



Holiday Wines Worthy Of A Special Occasion

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in: **DRINKING**



10.31.13 - Several years ago, while visiting my family in Michigan for the Christmas holiday, my dad told me about a mysterious collection of wines stashed in his basement. The wines had been passed down to him by an old Italian judge, who had died before he had a chance to drink them.

Naturally, I was curious about what sort of wines they were. My dad hadn't bothered to go through the couple of cases he was given, instead leaving them for me to pick through when I arrived. I was practically rubbing my hands together in anticipation of the treasures I might find in Dad's basement.

When I went downstairs on Christmas morning, what I found was mostly disappointing — white wines from the '70s that had turned brown, unremarkable reds never meant to be aged, cork-tainted wines that had to be poured down the sink. But there was one bottle that made my heart palpitate: a 1967 Antinori Chianti Classico Riserva from **Tuscany**.

I brought it upstairs and popped the cork, and found that the wine had held up beautifully over the years. It had lovely mature character, and managed to retain much of its fruitiness. I poured glasses for our little gathering — my dad, stepmom, husband, sister and brother-in-law — and we all agreed that the wine was something special. Truth be told, it was a little past its prime, but that didn't stop us from finishing the bottle.

While we waited for the rest of the family to arrive for dinner, my husband searched the Internet to find out more about the wine we'd just polished off. "Wow, that wine is selling at auction for \$200!" he announced. My frugal father, a man who drinks wine daily but rarely spends more than \$10 on a bottle, was thunderstruck. "If I'd known that," he said, "I would never have opened it."

He was only half joking. But what better time could there be to open a special bottle of wine than the holidays, when you're surrounded by family and friends — the people you love most?

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Holiday-worthy wines

Even if you don't have a 1967 **Chianti** hiding in your cellar, chances are you have a bottle or two stashed away from a winery visit or vacation. What are you waiting for? My dad's Italian judge was waiting for the right occasion to open his wines, too. If you don't already have a special bottle set aside, why not make this the year to splurge on a memorable wine to share with your favorite people?

Here are five wines that fit that description nicely. These Napa Valley and Sonoma stunners taste great now and will improve with age, so you'll be able to enjoy them at future holiday celebrations too. The wines are balanced and food friendly — none containing more than 14.1% alcohol — so they'll pair wonderfully with your holiday **brisket** or standing **rib roast**.

Pine Ridge Vineyards Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 (\$85): This gorgeous wine has an enticing aroma of red fruit, along with cherry and berry flavors accented with baking spices. It's elegant and balanced, with soft tannins.

Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Napa Valley Fay Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 (\$95): With aroma of raspberries and cedar, this is a beautifully balanced wine with bright red cherry flavor, silky texture and well-integrated tannins.

Clos Du Val Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 (\$80): Here's a classic, age-worthy Napa Valley Cabernet with rich aromas of leather and black fruit. It has black cherry and chocolate flavors, along with good structure and moderate tannins.

Cobb Wines Sonoma Coast Jack Hill Vineyard Pinot Noir 2009 (\$70): This lovely cool-climate Pinot smells of ripe raspberries and cherries, and has delicious red fruit flavors to match. The wine's fruit-forwardness is balanced by a good bit of acidity.

Inman Family Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 2009 (\$35): With its aromas of red fruit and cinnamon spice, this wine was made for Thanksgiving dinner. It's medium bodied and elegant, with soft tannins and flavors of red fruit and cola.