

## **WINE AND DINE**

### **Fortify your spirits on a cold winter's night**

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

On cold winter nights, sitting in front of a warm, cozy fire with a nice glass of wine is a pleasant way to enjoy this season. A glass of port wine can help create a special evening.

#### **Wine facts**

Due to conflicts between France and England in the mid 15th century, England was looking for alternatives to French wine. Spain and Portugal were happy to oblige. Portugal added a spirit (about 20 percent alcohol) to help stabilize their wine shipments to England. These fortified wines quickly grew in popularity in England.

The Portuguese seaport where these shipments were made is Oporto and is where port wine was born. English wine merchants set up warehouses in Oporto, which helps explain why English sounding names (Warre's, Graham's and Dow) are brands of Portuguese port wine.

Red port wines are divided between ruby and tawny styles. Port wine is barrel aged the same as regular wine, but clear alcohol is added to the barrel during the wine's fermentation process. This creates a high alcohol wine (20 percent) that is sweet. At this stage, the winemaker evaluates the quality of the wine and decides whether it will be a ruby or tawny port.

Ruby port tends to be made from lower quality wine and is aged in stainless steel vats for one to five years. This wine is young and sweet and has a ruby red color. These wines are bottled and will continue to age, like a regular red wine.



*Bill and Karen Garlough,  
owners and founders of  
My Chef Catering in Naperville*

#### **Wine of the Month**

##### **De Krans Cape Tawny Port Wine Suggested retail price: \$15**

Both the Wine Spectator and Robert Parker agree this South African port wine is a wonderful value. The Wine Spectator describes this Tawny as offering "cinnamon, date, caramel and buttered pecan notes that stay fresh on the long, fine-grained finish. Nicely done." Robert Parker describes this elegant Port as having a "complex, rich nose of spices and coffee beans" and will be a delight to drink over the next six years.  
-- Bill Garlough



Tawny ports are made from the higher quality lots of wine and are aged in wood barrels for seven or more years. During this barrel aging process, the seal is intentionally offset to allow minor amounts of air into the barrel. The wine will eventually become oxidized and its aging process will stop.

These ports gain a candied, caramel and hazelnut character and are similar to Spanish sherry in weight and complexity. This wine will not age further in the bottle. Tawny port is bottled with less than 10 years of age, aged 10 years and aged 20 years plus.

### Food pairings

Ruby port's youthful, sweet and fruity nature is a great match with dark chocolate and dark-colored fruit such as black cherries, blackberries. Tawny ports pair beautifully with blue cheese, crême brulee, almond biscotti, dried apricots or pears and foods with honey, nut and caramel flavors. The classic English pairing is a slice of Stilton blue cheese and walnuts with a glass of Tawny port.



### Bill's wine picks

(With suggested retail prices)

Ficklin Vineyards Tinta Ruby Port: \$15

De Krans Cape Tawny (South Africa):  
\$15

Yalumba Antique Tawny (Australia):  
\$17

Graham's Six Grapes Ruby Port: \$22

Warre's Otima Tawny Port 10 (years):  
\$24

Bill and Karen Garlough are the founders and owners of My Chef Catering in Naperville, winners of the U.S. Chamber's 2007 national Small Business of the Year. Bill earned his Level 1 Master Sommelier designation in July, 2004 and pairs food and wine for their customers.