

Billy Munnely's
HOLIDAY GREETINGS & WINE SHOPPING LIST FOR 2020

billysbestbottles.com

Most of the wines here should perform nicely over the Holiday season, and all are less than \$20. Some even less than \$10. The Holidays is not the time for high-priced wine – what time is!! If there is one tip I'd like to offer it is to have several bottles – whites and reds – open at once for a variety of experiences to suit different moods. Pour small amounts. Choose what to pour with the question "What does the moment need?" and change the wine as often as you change the music. Refrigerated, opened bottles keep well for 2-3 days.

For amusement, or controversy, I'm including Andrew Jefford's (English wine writer) take on why France is still the standard bearer for wine.

Wishing you and yours a happy and safe Holiday season. Here's to a better world in 2021. Stay healthy and be optimistic. Thanks for reading.

Billy

SPARKLING

LILY the PINK and a WORLD CHAMP

Colio was one of the pioneers in Ontario winemaking and I've always had a fondness for Lily, their reasonably priced sparkling. Tasting it today I feel it's certainly on par with popular sparklers such as Prosecco. Expect lovely freshness and just enough fruity flavours to carry the show. Excellent aperitif or party sipper. Love the pale salmon colour.

Codorniu from Spain continues to be my go-to sparkling. Nothing beats it for quality and price. A world-champion for sure.

COLIO 'Lily' Sparkling Rosé, VQA Ontario
536565 \$16.95

CODORNIU Brut, Cava, Spain 215814 \$15.00



THE PERFECT HOUSE WHITE!

My perfect house white has a 'good friend quality – pleasant, but also interesting, and without baggage. It refreshes and also brings cheer, and is equally good for just-drinking, and meals. Have flirted with Miquel's unoaked Chardonnay for years but the newly arrived 2019 vintage has won me over big time. Handy screwcap too.

LAURENT MIQUEL 19 Chardonnay 'unoaked', IGP
Pay's d'Oc, France 157909 \$12.95

WHITE WINE



THE PERFECT APERITIF

I like my first glass of the evening to ring as bright and clear as a Spring morning. An awakening for the palate and senses that opens doors of possibilities. I'm looking more for feelings than flavours. A tease. The Chenin Blanc below performs beautifully in this category. Add a white tablecloth to the scene for an elegant touch. But please no strong flavoured foods – till you move on to something else.

JARDIN 19 Chenin Blanc, Stellenbosch,
South Africa 443473 Vintages \$17.95



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**2 PREVIOUSLY
RECOMMENDED
PARTY WHITES
UNDER \$10**

Loios is light, refreshing and fun to drink. Think Pinot Grigio's party-going cousin.

**JOÃO PORTUGAL RAMOS
19 'Loios', Alentejo, Portugal
92114 \$9.45**

AND!



The Robertson Chenin is super zesty, accented with a mineral note, and a hint of richness. An all-round performer.

**ROBERTSON 19 Chenin
Blanc, South Africa
495507 \$9.95**

**LEFTOVER TURKEY SANDWICHES
and PARTY SIPPING**



What happens when you blend Mr refreshing Pinot Grigio, with Miss pretty Torrontes? You get a wine that's both refreshing and delightfully tasty – the perfect Holiday sipper. Torrontes is Argentina's edition of Gewurztraminer – a mildly spicy and or tropical experience that I love drinking in the daytime – or with those Turkey left-overs.

**FUZION 19 Torrontes/
Pinot Grigio 'Alta', Mendoza,
Argentina 168419 \$9.95**

**THE PERFECT
HOLIDAY HOUSE RED**

Italian producers can somehow land good wine on our shores for amazing prices, and here is a new one called Tavernello, from the province of Emilia Romagna. It's not unlike the gutsy reds from neighbouring Abruzzi – but with a shade more pleasantness. So, it works not only for traditional Italia, but for just about all popular foods and of course, party drinking. Could be the best value crowdpleasing red wine in our stores! Best lightly chilled.

**TAVERNELLO 18 Sangiovese/Cabernet, Rubicone
IGT, Emilia Romagna, Italy 13602 \$8.95**

RED WINE



**AN AMAZING, MID-PRICED RED
FROM PORTUGAL**

This hits a perfect mid-spot between everyday and rich. Glam and bistro. The Douro region seems to be able to do this. Most of its wines are modelled on the classic Bordeaux styling but the warm climate results in a more rounded, fuller style similar to Rhone wines. Something that ups the drinkability. Speaking of which, this one borders on dangerous!. You'll be mighty popular pouring it for the Holiday dinners.

**DR (Agri-Roncao) 17, Douro,
Portugal 14663 Vintages
\$15.95**



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**AN AMAZING,
MID-PRICED RED
FROM SPAIN**

Looking for mellow red to share with family and friends? Monasterio's wine delivers mellow with charm and grace. Very seductive. And there's a liveliness usually missing in big reds. So, this wine will also

work well at the dinner table.

MONASTERIO 16 Old Vine Garnacha, Carinena, Spain 10635 Vintages \$16.95

**AN AMAZING, MID-PRICED RED
FROM FRANCE**



You all know I'm a Rhone addict. It's my red wine Holy Grail, or at least one of them. My pick below has bold herbaceous flavours along with a lively, refreshing character. Nourishment without heaviness. Really hard to stop drinking this. Enjoy with either red or white meats, and read all about Xavier here <https://www.xaviervignon.com/en/>

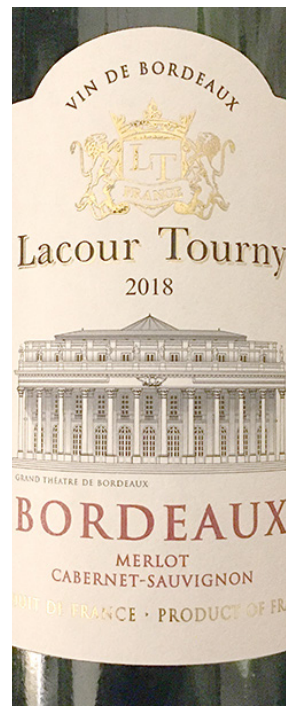
XAVIER 18 Cotes du Rhone France 297317 Vintages \$17.95 (organic)

SHARABLE SIZE!

In the Holiday edition of LCBO FOOD & DRINK there is an ad for a 1.5L size bottle of Chilean wine with a 'Shareable Size' tag line. Be warned then, regular-size bottles are not for sharing!!!

A FRENCH BISTRO EXPERIENCE FOR \$12

Every year, as I taste through thousands of red wines one of my hopes is to find good editions of what I called Bistro wines. Wines that feel real, and which are everyday priced – or close. Big producers in the New World and Italy have been my main sources of Bistro pleasure, but I have a new favourite that hails from an unlikely source, the high 'n mighty Bordeaux region of France.



My first gulp of Lacour Tourny took me back decades – to a time when the wine world was smaller, and all reds were seriously dry with some pucker. After a glass, you moved on to food. Back then,

red wine was not yet a party drink. If you share my enjoyment of frank, honest, dusty-dry reds that invite us to the dinner table, Lacour Tourny is a must have. Lightly chill and start planning Bistro dinners. P.S. This is NOT a Holiday party drink.

LACOUR TOURNY 18 Bordeaux, France 17447 \$11.85

THE PINOT NOIR EXPERIENCE FOR \$12

Traditionally, I've poured lots of chilled Beaujolais over the Holidays, but this year I'm switching to this Pinot Noir. Lighthearted, refreshing and fun is how I described it in a previous blog. Hard to imagine a better afternoon/early evening wine – lightly chilled of course. Fans of light reds may want to get a stash at this price.



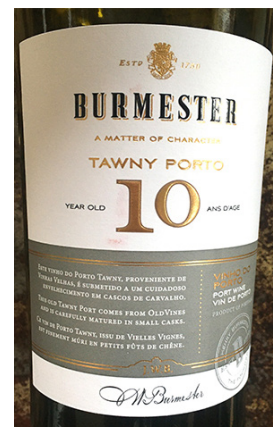
MEZZACORONA 19 Pinot Noir Dolomiti IGT, Italy 13538 \$14.95 (\$11.95 til Jan 2)

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SWEET & STRONG

While Vintage-style is considered the Grand Master of Ports, it's a big spend and needs decades of cellaring to show its talent. For me, Tawny is the way into the delights of Port without breaking the bank and waiting around. The Burmester below delivers warmth and vitality in a sea of Christmas pudding flavours. What a delicious mouthful. Especially when lightly chilled. While after-dinner sipping is the traditional time for Tawny Port, I find it also hits-the-spot on winter afternoons by the fireside, or to fortify the spirits in a poker game.

BURMESTER 10-year-old Tawny Port, Portugal
223958 Vintages \$29.95



WHY IS FRANCE STILL THE STANDARD BEARER FOR WINE

by Andrew Jefford



French wines, Jefford says, are as much about nurture as nature. "The French capacity for complaining, moaning and disputing is almost limitless," he said. "There are many negatives to this, as any French politician or business leader will tell you. But if you want to make great wine, this is a very good thing."

Jefford says that discontent has driven incremental progress over 1,000 years, and has "brought us today's Musigny, Yquem, Morgon and Madiran. France's intricate wine offer isn't just due to terroir; it's also the fruit of divine dissatisfaction."

The French have two other key attributes. The first is that they "honour difference. Most French winemakers, even at the grandest addresses, are fundamentally modest. They know they are there to serve the place," said Jefford. "The only question is what the place most wants to do or to give. The focus is always on origin, not the market."

The French also taste well. "Most people truly care about food and flavour in France. They value and reward subtlety of aroma and flavour," he said. "Palates come into being within cultures. I now believe these different sensual cultures are of great consequence to wine creation."

"France's vast chalk and limestone deposits, alkaline soils, profusion of hill slopes and gravel terraces are all relished by vines. And then there are France's cool, dry winds."

BILLY'S BEST BOTTLES

Billy Munnelly & Kato Wake

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