



Most years, and this is no exception, I make the November wine selections with two goals in mind. The first is a selection that is *not* intended to be served with Thanksgiving dinner. After all, you need to eat 60-90 other meals this month, why focus only on one? My second pick is intended to work with ol' Tom Turkey, with a recipe to use up the leftovers. I hope you enjoy these incredible wines and have a wonderful holiday season.

### **2016 Nubori Rioja Crianza "Edicion Limitada" (\$15)**

I have to admit that when I was first presented this wine I did not give it much serious consideration. The heavy, oversized bottle and expensive metallic label made me wonder what deficiency the winery is trying to hide. In fact, I even mentioned to the distributor rep that this wine is probably a "whole lot of sizzle, but not much steak." Well, he smiled and then I ate, or more appropriately drank, my words. Yes the packaging is a bit overblown, but boy for this price there is a heck of a lot of wine in the bottle.

Rioja is the last old world wine region where there is still a relatively big divide between the "old school" and modern producers. To understand the difference, let's take a moment to discuss the history of winemaking in the region. Wine has been made in Rioja since Roman times, but fortunes changed dramatically in the late 1800's as many Bordeaux producers, fleeing the phylloxera scourge ravaging France, crossed the Pyrenees mountains and settled in the unaffected region of Rioja. They found that the local grapes, particularly Tempranillo, produce a wine that is sturdy and age worthy, just like their beloved Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. In order to temper the relatively stiff tannins of cool climate Tempranillo, producers took to aging the wine in barrel for longer than was traditional in Bordeaux. For roughly a hundred years the style has evolved, with many producers preferring to make wines aged for extended periods in oak cask, often to the point of nearly full maturity. This style of Rioja is still easy to find, and typically the wines are more amber/orange/brown than red, with exotic aromas of soy sauce, balsamic vinegar, leather and tobacco that dominate the fading fruit components.

Then in the late 1990's and early 2000's a new generation of winemaker started to evolve in Rioja. These were university trained oenologists, or wine scientists, who also had traveled and interned in other places, like Bordeaux and Napa. They brought back to their family wineries modern techniques and innovations, to produce richer, more fruit forward wines, more in style with contemporary tastes. This same phenomenon played out in the 1990's in other classic regions; Tuscany, Piedmont, Rhone Valley and even Bordeaux. During "the renaissance" of these areas there was much head shaking and teeth gnashing on both sides, and eventually many producers merged into the middle. Taking the best of the classic qualities of the wines, but giving them a contemporary spin. However, in Rioja many producers still fall into one camp or the other. This is an example of a very modern style, one that will please Cabernet/Bordeaux drinkers as much or more than those who prefer the traditional styles.

The Nubori winery was founded in the 1889 by D. Pedro De La Torre, who came from humble beginnings but studied winemaking in Bordeaux before returning to his native Rioja. He was one of the first producers to introduce new barrels to his winemaking, seeing the positive effects it has on the wines. After his death the winery has changed hands several times and today is part of a large, multi-winery consortium, but Torre's style still remains. This 100% Tempranillo wine is aged for eighteen months in all new French oak barrels.

When you pull the cork on this wine, make sure to decant it for up to an hour before serving. The rich color is a good indicator this wine will have plenty of power on the palate, and the nose is a rich combination of baked cherries, blackberry preserves, wet red clay, coconut macaroon, espresso roast coffee beans and dulce de leche. On the palate this wine delivers a dense core of fruit with a firm frame of oak tannins, and very nice length. Drink this wine over the next three years with a standing rib roast, pot roast, grilled leg of lamb or portobello mushroom risotto.

### **2016 Pierre la Grande Syrah/Gamay (\$20)**

This wine has been an Orlando store favorite for a couple of years, but I decided to make it our November Explorer feature because it combines my two favorite grapes to pair with turkey; Syrah and Gamay. Specifically I love Syrah wines from the Northern Rhone Valley of France, which is coincidentally not far from the Beaujolais region, home to Gamay. It is very unusual to see a blend like this, particularly for export, but the story behind this wine explains why it is special.

The wines of Pierre la Grande are the American label for the husband and wife duo of Jean-Pierre and H el ene Mucyn. They are passionate about making wines in the Northern Rhone, but did not inherit land like many of their

contemporaries. Consequently they are cobbling their estate together as older growers retire and sell their steep, old vine vineyards. Most of their production is Crozes-Hermitage and Cornas, but they produce a small amount of this wine from a very old vineyard located on the border of the St. Joseph appellation.

Because this is a very rural area, the exact age of the vineyard is not known, although Jean-Pierre estimates it was planted before WWII. While he does not know why they planted Gamay with the more traditional Syrah vines, it could be simply a function of volume. It is hard to believe, but until 1980's the wines in this area were sold mostly to the restaurants and bistros of nearby Lyon, and at very low prices. Whoever planted the vineyard was likely trying to stretch the quantity of Syrah grown by interplanting higher yielding Gamay vines. The result would also be more like the bistro wines so commonly sold in Paris, where they are typically Beaujolais or light, fruity reds from the central Loire Valley. I first tasted this wine with importer Craig Baker, who is not a fan by the way, but love the way the two grapes intertwine.

I do suggest decanting this one for a few minutes because both varieties benefit from a little air to release their bouquet. It immediately offers you a robust nose of red and black currant jams, with kisses of white pepper and new ball mitt leather. On the palate it is plump and fleshy, with very little tannin but a bit of crunchy acidity. Serve with barbecued chicken, smoked or roasted turkey, and even Indian dishes.

### **Spanish Beef Stew**

I love this recipe with the Rioja feature this month, but it is so versatile you can serve it with almost any red wine. This is also a great dish to serve company when time to cook is at a premium. It goes together quickly and cooks all afternoon in a slow cooker.

**1 pound beef stew meat,  
cut in 1 inch cubes**

**salt and ground black pepper to taste  
1 yellow onion, diced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 cups red potatoes, quartered  
1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes  
1 (12 ounce) jar sofrito  
1/2 cup pitted and halved green olives**

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Cook beef in hot skillet until completely browned, about 5 minutes; season with salt and pepper. Transfer beef to a slow cooker, retaining some of the beef drippings in the skillet.

Return skillet to heat and heat the retained drippings. Saute onion and garlic in hot drippings until softened, about 5 minutes; add to beef in slow cooker.

Stir potatoes, diced tomatoes, sofrito, and olives into the beef mixture.

Cook on Low until beef and potatoes are fork-tender, 4 to 5 hours.

### **Turkey Tikka Masala**

**3 tbsp ghee or unsalted butter  
1/2 yellow onion, finely chopped  
1 tbsp peeled and shredded fresh ginger  
3 large cloves garlic, minced  
1 (14.5oz) can crushed tomatoes  
1 tbsp sugar, or to taste  
2 tsp garam masala  
1 tsp turmeric  
1 tsp sweet paprika  
1 tsp ground cumin  
1 tsp ground coriander  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
3 cups chopped leftover roast turkey, chopped  
into bite-sized pieces  
1 cup whole milk yogurt (not Greek)  
1/4 cup packed chopped fresh cilantro,  
plus more for garnish  
Steamed basmati rice and/or naan, for serving**

I did not realize this is my second Tikka Masala recipe this year until after I tested and wrote the piece. My apologies but this is a really easy recipe to prepare, tastes delicious, works great with the Syrah/Gamay and I'm against a deadline, so it has to stay. No big tricks here, just make sure not to let the mixture boil after you stir in the yoghurt or it will curdle. (If that happens it does not effect flavor, just appearance.)

In a large deep skillet over medium heat, warm the ghee.

Add the onion and cook, stirring, until softened, about 7 minutes. Add the ginger and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add the sugar, spices, 1 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper, tomatoes, and 1/2 cup water.

Cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the yogurt and turkey and simmer very gently until warmed through. Stir in the 1/4 cup cilantro. Serve over rice, garnished with more cilantro.