

# WINE AND DINE

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## Have wine with your corned beef

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

This time of year, we start gearing up for some fun by planning our St. Patrick's Day celebrations. The color green will be everywhere; our clothing, our rivers and our beer. Ireland is famous for its beer, and its cuisine pairs well with this beverage. Many a cook will add stout beer to their cooking pot when boiling their corned beef dinner. When this is done, a stout or porter beer is a wonderful pairing.

But what about wine with traditional Irish corned beef and cabbage dinner? I asked an Irish lass if she was interested and she gave me the green light to come up with a wine pairing for this meal. The combination of boiled meat, pickling spices and cabbage presents a challenge indeed. I kicked this topic around with fellow wine lovers, wine merchants and wine distributor salesmen to try and reach a consensus. Here's what we concluded.

### The meal

For centuries, hanging a cooking pot in the fireplace was a common way for Europeans to cook their dinners. Examples of these boiled meals include the Italian bollito misto and the French pot-au-feu. So, corned beef and cabbage has deep roots in European culture.

Corned beef and cabbage presents a wine pairing quandary, as vinegar and a wide variety of spices may be used in the corned beef boil. These spices could include salt, garlic cloves, peppercorns, bay leaves, mustard seeds, ground ginger, juniper berries, allspice, cloves and cinnamon sticks. Close to serving the meal, cabbage is added to this boiling dish, which introduces more challenging flavors to this wine pairing.

### The wine pairing solution

In evaluating this dish, it was agreed by my wine buddies that there are three main issues to contend with: the saltiness of the corned beef, the fatty nature of the cut of meat and the earthiness of the cabbage. It was generally agreed that some sweetness is needed to counter the salt level and that some acidity would help cut through the fattiness of this meat.

For white wine lovers, this sounds like Riesling, as it typically offers sweetness and high levels of acidity. However, there is some concern that many Rieslings may be too sweet and acidic. When we discussed the various spices used in this boil, Gewurztraminer came to mind as it has hints of cloves on the palate. Gewurztraminer also offers some sweetness and acidity, so it is a better choice. I then discussed this challenging pairing with a wine salesman who grew up in Alsace, France. He mentioned that the French drink Pinot Gris with sauerkraut and thought this would also pair well with cabbage. Pinot Gris also has some sweetness and acidity, so this is also an attractive choice.

It was agreed by all that red wine was the more challenging to pair with this dish. A wine with high levels of tannins (found in wines like cabernet sauvignon) was not considered to be a good match. While Pinot Noir has good fruit and acidity levels, we agreed that many Pinot Noirs may be too delicate for this hearty dish. We were divided on Zinfandels (great fruit and sweetness levels but little to no acidity). At the end, we concluded that both French Cote du Rhone and Beaujolais wines would pair well, as they both offer good fruit, sweetness and some acidity. They are also reasonably priced, which is appropriate to pair with this peasant dish.

For something truly whimsical, why not offer your friends and family some "green" wine to enjoy with their Irish dinner this year. Portugal offers Vinho Verde, which literally translates to green wine. As these grapes are harvested early,



Bill Garlough  
is an expert at  
wine and food pairings

they are not mature but a little "green." These white wines are slightly effervescent, easy to drink and inexpensive, making them a fun choice.



Here are some wines that pair nicely with corned beef and cabbage.  
Courtesy of Bill Garlough

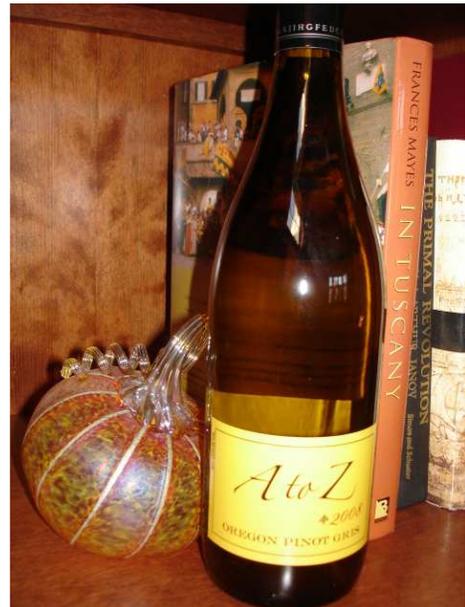
#### Bill's Picks (with suggested retails)

- ❖ 2008 Aveleda Vinho Verde Fonte: 84 pts. Wine Spectator (a fruity white with peach and green apple flavors) \$8
- ❖ 2008 Gunther Schlink Gewurztraminer: Not Yet Rated (a pleasing white with pear, granny smith apple, baking spice notes with medium-high acidity) \$14
- ❖ 2007 Gustave Lorentz Alsatian Pinot Gris: 85 pts. Wine Spectator (a clean white with tangy acidity and hints of lemon curd) \$18
- ❖ 2007 Perrin Cote du Rhone Reserve: 87-88 pts. Robert Parker (beautiful blackberry and cherry fruit, is med. bodied and silky textured red wine) \$10
- ❖ 2007 Marcel Lapierre Morgon Beaujolais: 89 pts. Robert Parker (this red finishes with clear fruit and subtle red meat and pungently herbal notes) \$19

#### Wine of the Month A To Z: 2008 Pinot Gris Retail Price: \$12

Description: For your St. Patrick's Day corned beef and cabbage dinner, I chose a wine that pairs well and is reasonably priced. Robert Parker gives this wine 87 pts. and says: "A To Z's 2008 Pinot Gris offers plenty of fragrant pit fruit and melon aromas followed by a vibrant, flavorful, just off-dry wine." This wine has appealing fruit notes, good acidity and has some sweetness, which should pair well with this Irish dish.

Bill Garlough is an owner of My Chef Catering in Naperville, the 2007 U.S. Chamber's Overall Small Business of the Year. Bill is a Level 1 Master Sommelier and pairs wine and food for My Chef's customers. Visit his Web site at [www.mychef.com](http://www.mychef.com).



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