

# Grape expectations

Turkey time is looming but what should you drink with the festive feast? Andy Waple asked three local experts to tell us what will be coming out of their cellars for Christmas Day.

## JOHN MITCHELL, OF MITCHELLS WINES, MEADOWHEAD

My late mum's birthday was Christmas Day so I have many happy memories of not only Father Christmas coming down the chimney but also celebrations with a very special lady, as all mums are.

So it was always a day to open a nice bottle at Cowboy Time (ten-to-ten, ten-to-ten) or aperitif time with a twist.

Gewürztraminer, sometimes French sometimes German, is an aromatic white grape variety that performs in cooler climates.

Its finest expression is from Alsace which is a very charismatic region in the shadow of the Vosges Mountains on the French side of the Rhine, so this year we are having Gustave Lorentz Reserve Gewürztraminer 2004 (£9.49) to kick off the day.

For a nice white with lunch, the famous Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2007 (£15.95) fits the bill. This New Zealand beauty is the epitome of gooseberries. The winery was established in 1985 when David Hohen of Australian Cape Mentelle fame tasted the wine from Marlborough, New Zealand. He created Cloudy Bay taking its name from the bay on the northern tip of South Island named by Captain Cook in 1770 from his trip which departed from Whitby.

At 2.30 ('dentist time' we call it) it's time to bring on the reds and for us it's Louis Latour Grancey Grand Cru 1998 (£26). Founded in 1797 Louis Latour is one of the most respected domaine-owning negociants. We were lucky enough to visit the cellars last month to taste this wonderful wine. But global warming beware! The grape picking is now four weeks earlier than 20 years ago - will Burgundy have to move north to keep it's fabulous Pinot Noir grape from ripening too early?

Finally, the best Port buy I've ever had is Duff Gordon 1994

(£30) from the most outstaying vintage before the Millennium - ten out of ten - superb. Merry Christmas!

## ANDREW COGHLAN, BARRELS AND BOTTLES



It's Christmas Day and we are starting with a glass of Launois Blancs de Blancs Grand Cru from Le Mesnil Sur Oger, home of Krug's Clos de Mesnil. This is stunning, served in the 1850s bottle shape, long elegant neck and giving an air of opulence. The wine is well structured with ripe berries and white flowers on the nose and good depth to the palate. Grapes are grown just 40metres from the Clos de Mesnil site and are rated at 100per cent grand Cru.

It is a lovely way to start the day and with it being 100 per cent Chardonnay is light and fragrant and, as all good aperitifs should, leaves the palate quite cleansed and ready for the onslaught!

Many of our family really enjoy white wine, so for the main course which will be a Gallantine of local (Ridgeway) Turkey with fresh Cranberries and shallots, I will serve both red and white.

For the white I am going with the newest vintage of Highfield Estate Sauvignon Blanc. The 2007 vintage will arrive around December 1 and when the new vintage arrives it is always full of extra zing!

As the year unfolds the wine softens so now we are enjoying a gentler style of the 2006 Sauvignon, from free run juice in the Marlborough district of New Zealand. I always look forward to the new wines' arrival, just to give that extra spice and verve. >>>

The red wine this year will be classical, a rich and ripe Pinot Noir which has enough weight to handle the cranberries in the gallantine. Nuits St Georges 1er Cru from Lupe Cholet is big and juicy, full of raspberries and toffee, an alcohol level of just under 14 per cent and a delight to drink especially after allowing the wine to breathe for four to five hours in a decanter.

To round off the meal will be a choice of Gartelmann Ambrosia, our new agency from the Hunter Valley. Jorg and Jan Gartelmann are what we can call eccentric wine making characters. Their Ambrosia is ripe and luscious with a hint of honey and spice.

There will be a decanter of Port on the side, but we usually leave that until Boxing Day. This year I have a few bottles of 1985 Quinta da Noval, still good value at well under £50 for a semi mature vintage Port and by the time you have enjoyed the rest of the Christmas Day selection, it can be a bit of a waste to see a great Port go untouched. For something a little better value for money, the Quinta da Ervamoira would be great, a ten-year-old tawny at sub £20, we might even stretch to a second bottle!

#### JOHN HATTERSLEY, OF THE WINE WAREHOUSE, BAKEWELL

Christmas Day is not Christmas Day without some fizz to kick start the party. However small your gathering, it is always a special event.

After visiting family and friends in the morning we start festivities at home around 2pm with Champagne - nothing fussy or over the top - just our house Champagne that we have had for the last ten years or so. It's Champagne Gremillet Brut (£16.95), and this year it has won the accolade of the Best Non-Vintage Champagne by the International Wine and Spirits Challenge.

It's clean and refreshing with a lovely creaminess on the palate followed by a lavishly crisp acidity - just right to cut through the oily texture of the copious smoked salmon canapés needed to quench the hunger of the patiently awaiting family.

The white wine to me has to be light enough to enjoy the



flavours and strong enough to go with most dishes. We will be having **Pouilly Fume Renardiere 2006** (£11.15). This is grown on flinty and limestone soils which gives a vivacious crisp and zippy finish to this fresh and grassy Sauvignon Blanc.

We are traditionalists really and turkey is always presented at our table. Burgundy is the archetypal wine to suit the delicate flavours and textures of meat which is so important. This year we are having Beaune 1er Cru Les Epenottes 2004 (£19.95) which was a great year in Burgundy. This wine, with its vineyard situated higher up the slopes than most, has a sensation that is unique to Burgundy - light, delicate, almost flowery in fragrance, but the harmony of the flavours are just exquisite while at the same time having the backbone and strength to compete with the great Gevrey Chambertins.

Pudding wines to me are always the finale, so they have to be memorable. Not only to enhance the food but to show the natural acidity and the crisp racy freshness that are not so apparent until you savour the wine. We are having Monbazillac single domain 2001 Domain de Grange Neuve (£7.75 50cl). This wine will stand up to the richest pudding and leave you totally satisfied and ready for that big chair in front of the fire. Bon Appetit!