



Host your Christmas party at a VQA Award of Excellence Restaurant

Simple tips can make dining out uncomplicated and fun

Niagara, Ontario (November 10, 2005) - Whether you are hosting a company Christmas party or a holiday gathering with friends, a good place to start is picking the right restaurant for your festivities.

The Wine Council of Ontario (WCO) suggests that party hosts consider choosing one of this year's VQA Award of Excellence restaurants. The awards are a way for the domestic wine industry to recognize Ontario restaurants that support VQA wines.

"We are extremely excited by the caliber of restaurants that are now VQA award recipients," says Norm Beal, WCO Chair. The just-released list of award winners is posted on the WCO web site as well as listed in an upcoming Ontario Wine and Culinary guide. Each restaurant is also presented with a framed certificate.

But selecting the restaurant is just the first step and for many, the most difficult part of the evening is selecting the wine. Here are a few tips to help take the stress out of the evening.

Budget: Price is not always an indicator of the best wine. Don't spend more than you can afford and don't feel bad that you aren't buying the most expensive wine on the list.

The rules about red vs. white: There are no rules. However, your server may have some recommended suggestions based on your menu choice or you can experiment with "wines by the glass". For hints on what wines might mix best with specific foods, click on the Wine-Food Matching Tool on the WCO web site.

Make it VQA: When choosing an Ontario wine, note that if the label says VQA you are assured it is made with 100 per cent Ontario grown-grapes.

Checking the label: It's important to check the bottle to make sure you are getting the exact wine that you ordered. Mistakes do happen.

Don't sniff the cork: If you are presented with the cork by the waiter, just place it on the table. The ritual of examining the cork is no longer recommended. Instead, make sure you have a small amount of wine in your glass so you can check the aroma. Be sure to swirl the wine and then tilt the glass up to your nose. If the aroma is questionable, take a

sip to make sure the wine is not spoiled. If it is, do not hesitate to ask them to replace the wine.

Don't drink and drive: Make sure no one drinks and drives. Plan ahead to ensure people have arrangements for getting home whether it's a designated driver or taxi.

For more information about wine selection visit www.wineofontario.org

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