

WINE AND DINE

This holiday season, get from givers

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By **BILL GARLOUGH** For Sun-Times Media

Holiday entertaining is in full swing and party-goers have a festive opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. As giving a bottle of wine is a popular hostess gift, this is a timely subject. Taking it a step further, it is appropriate to recommend wines from merchants who have a giving nature and actively support not-for-profit organizations in our community.

Wines as hostess gifts

Wine continues to grow in popularity in this country and is now produced in all 50 states, giving this beverage universal appeal. Wine can be one of the simple pleasures in life that you share with family and friends. Its popularity makes it an ideal hostess gift and it can be an expression of your friendship. Here are several tips for selecting wine as a hostess gift:

- Bring a wine that complements the menu.
- If a wine lover is hosting, bring their favorite varietal.
- If the host is a new acquaintance, bring a bottle you enjoy and use this as an ice breaker.
- Champagne/sparklers are always festive.
- Canadian ice wines are trendy and attractively packaged.

Wine merchants

When we opened up My Chef Catering in Naperville 21 years ago, we knew we were joining a progressive, vibrant community. While our assumptions were accurate, we also learned that Naperville and the surrounding communities have the most incredible spirit of volunteerism of any place we have ever lived (we know this view is shared by many people).

We have also found that the business community recognizes its responsibility to give back to the community. While this is a vast topic with countless acts of humanitarianism, I will focus on several (wine) merchants who actively give back to local not-for-profit organizations. Here are some examples of companies with a mission to make a difference:



*Bill Garlough,
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BILL GARLOUGH**

Binny's conducts wine tastings and designates tasting fees as a fundraiser for not-for-profits. In early December, they hold their annual Champagne Gala to benefit Little Friends. They also hold tastings to benefit The Naperville Area Humane Society. Their holiday hostess gift suggestions with suggested retail prices include:

- Gloria Ferrer California Brut Sparkler (90 pts. Wine Spectator) \$16
- Graham's Six Grapes (Ruby) Port Wine \$19
- Jackson-Triggs Canadian Ice Wine (89 pts. Wine Spectator) \$20

Costco donates product to not-for-profits to help with fundraisers and feeding people in need. Some of the organizations that support include the United Way, NCO, the Children's Miracle Network and Loaves & Fishes. Their holiday hostess gift suggestions with suggested retail prices include:

- Dr. Loosen Beerenauslese (BA) Riesling Gift Box \$16
- Warres 10 year Tawny Port (90 pts. Wine Spectator) \$20
- Kirkland Signature Brut (French) Champagne (90 pts. Wine Spectator) \$22

Trader Joe's donates food to not-for-profit organizations including Loaves & Fishes, DuPage PADS and the Power Connection in Bolingbrook. Their recommendations with suggested retail prices are:

- Martellozo Prosecco Italian Sparkler \$7
- Trader Joe's Reserve California Cabernet Sauvignon \$10

Whole Foods donates food to not-for-profits including Naperville CARES, District 203 and Loaves & Fishes. As an example, to help promote the sale of Loaves & Fishes' new community cookbook titled "Culinary Comforts," Whole Foods recently donated food to four area restaurant chefs who prepared their recipes featured in the cookbook. The restaurants then sampled their dishes at the Whole Foods store in Naperville. Holiday hostess gift suggestions with suggested retail prices include:

- Presto Prosecco Italian Sparkler \$11
- Glunz's Vin-Glogg (Scandinavian mulled spice wine — serve warm) \$12

So if you're looking for wine as a hostess gift this holiday season, give one of these wines a try and at the same time, support a merchant that supports our community. It's a win-win to give back to those that give. Happy holidays everyone!

Bill Garlough is an owner of My Chef Catering of Naperville (www.mychef.com), the winner of the 2007 U.S. Chamber's national Small Business of the Year. Bill is a Level 1 Master Sommelier and suggests food and wine pairings for his company's customers.