



PARTY STARTERS

We love local wines and spirits, and with so many within reach during the winter, it makes the season of giving so much simpler. Cheers!

BY LAUREN MIFSUD | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MEGAN WYLIE RUFFING


Pennsylvania grows the fourth-largest amount of grapes in the nation (approximately 14,000 acres), and is seventh in the country overall in the production of wine — so, when it comes to gifting with a local emphasis in mind, there are plenty of bottles to choose from. We're pumped to pair these picks with our party appetizers, pour them in complement to our traditional New Year's Day dinner, and to toast to 2011. 


FOR THE WHITE WINE ENTHUSIAST: White wines lack tannin — the bitter, plant compound that causes the astringent and sometimes bitter aftertaste that can be found in red wine. Its absence is the reason why most white wines can be served well chilled.

 Memories of this classic **Chardonnay** from **Greendance — The Winery at Sand Hill**, linger long after the last glass is gone. This particular bottle is best served chilled, and is fruity, lightly oaked, and easy to drink. Its finish is the perfect end to any meal, including some decadent dishes, such as a crisp Caesar salad or delicate fish, that we're craving this winter.

 Hinting of floral notes, **Christian W. Klay's Blanc de Lafayette** is dry, mild, and delicate. It pairs well with chicken dishes or the cheese plates we're so fond of serving. But, we like it best when it's ice cold and sipped along with small and flavorful fruits, such as dried figs or strawberries — but we'll wait for that treat until summer.


OENOPHILES are defined as wine enthusiasts, aficionados, or connoisseurs. They're therefore the hardest people to pick a bottle for. But, don't worry. We've got you covered with these local picks (all you need to do is tie — or stick on — the bow).


 When we're looking to sip on something with a romantic blend of flavors, we go for a bottle of **Glades Pike Winery's Traminette**, a hybrid fruit with flavors similar to that of the Gewürztraminer grape. This semi-dry white wine is clean and hints of pineapple, melon, and lemon zest.


 We're stocking multiple bottles of **Greenhouse Winery's Riesling** (and gifting them as stocking stuffers, too). The semi-dry blend is absolutely sublime with a holiday dinner that's centered on turkey or pork.


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FOR THE RED WINE LOVER: We all love the added bonus of red wine's health benefits, but mostly, it's our go-to for that rich, full-bodied flavor. Just a glass of any one of these great reds helps us to relax during the rush of the holiday season.

 Our must have curl-up-by-the-fire bottle this winter is **Christian W. Klay Winery's Washington Tavern Red**. The fruity, light bodied, and semi-dry wine is heavenly when paired with pasta dishes or as a standalone during a night in with friends.

 The cartoon label on **Greenhouse Winery's Hoe n' the Sled** bottle (sister to the winery's best-selling Hoe 'n the Garden) is a fun, festive touch. But the semi-sweet, light red wine inside is even more enjoyable.

 An elegant dinner party is just the right setting to pour **Glades Pike Winery's Baco Noir**. With its deep, black cherry taste, hints of raspberry, bursts of red currant, and peppery finish, the wine is sophisticated. Hint: Serve this when making a toast to health and happiness.

 A great **Cabernet Sauvignon** makes us happy. So it's no wonder that we're giddy over **Greendance — The Winery at Sand Hill's** version. The smooth, full-bodied wine dances on the palate and ages well. But we doubt that, with its rich, complex tastes, it will last on shelves for long.

WHEN WE'RE IN THE MOOD FOR SOMETHING ELSE:

When winter days merit a more ... frothy experience, we snow-boot it over to a local brewery (Pennsylvania has so many!). North Country Brewing offers vats full of beer brewed just for guzzling during the winter, such as the Jack Frost Winter Warmer. We adore this dark beer, and its exclusivity — it's only available for two weeks out of the year.

In celebration of Hanukkah starting at sundown on December 1, Bocktown Beer and Grill will be hosting a tasting of Shmaltz Brewing Company's He'Brew Jewbelation Vertical beer. Bocktown is one of only 88 craft-beer bars around the

world serving all of the Vertical Jewbelation drafts on the same night! The sipping can continue after the one-day affair as the beer will be available to take home.

We'll be toasting to the New Year with Veuve Clicquot premium Champagne from PA Wine & Spirits stores. Its fine bubbles make it both extremely flirty and dance inducing. When we kick our pretty party heels off, we'll spike our hot chocolate with Baileys Irish Cream, also available at PA Wine & Spirits stores.

Details in the *Edible Allegheny Directory*, page 34.

