

# THANKSGIVING WINES

*Begin your feast with the bubbles*

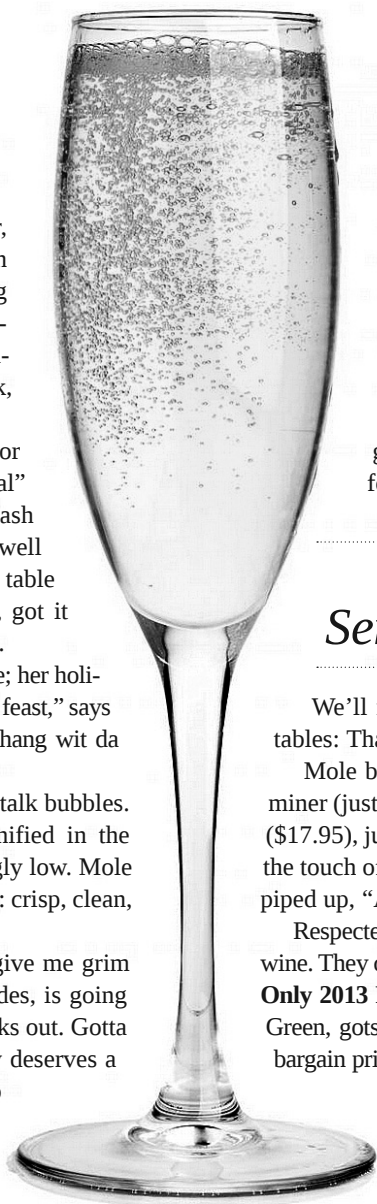
**S**lumped against the grimy wall, I rode the wheezing elevator, creaking and clanking, to the 15th floor of the old high-rise in downtown Eugene, then ambled down the hall, dodging peeling linoleum, stopped at our office door, Wine Investigations, flaking black letters on frosted glass. The door was ajar, Mole obviously already at work. I pushed in, tossed my ragged fedora on a hook, surveyed our “lab.” I couldn’t suppress the dread that rose in my chest.

Every year, we go through this, trying to decide on the “best” wines for Thanksgiving feasting. Partly, at least, we struggle with the “traditional” menu — roast turkey, savory dressing and gravy, sweet spuds, beans, squash and the rest. Our problem, see, is that most wines just can’t match up well with the herbs and spices and volatile aromas/flavors on the traditional table — at least no single wine. David Lynch, wine-scribe for *Bon Appétit*, got it right: “There is no such thing as a perfect Thanksgiving wine.” True dat.

But Mole knows, too. His wife, the charming Molly, loves to feed people; her holiday tables are legends, and Mole covers the wines (note the plural): “A propa feast,” says he, “gots ta staht wit bubbles, den offa ever’body da kindsa wines dat’ll hang wit da chow.”

Eloquently put. Word: Lately, wine geeks talk about cava when they talk bubbles. Cava is Spanish bubbly, a blend of weird Spanish white grapes, vinified in the Champagne method but guvmint-subsidized so that the price is shockingly low. Mole had already selected **Torre Oria Cava Brut Reserva** (\$9.95!). We tasted: crisp, clean, delightful. Pump up the party.

The phone rang. For once, I didn’t ignore it. Dan Cooley called to give me grim news: John Cooney, respected wine wholesale rep in this area for decades, is going down; Dan wanted to know if I could give John some ink before he checks out. Gotta do it: Few people outside the wine biz might know it, but John Cooney deserves a place among the Best of Eugene. Gobs of good wine found its way into this little market — probably more than warranted — only because John Cooney (Dan Cooley, too) brought the wines to our retailers,



hence to us. That happened because John earned respect for his honesty and his palate — if John said the wine was good, then it was. John is perhaps best known for his “Natural World” segments on KLCC.

Nobody gets a pass on this life. Nobody lives forever. But some go too soon, and that’s sad. And some departures leave a gaping void, a loss that really can’t be filled. Leonard Cohen, in one of his most poignant lines, sings, “May everyone live, may everyone die. Hello my love, and my love goodbye.” Thanks, John, for a life of worthy work. You made living better for many folks.

## ‘Bottom line: Serve the wines you like.’

We’ll raise our glasses to you, filled with good wines you helped bring to our tables: Thanks again.

Mole brought me back, pouring tastes from our favorite turkey wine, gewürztraminer (just say guh-vertz). He’d selected **Brandborg 2012 Oregon Gewurztraminer** (\$17.95), just delicious, aromatic, with zesty flavors of ripe grapefruit, slightly off-dry, the touch of sweetness just right to complement turkey — and many side dishes. Mole piped up, “Ain’t dat nice?” Yep.

Respected wine-mag *Decanter* assembled a panel of wine-pros to choose Thanksgiving wine. They concluded: Not pinot noir. Say what? Nonsense: Mole brought out **Dollar Bills Only 2013 Pinot Noir** (\$14.95): “Randy at Sundance steered us ta dis, made by Patricia Green, gots some cranberry accents, jes’ fine fer a feasting.” Light body, good balance, bargain price (for pinot noir). This’ll work.

Bottom line: Serve the wines you like. Be happy. Be alive — and remember to offer thanks for all the good people whose lives and work have made our own lives better. ■

## OUTDOORS BY JOHN WILLIAMS

# WALDO LAKE WILDERNESS

*One last hike before the snow piles up*

**T**here are 85 miles of trail that cross nearly every part of the Waldo Lake Wilderness, but the Black Creek Trail is one of the best. After a short walk through an older plantation, the forest quickly transitions to a very impressive forest dominated by ancient Douglas fir nearly 7 feet in diameter and 250 feet tall.

Forests like this once blanketed much of the Cascade foothills but have since been clearcut repeatedly. These trees can grow so large because of high levels of precipitation and rare occurrence of fire. The trail climbs gradually towards 150-foot Lilian Falls, which is 1.3 miles down the trail. Lilian Falls makes an excellent destination if you’re short on time.

To continue towards Waldo Lake, veer left away from the falls onto a decidedly drier slope. The trail continues uphill, steeply at times until you reach Waldo Lake. After a couple of switchbacks the forest changes dramatically to one dominated by mountain hemlock and true fir with bear grass and huckleberry making up the understory. On some of the rocky slopes that look out over the deep canyon that Black Creek has cut you will find Douglas maple, which add some lovely fall color to the hike.

If you’re interested in a nearly 8-mile hike, then head south on the Waldo Lake trail approximately half a mile to Klovhdal Bay. Throughout much of the early 1900s different corporations attempted to divert the water of Waldo Lake down the Black Creek Canyon in order to produce electricity and water for irrigation in the Willamette Valley.



Klovhdal Bay is named for Simon Klovhdal who designed a tunnel system to lower the level of Waldo Lake 25 feet. Thankfully, this and subsequent projects to exploit Waldo Lake failed.

Huckleberry along the shores of the incredibly clear Waldo Lake provides a little bit of fall color. At this point, return the way that you came. Many trails along the western side of Waldo Lake could be combined with the Black Creek Trail for extended backpacking. If you’re heading out for this hike soon be prepared for cold, rain and possible snow. Also worth hiking in the area is the Joe Goddard Interpretive Trail, which is approximately half a mile. Absolutely massive Douglas fir and Pacific yew can be found there. To reach the Joe Goddard Trail, simply turn off to the right 1.5 miles before the end of Forest Road 24. ■

### Directions from Eugene:

Follow Hwy. 58 for 40 miles to Oakridge, turn left at the only stop light, turn right onto 1st Street, which becomes FR 24 (Salmon Creek Road). Follow for 21.5 miles to the end of the road.

**Hike Distance:** 7.5 miles

**Hike Type:** Out and Back

**Elevation Gain:** 2,000 feet

**Trailhead Elevation:** 3,400 feet

**Usage:** Light

**Difficulty:** 2 out of 5

**Fees:** None