chardonnay and 20% pinot meunier. To make the wine pink, 15% of still red wine is added to the blend to add color. The wine has aromas of red berry, and grapefruit. On the palate, it is fresh with mineral notes and a beautiful salinity on the finish that will make you crave some cheese to enjoy with it.

WHITES

In the world of white wine, there are lots of interesting grapes to try. If you love the crispness and acidity of a sauvignon blanc, then give a Semillon a try. A variety blended with sauvignon blanc to make Bordeaux blanc in France. But, in contrast to France, in the Hunter Valley of Australia? Semillon shines.

De Iuliis 2015 Semillon: Hunter Valley, Australia (\$15-\$20) – De Iuliis, a family-owned winery since 1998, picks the semillon early and ages it for three months, on the yeasts (sur less), in stainless steel. The wine is low in alcohol but high in acid with notes of citrus and florals. It is the ideal wine to enjoy with oysters but also can be paired with beef tartare.

Grenache is a traditionally known as red wine grape but it has a relative: Grenache blanc. Grenache blanc is a white wine grape. It is one of the primary white grapes grown in the Rhône Valley in France. Grenache blanc is a beautiful straw-colored, high-acid wine that has a nose of green apple and peach. That said, California has a great producer of Grenache blanc in Paso Robles.



Tablas Creek 2015 Grenache Blanc: Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$30) – With similarities to Chateauneuf du Pape, Tablas Creek is the winery to visit. The winery was created as a partnership between the Perrin family of Chateau de Beaucastel in France and the Haas family. The grenache blanc has a nose of citrus, green apple and sea spray. The bright acids and the salinity on the finish make this wine ideal to enjoy with dishes ranging from sushi and fish to spicy Asian dishes. To purchase this wine, go to: www.tablascreek.com



2014 TIMBRE Pinot Noir: 'Lead Vocals', Bien Nacido Vineyard (\$45) – Previously under the label La Fenetre, owner and winemaker Josh Klapper started making wine in Santa Barbara in 2005. Focused on producing balanced, food-friendly wines from the Santa Maria Valley and the Central Coast, Timbre Pinot Noir "Lead Vocals" will please most palates. Brought to a dinner party recently, the elegant wine with aromas of strawberry, cranberry, cocoa powder and earth had every single person asking where they could get it. To purchase this wine, go to: www.lafenetrewines.com

Another fantastic red wine to pair with holiday dishes is grenache. You cannot go wrong with one from the Rhône Valley but there is also delicious domestic syrah. Paso Robles is a popular place for syrah but we like the syrah from Ballard Canyon in Santa Barbara County.

REDS

Wondering what wine is a must on the holiday dinner table? Aside from Champagne, pinot noir is the perfect wine. The fruity and earthy flavors make it a wine that pairs with almost anything – chicken, salmon, lamb, veal, pork and cheese. Pinot noir is grown in Burgundy (France), New Zealand, Oregon, Sonoma as well as other regions. One of our favorite places for pinot noir however is Santa Barbara.

Larner Wine 2012 Estate Syrah: Ballard Canyon (\$38) – Larner Wine is a family-run winery with 34 acres of vine planted of Rhône varieties: syrah, grenache, mourvedre and viognier, as well as a small block of Italian malvasia bianca. The cool climate and sandy soils contribute to the expressiveness and acidity of this wine. With aromas of rose petal, leather, cherry and vanilla and a long finish, this is the wine to pair with a roast or stew. To purchase this wine, go to: <http://www.larnerwine.com> Brachetto d'Acqui is a red wine from the Piedmont region in Italy that is slightly sweet and slightly effervescent with aromas of strawberry and cherry. It's impossible not to fall in love with a brachetto. This is the wine to finish any meal as it pairs wonderfully with chocolate, strawberries or cheese. Marengo Pineto: Brachetto d'Acqui (\$20) – Run by third generation Michela Marengo and her sisters, their graceful brachetto is a deep ruby color with aromas of rose petals and strawberries. On the palate, the wine is subtle and delicate with flavors of raspberries, strawberries and cherry jolly ranchers. Pair it with strawberries and cream, a fruit tart or pour it over your strawberries. To purchase this wine, go to: www.wine.com

*Many of these wines can be found at www.wine-searcher.com to find a retailer near you.