

Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

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A WINE FOR THANKSGIVING

If I had to choose just one wine to pair with Thanksgiving dinner it would be Alsatian Gewurztraminer. I can hear you tripping over the word. Let's take it in pieces; gewurtz means spicy in German, and Traminer is named for the northern Italian town and historical birthplace of the local wine called Tramin. In German if you place an "er" on the end of something it means "from that place." So the translation of the grape variety we call Gewurztraminer is literally "spicy wine from Tramin."

All of this German wording for a wine from Italy would make some sense if Alsace was in Germany but, as the geographically astute reader already knows, Alsace is part of France. Alsace is in the very farthest eastern part of France right next to Germany on the western side of the Rhine river. This region is the most culturally German part of France and the French and Germans have sparred over this territory for centuries. In the twentieth century the province changed hands four times.

All of this cultural blending has lead to a funny, long, sometimes difficult to say grape name, Gewurztraminer. But remember Traminer is the name of the grape from the Italian town of Tramin and the grape they grow

in Tramin is called Savagnin Blanc (*don't confuse this with Sauvignon Blanc, these are two different grape varieties*).

This means that Gewurztraminer is translated as spicy Savagnin Blanc. The reason we can buy Alsatian versions and not Italian ones is because of terroir. Terroir is the soil, the river, and the mountains, and in Alsace they conspire to make Savagnin Blanc struggle in such a way that it produces the perfect wine for Thanksgiving.

The cultural mish-mash that is Gewurztraminer: Italian grape, German name, grown in France, and served at an American holiday is perfect for representing the immigrant heritage of America. Thanksgiving is a day when we give thanks to those who struggled to get us here and to those who struggled to feed us once we arrived. And it is the mish-mash of dishes that make up Thanksgiving dinner that makes Gewurztraminer the perfect pairing. Gewurztraminer pairs perfectly with roast turkey but also many kinds of stuffing from cornbread to jalapeño. It pairs well with all the side dishes like green bean casserole, sweet potatoes with marshmallows, garlicky mashed potatoes, cranberry salad, pumpkin pie, apple pie, and just about anything else.

The reason Alsatian Gewurztraminer does this so well is because it is a white wine (actually the color is a very slight pink) with a high level of acidity and a heady amount of alcohol at 14%. The acidity and alcohol strip the compound fats and flavors from your mouth with each sip. This allows you to taste each bite independently and to truly savor the compound flavors. Gewurztraminer has intense aromas of tropical fruit, nutmeg, and cinnamon. The wine smells sweet but tastes rich and luscious with a semi-dry finish.

Two good, broadly available Alsatian brands are Trimbach and Hugel. Alsatian Gewurztraminer should retail for around \$20ish a bottle and should be served chilled.

It is also possible to find Gewurztraminer from California, Washington, and South Africa, but I caution you, not all Gewurztraminers are the same. Often the California and Washington examples lack acidity and can be too sweet.

The terroir of Alsace and their signature wine, the multinational hybrid that is reflected in its name, makes Alsatian Gewurztraminer my one wine recommendation for Thanksgiving.

ADVENT CALENDAR WINE CLASS

When I was a kid, my parents bought me a few advent calendars. I thought they were fantastic. What's not to like about surprise pieces of chocolate everyday? My

fond memories of advent calendars, the pictures on the outside, and inside, and the treat under the perforated paper flap, makes me nostalgic. Holidays, especially for adults, is all about nostalgia. I think it's different for children. For them, especially those of a young age, holidays are plum full of exciting new things to experience.

Last week I was browsing around Duluth's new Costco and I stumbled upon the [2021 Costco Wine Advent-ure Calendar](#) and my inner child melded with my nostalgic adult and instantly I saw something fun for us to do!

Here is my plan. Each day (December 1 to 24, you know, the days of Advent) I'll taste a wine, comment on where it's from, the grape variety, the production method, and score it on a 100 point scale tasting chart. Then I'll post this to YouTube and you can follow along on a Wine Advent-ure.

I'll post these onto our SavvyNomadTV YouTube channel. (I bet you didn't know we had a YouTube channel.) We've had this channel for over 10 years but never really did anything with it. But this year in France I made



37 days of videos - essentially vlogging everyday of our trip. These were both easier and more fun to produce than I had initially thought. It was fun to share our trip with a bigger audience. I'm encouraged to do more videos and this Wine Advent-ure is coming up next. Since the Pandemic isn't really fading away as much as I'd like, this virtual class will have to suffice until we can host wine classes in person again.

Here's how to join in on the fun: Follow this link and subscribe



to our [SavvyNomadTV](#) YouTube channel. If you want to drink along with me as I taste the wine, head out to your local Costco liquor store and buy the Wine Advent-ure box. The box (careful heavy!) contains 24 ½ sized (375ml) bottles of wine. The box retails for \$99.99. That comes to \$4.17 per bottle or \$8.33 per bottle if you consider that the box holds the equivalent of 12 full sized bottles. It is not necessary to be a Costco member to buy from their liquor store in Minnesota.

If you don't want to drink along that's fine too, but please do [subscribe to our YouTube Channel](#)

as I'll be posting all of this year's daily vlogs from France in the near future.

I have to say I'm looking forward to tasting these Advent-ure wines. The importers have gone out and gathered an eclectic mix of varieties and regions, many that I've never tasted before. The box includes wines from Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, plus the regular places like France, Italy, Spain, South Africa, and Argentina. When was the last time you saw a Moldavian wine section in your local store?

I hope this piques your interest and I hope to see your thoughts virtually on YouTube in the comment section. Finally, I also hope that this helps you build some childlike holiday anticipation and cheer, or should I say "Cheers!"

NEW SAVVY NOMAD LOGOS

Our old Savvy Nomad logo was feeling tired to me. It no longer reflected all of our different interests. So I made a new general logo and three interest specific icons. If you've ever tried to design a logo you know how hard it is to create something that conveys meaning in a simple form. Here's our new look:

