Announcer (00:00:03)

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

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The 2023 holiday entertaining season is finally here. Party hosts are brainstorming the perfect holiday menus that embody the flavors and textures of the season.

Wine is often included on the menu but doesn't receive the same attention to detail as the meal. When paired correctly, wine can support your holiday dishes rather than compete and clash with flavors.

I'm Adair Seifert, and today Matt Bekebrede, wine enthusiast and professor in the department of hospitality leadership at Missouri State University, offers insight on the perfect holiday wine pairings.

Matt Bekebrede (00:00:43)

As far as what wines that would be universally used or accepted for the holidays, I mean, really when you get into like, say, Thanksgiving celebrations, there’s a lot of different flavors and components.

Riesling is a great option. There are a lot of dry Riesling out there that work very well with all those different flavor profiles. When you get on the red side, a light red at Pinot Noir, Gamay, and Grenache are some great options that would pair with that wide array of different flavors.

Adair Seifert (00:01:18)

He offers suggestions on wine pairings for sweet and savory foods.

Matt Bekebrede (00:01:23)

If you're looking at pairing wines with sweets, you know sometimes you run into a little bit of a challenge there. Traditionally, you might do a sweet dessert wine, but then a lot of times you don't want the competing sweet and sweet, so you might go more kind of almost a sweet and savory aspect of things. Look for a wine that's not going to compete on the sweetness level.

So, for instance, if you have a real sweet chocolate dessert, you might do something like a big red with kind of a jammy fruit profile. So maybe a Zinfandel, say, from Lodi. That's got that jammy fruit to it to kind of help balance out where you're not competing. Sweet and sweet when you're thinking of more like savory foods dinner when you talk about pairings, couple different ways.

We can look at congruent pairings to where we're going to pair like items. So, let's say, for instance, Thanksgiving dinner. You got the cranberry sauce of some variation. Everybody does a little differently, but Pinot Noir has similar characteristics. Those bright red fruits are going to be a nice congruent pairing.

You could also look at contrasting pairings where you might have something that's spicy and you could pair that with a sweet Riesling that's going to have those contrasting elements, but they're going to marry and pair very well together. The biggest thing though, when you look at those savory holiday pairings is to drink what you like with what you have, not what someone tells you should drink. So, I mean other options or other things to think about when you're thinking about holiday pairings. They mentioned congruent pairings and contrasting pairings. One of the easiest ways to look at food and wine pairing is body to body. Lighter body dishes with lighter bodied wines. Heavier bodied foods with heavier or with fuller bodied wines. The easiest way to look at those when you're thinking about the wine is to think of skim milk being light bodied, whole milk, being full bodied. Wines kind of look the same way so a light bodied wine and the red side is going to have a lighter color and it's going to be a little bit more translucent. More full bodied wines have a darker color, darker fruit characteristics, and lighter fruit characteristics.

Pair those up with the food and you're not going to have competing elements. You're going to have more synergy between the two.

Adair Seifert (00:03:44)

He shares a good source for learning more about wine pairings.

Matt Bekebrede (00:03:47)

One of my favorite sources is winefolly.com. She does a phenomenal job that provides a great wealth of information not only on her website but also on social media. The greatest thing about the information shared is it's very approachable. Very easy to understand, so someone who's not into wine can appreciate and understand it. Someone who's into wine and has been in the industry for a long time can also appreciate what she offers.

Adair Seifert (00:04:18)

He offers insight on how to choose the perfect wine for a gift.

Matt Bekebrede (00:04:22)

Probably the number one thing that I would say to focus on is don't go with a sweet wine because you don't know if that person really likes it. Don't go with a big heavy cab because you want to kind of be more in the middle. So, I would suggest something more middle-of-the-road like Pinot Noir. I've mentioned that before, but Pinot Noir is a great option. Pinot Noir offers that element of a lighter bodied and nice fruit forward characteristics. It's not sweet by any stretch, so it's very approachable to someone that you don't know if they really like this or that this is good in between.

Adair Seifert (00:04:59)

That was Matt Bekebrede, wine enthusiast and professor in the department of hospitality leadership at Missouri State University. I'm Adair Seifert for the Missouri State Journal.

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For more information, contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397, the Missouri State Journal is available online@ksu.org.