

Baking Spice is Nice

Mention cinnamon, nutmeg or cloves this time of year, and mulled cider comes to mind. As we enjoyed the wines in this report, we wondered more than once about how a completely grape-based beverage could bring to mind baking spices! Layered, complex spice flavors help make a good wine engaging and worth savoring. But these wines are often expensive; the trick is to unearth affordable ones. That was our quest, and this batch gives the right answer. Most of the wines here cash in for less than \$15: many are \$10 or \$11 bucks – a neat trick. Bring one of these to your next holiday gathering, and see if that spices things up.

As always, use this list as a starting point, but don't forget that other wines from the same producer, region, and vintage, may offer similar flavor profiles. Order of information in each review: Winery, Region, type of grape, vintage, country, price, our enlightened (?) comments, and our grade.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Domaine Des Tours, Vin de Pays de Vaucluse, Reserve, 2007, France, Lower Falls Wine, \$20

Whoa. Graphite, fruit leather, charcoal, spiced cherries. Gorgeous, delicious wine with a long finish. A

Unus, Calatayud, Old Vine Garnacha, 2007, Spain, \$10

Value alert! Leather, spice, licorice, cherry, brown sugar. A ton of wine for the price. A

Bodega Colome, Valla Calchaqui, Amalaya, Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Tannat, Bonarda, 2006, Argentina, \$10

Spiced cherries, opulent fruit, licorice, mocha. From many grapes, one multilayered weeknight pleasure. A

Santa Rita, Valle Central, Reserva, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2007, Chile \$11

Chile, spicy, licorice, candied cherry, pepper. A yummy sustainably grown wine. A-

Marietta Cellars, California, Old Vine Red Lot Number 53, United States, \$15

Blackberry, ripe fruit, black cherries, chocolate. Hm, bittersweet chocolate. And chocolate covered cherries. And chocolate covered black pepper. Yum. A-

Celler el Masroig, Montsant, Sola Fred, Carignan and Malbec, 2008, Spain, \$11

Opulent, spicy wine with cloves, ripe cherries and cocoa. A-

Domaine De La Renjarde, Cotes du Rhone Villages, 2006, France, \$10

Charcoal, coffee & chocolate. What's not to like! B+

Jade Mountain, California, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2007, United States, \$14

Ripe spicy fruits with warm cinnamon and nutmeg flavors. Yum. B+

Yalumba, South Australia, The Y Series, Riesling, 2008, Australia, \$12

Herbs, citrus, a hint of sweetness well balanced by zingy acidity. A award winner for Best Green Practices. B+

Layer Cake, Mendoza, 2008, Argentina, \$14,

Cinnamon, baking spices, anise, a little coffee. B+

Penfolds, South Australia, Shiraz Mourvedre, 2007, Australia, \$15

Chocolate, ripe fruit, blackberry & charcoal. B+

Bodega Tamari, Mendoza, Reserva, Malbec, 2009, Argentina, \$15

Blackberry, blueberry, dusty spices. B

Latitud 34, Mendoza, Malbec, 2008, Argentina, \$12

Cinnamon, chocolate, cherry liqueur, coarse. B+

Neponset Winery, Lodi, Old Vine, Zinfandel, 2008, United States, Winery Sale, \$16

Ripe red fruits, licorice, hard candy, anise, a hint of herbs. Very tasty locally produced wine. B+

Santa Rita, Valle Central, Reserva, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2008, \$11

Spice, pepper, tannin, tart cherry, pomegranate. Primonero is a contraction of Primitivo and Negroamaro, the two grapes equally represented in this wine. B+

Beringer, California, Founders' Estate, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2006, United States, \$13

Cherry syrup, licorice, cinnamon, cedar, clove & cabernet spice. Tasty. B

*** Recipe ***

Turkey Meatloaf Muffins

Personal size meatloaf muffins are visually appealing, fun to make, quick cooking, and kids love 'em.

Prep time: 10 Minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

Yield: 8-10 muffins

2 eggs, whisked

2 pounds ground turkey

1 cup whole-wheat breadcrumbs
2 TB Worcestershire sauce
1 TB chopped garlic
1 TB minced onion flakes
1 tsp. Italian seasoning
1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
Salt to taste
Ketchup
4 cups mashed potatoes for "frosting" (optional but fun)
Bacon, Ketchup or cherry tomatoes for topping



Preheat the oven to 350. Line muffin cups if you like. Wash your hands (no kidding). In a big bowl, use your hands to mix the egg, ground turkey, breadcrumbs, Worcestershire sauce, garlic, onion, Italian seasoning, crushed red pepper, and salt. Pack the mixture like a snowball (about the size of a tennis ball) and place in a muffin cup. Repeat with the rest of the meatloaf mixture. Remember, meatloaf won't rise like a real muffin, so mount them up. Brush each cupcake with ketchup.

Slide the tray into the oven, and bake uncovered for 30 minutes, or until the interior registers 160F. While cupcakes are cooking, cook the bacon, dry on paper towels, and crumble. Set aside. Remove muffins from the oven, and let cool for 5 minutes. While muffins are cooling, heat mashed potatoes if they are not already hot, and test to make sure the potatoes are spreadable like frosting. If necessary, mix in a little milk or butter.

Frost each muffin with potatoes. Sprinkle with bacon pieces, garnish with a cherry tomato or a dollop of ketchup. Serve with a spicy wine, of course.

A good wine is a riot of love and life.
- C. Demoulins 1789

In vino veritas,
Tod Dimmick
Editor

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GRAPE M  NDS