



Four Seasonal CELEBRATIONS

HOLIDAY PARTIES FOR THE WINE LOVER

When the temperature drops and the holidays arrive, it's time to gather together, eat soul-warming food and raise a toast to family and friends. Returning home for the holidays can mean jetting across the globe, preparing that delicious recipe your grandmother brought back from the old country or simply sipping the same spirit or wine that has sustained your family for centuries. The most generous and energetic among us cook for days, bring out the good crystal, light candles and welcome family and friends with a glass of great wine and a hot meal.

This year, why not consider shaking up your own traditions and adopting elements from long ago or far away? Consider a Southern Thanksgiving showcasing the year's harvest; a modern American Hanukkah dinner; an Old-World Christmas inspired by elegant Austrian traditions; or a Japanese New Year complete with good-luck dishes guaranteed to make the Year of the Dragon prosperous for all.

This holiday season, try another culture's customs—we'll share menus, table-setting tips, cocktail recipes, wine pairings and party playlists. Any way you say it—cheers, *l'chaim*, *prost*, *kanpai*—there's no better season to indulge in a feast and raise a glass.

BY LILLY KUWASHIMA • PHOTOS KATE SEARS • PROPPING PJ MEHAFFEY



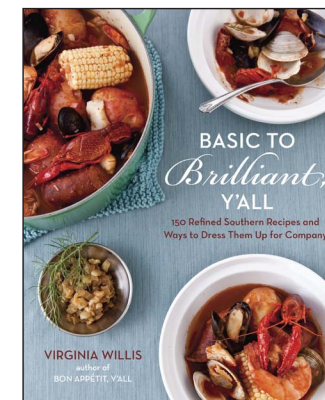
A Gracious Southern Thanksgiving

“Thanksgiving is about celebrating the bounty of the land and feeding as many people as possible,” says Virginia Willis, chef and author of the cookbook *Basic to Brilliant, Y’all!* (Ten Speed Press; 2011). As a child growing up in Georgia, Willis watched her grandmother start baking pies weeks in advance of the holidays. On Thanksgiving, the table overflowed with casseroles, turkeys, giblet gravy and homemade relishes. Georgia’s 10-month growing season and tradition of putting up produce—a term for preserving and canning—allowed “the summer harvest to come back and visit” with the relatives who had traveled across the country.

Thanksgiving Menu

For a blowout down-home meal, serve a cornucopia of courses and share the relishes and canned peaches made from the fruits and vegetables grown in your garden. Recipes for many of these dishes can be found in Willis’s book.

Thyme Toasted Pecans
Cheese Straws
Yeast Rolls
Roast Turkey
Smoked Turkey
Cornbread Dressing
Giblet Gravy
Green Beans with Ham Hock
Collard Greens
Sweet Potato Casserole Topped with Pecans
Spicy Pickled Okra
Fruit Chow-Chow
Bread and Butter Pickles
Pecan Pie
Pound Cake with Peaches and Cream



For selected Thanksgiving recipes, visit winemag.com/trecipes

Thanksgiving Décor

At Willis’s grandmother’s house on Thanksgiving, family and friends sat at a long table that spanned multiple rooms and passed platters of food to each other before tucking into their turkey. Now, Willis uses her grandmother’s vintage bone china as a tribute to her fond childhood memories. Food is the focal point of Willis’s table, so she plans accordingly by setting out platters in advance and labeling each one with what it will hold—allowing a seamless transfer of food to the table. To complement the harvest colors of the meal, place pumpkin-colored napkins on a wheat-colored tablecloth. Serve sparkling wine in elegant glassware, like the **Fusion Infinity Champagne Flutes** pictured (\$69.95 for a set of four at wineenthusiast.com). And no Southern Thanksgiving is complete without a gravy boat!



Thanksgiving Playlist

Music might just rival peaches as Georgia’s most famous export. **Midnight Train to Georgia**, Gladys Knight; **Amen**, Otis Redding; **Take Me Home, Country Road**, Ray Charles; **Get Up Offa That Thing**, James Brown; **Can’t Believe You Wanna Leave**, Little Richard; **Amazing Grace**, Cat Power.

Thanksgiving Wine List

For the classic American holiday, choose wines that are made close to home. Versatile wines do the trick on a table with varied flavors: A lively sparkler, a fragrant Viognier and a smooth Merlot will cross sweet, spicy and salty barriers with ease.

88 Sparkling Pointe 2005 Blanc de Blanc (North Fork of Long Island); \$42.

87 Keswick Vineyards 2009 Estate Reserve Viognier (Monticello); \$25.

87 Veramar 2008 Estate Club Merlot (Virginia); \$32.



Thanksgiving Cocktail

Country Store

Lara Creasy, beverage director of JCT Kitchen and Bar in Atlanta and No. 246 in Decatur, Georgia, offers her variation of an Old Fashioned with Applejack and maple syrup, highlighting the flavors of fall—a perfect way to whet the appetite before a Thanksgiving feast.

½ ounce maple syrup
4 dashes Fee Brothers whiskey barrel aged bitters
1 brandied cherry
2 orange slices
2 ounces Laird’s Applejack brandy

Muddle maple syrup, bitters, brandied cherry and one orange slice in an Old-Fashioned glass. Add brandy and stir with a bar spoon until syrup dissolves. Add ice and stir again until combined. Garnish with remaining orange slice.



COCKTAIL PHOTO: JON VAN GORDER



Modern Hanukkah

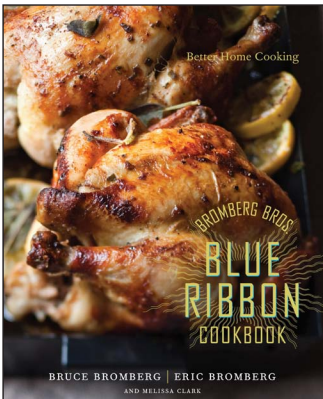
Bruce Bromberg has a James Beard award-winning latke recipe, but during the festival of lights, his mother is the one who cooks. Her consistently perfect preparation of family recipes reminds Bromberg, chef and co-owner of Blue Ribbon at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, that there is nothing better than honest comfort food made with care. The great joy of Hanukkah, Bromberg says, is that “the cooking is the same every year.” Food can be a beacon of light, too.

Hanukkah Menu

In traditional Hanukkah feasts, latkes are cooked in oil, which is a way of referencing the oil lamp that burned for eight nights. Another tradition is the inclusion of sweet dishes, which symbolize the sweetness of life. Below, Bromberg shares his family’s menu.

- Matzo Ball Soup
- Potato Latkes
- Noodle Kugel
- Roasted Asparagus
- Braised Beef Brisket
- Chocolate Roll
- Apple Pie

For selected Hanukkah recipes, visit winemag.com/hrecipes



Hanukkah Décor

Tradition is important, but so is making your own style shine. Modernize the dinner table by using chic dreidels (four-sided spinning tops) in contemporary colors as your decorative touchstone. Arrange the spinners in a glass bowl to create a centerpiece. A turquoise runner, crisp napkins, nickel flatware in a streamlined style and a silver menorah with candles, like the **Bridge/Arc Menorah** (pictured) from J. Levine Co. (\$45 at levinejudaica.com) on a dark blue tablecloth are fun twists on the usual color scheme. As a stylish finishing touch, wrap small boxes filled with gelt (chocolate coins) at each setting. Top boxes with star-shaped gift tags and write in each guest’s name—the sweet treats can double as place cards. And don’t forget the wine: showcase Israel’s wines with stylish stems like the **Fusion Infinity Cabernet Stemware** (\$89.95 for a set of four at wineenthusiast.com).



Hanukkah Playlist

A cheeky playlist puts a whimsical spin on a traditional holiday. **Dreidel**, Erran Baron Cohen featuring Jules Brookes; **How Do You Spell Chunnukkahh?**, The LeeVeas; **Hanuka’s Flame**, The Klezmatics; **The Chanukah Song**, Adam Sandler; **Ocho Kandalikas**, Erran Baron Cohen featuring Yasmin Levy; **Beginning to See the Light**, Lou Reed; **Hanukkah Blessings**, Barenaked Ladies.



Hanukkah Wine List

The ever-growing quality and selection of kosher wines available in the U.S. means hosts have an array of choices available to them. For traditional menus, go for traditional varieties: a Shiraz, Cabernet and Chardonnay on the table means most palates will be pleased.

90 Binyamina 2007 Reserve Kosher Shiraz (Upper Galilee); \$25.

88 Barkan 2006 Superieur Kosher Cabernet Sauvignon (Galil); \$65.

88 Yarden 2006 Katzrin Kosher Chardonnay (Galilee); \$26.



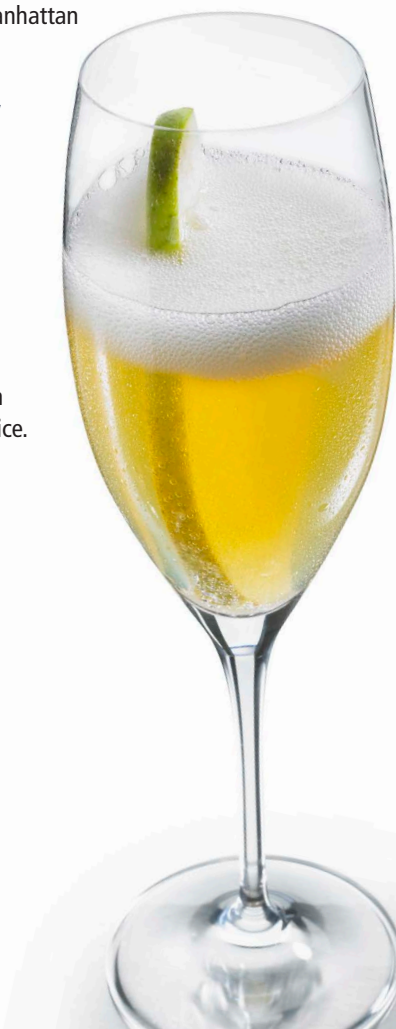
Hanukkah Cocktail

Miss Behavin’

Your Hanukkah celebration will sparkle with this Champagne-kissed, seasonal take on the French 75, created by Manhattan bartender Brian Miller.

- ¾ ounce Clear Creek Pear brandy
- ¾ ounce Laird’s Apple brandy
- ¾ ounce fresh lemon juice
- 1 ounce simple syrup
- Champagne, to top
- Pear slice, for garnish

Place brandies, lemon juice and simple syrup in a shaker with ice. Shake and strain into a Champagne flute. Top with Champagne and garnish with a pear slice.



COCKTAIL PHOTO: JON VAN GORDER

Old-World Christmas

In Austria, the yuletide spirit touches every winter experience: White lights shaped like angels brighten Christmas markets, gingerbread houses decorate pastry store windows and mulled wine simmers on stovetops in many homes. The Saahs family has been celebrating Christmas at Nikolaihof, their winery in Wachau, since 1894. It's no surprise that they cherish the traditions of lighting real candles on a giant Christmas tree, singing carols in the family chapel and enjoying the gifts of family, food and wine in the traditional fashion.

Christmas Menu

Christmas dinner in Austria marks the end of the traditional preholiday fast, so the fare is rich and decadent. For an Old-World Christmas feast fit for a king, try the menu that the Saahs family has prepared for generations.

Bacon-Wrapped Prunes
Roasted Wild Goose with Stuffing
Lentils with Thyme, Onion and Ham
Baked Apples Filled with
Cranberries
Warm Cabbage Salad with Bacon
Potato Dumplings
Chocolate Cake with Apricot
Compote and Whipped Cream

For selected Christmas
recipes, visit
winemag.com/crecipes



Christmas Décor

For an Old-World-style tabletop, take color cues from the snowy Austrian countryside. Christine Saahs starts with a damask tablecloth white as the winter wonderland surrounding her home. Her Augarten porcelain china is also white, lined with a touch of fir green trim and her polished sterling silver adds a bit of sparkle. For festive touches, Saahs scatters decorative gold angels and mistletoe across the table, or add **Inspiring Words Mercury Wine Bottle Set**, like the ones pictured (\$39.95 for a set of three at wineenthusiast.com). A pine Advent wreath with four candles is standard on the dinner table for all of December. And while two Riedel wine glasses at every setting are an essential part of the Saahs family Christmas—consider a set of stemware with vintage accents to further set off the Old World atmosphere of the party with the **Fusion Deco Champagne Glasses** (\$39.95 for a set of four at wineenthusiast.com).



Christmas Playlist

Playing the Vienna Boys' Choir's *Little Drummer Boy* and *Merry Christmas* albums is an easy way to bring magnificent Austrian music to your home. *Stille Nacht*; *O Tannenbaum*; *The First Noel*; *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*; *Joy to the World*; *Deck the Hall*; *In Dulci Jubilo*; *Adeste Fideles*.



Christmas Wine List

Why not pair one of the Saahs's own wines with their menu? Or choose another dry Riesling with crisp acids to balance the richness of the feast. If the wine must be red, choose a young Burgundy that's firm without being overly weighty.

91 Nikolaihof 2006 Steinerhund Reserve Riesling (Wachau); \$76.

90 Geh. Rat Dr. von Bassermann-Jordan 2008 Riesling Trocken (Pfalz); \$20.

92 Bouchard Père et Fils 2008 Ancienne Cuvée Carnot Caillerets Premier Cru (Beaune); \$85.



Christmas Cocktail

The Gingerbread Man

The flavors of gingerbread cookies translate seamlessly into this sophisticated sip by Kelly Liken, chef and owner of Kelly Liken restaurant in Vail, Colorado.

1½ ounces Maker's Mark Bourbon
1 ounce spiced syrup (see recipe online at winemag.com/ssyrup)
½ ounce molasses
Splash of dry sparkling wine

Place first three ingredients into a shaker filled with ice. Shake vigorously, incorporating molasses. Strain into martini glass and top with a splash of sparkling wine.



COCKTAIL PHOTO: JON VAN GORDER



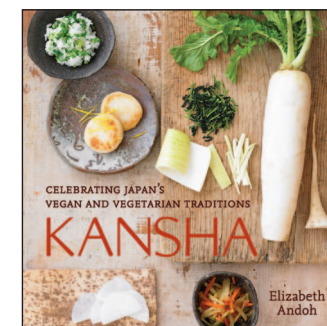
Japanese New Year

Oshogatsu—New Year’s season in Japan—emphasizes spending time at home with family and enjoying felicitous food. Near midnight on December 31, multigenerational families sit side-by-side “slurping year-crossing soba noodles that are long in hopes of not cutting short the possibilities in the new year,” says Elizabeth Andoh, author of *Kansha: Celebrating Japan’s Vegan and Vegetarian Traditions* (Ten Speed Press, 2010). A sip of fortifying *otoso*, saké infused with herbs and spices, kicks off the morning of January 1, and consuming good luck foods continues through the week with dishes like *ozoni* (a stew made with simmered vegetables and *mochi*, or steamed sticky rice), red snapper, pickled vegetables, lotus root and black beans.

New Year’s Menu

As January approaches, Chefs Kakusaburo Sakurai and Ryota Kitagawa of Wasan, a modern Japanese restaurant in New York City, create artful New Year’s fare for holiday entertaining. Elizabeth Andoh’s cookbook, *Kansha*, provides information about creating many traditional New Year’s recipes at home.

Ozoni (Stew with Simmered Vegetables and Toasted Mochi)
Kohaku Namasu (Pickled Daikon and Carrot Salad)
Nishime (Simmered Lotus Root, Shiitake Mushroom, Carrot, Bamboo and Taro Root with Shrimp)
Datemaki (Sweet Rolled Omelette)
Elizabeth Andoh’s Miso-Infused Chicken Dumplings
Sweet Black Beans
Temari (“Pom Pom”) Sushi
Mochi Ice Cream



For a recipe from Wasan, visit winemag.com/wrecipes

New Year’s Décor

Japanese families often keep sets of lacquerware soup bowls, saké cups and chopsticks that are used only on special occasions. The lacquerware is typically made of wood, hand-painted an earthy red color, accented with gold leaf and decorated with symbolic nature scenes: pine, bamboo and plum are a popular trio. Translating Japanese aesthetics into a New Year’s Eve party is easy. Serve food in a *jubako*—a stunning stacked lacquerware box. Asian specialty stores like New York Mutual Trading Company’s Japanese Culinary Center and online retailers sell accessible versions of jubako, lacquerware bowls and chopsticks. At home on New Year’s, Japanese families eat buffet style, placing nibbles on small plates, but you might try modern glass serving vessels, like the **Midtown Martini Chillers** pictured (\$29.95 for a set of two at wineenthusiast.com)—which is also an ideal way for guests at your party to ring in 2012.



New Year’s Playlist

Jazz up New Year’s Eve with music recorded live in Japan. **Straight, No Chaser**, Thelonious Monk; **Blues March**, Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers; **Changes**, Miles Davis; **’S Wonderful**, Ella Fitzgerald; **I’ll Remember You**, Sarah Vaughan; **A Kiss to Build a Dream On**, Louis Armstrong; **Peace on Earth**, John Coltrane.

New Year’s Saké & Beer List

Unlike wine which can cleanse the palate, Wasan’s sommelier, Toshiyuki Koizumi, says saké can expand the taste of even the most delicate flavors in food. To start off the night, Koizumi suggests a sparkling nigori or cloudy saké. Keep the festivities going with a few of his favorite craft saké and Japanese beers.

Asahi Shuzou Dassai 39 Sparkling Nigori (Yamaguchi); \$45/360 ml.

Nagai Shuzo Mizbasho Ginjo (Gunma); \$27/720 ml.

Tenzan Saké Brewer Company Shichida Junmai (Saga); \$35/720 ml.

Ryujin Shuzo Oze no Yukidoke IPA (Gunma); \$7/330 ml.



New Year’s Cocktail

Plum Blossom

Japanese plums bloom in the winter and symbolize hardiness. When mixed into a cocktail, plum wine signals the beginning of an auspicious Japanese New Year’s party, American style. The following is an adaptation of a recipe from Katsuya restaurant in Laguna Beach, California.

1 ounce Pearl plum vodka
1½ ounce Kaori Ume Shu plum wine
1 ounce cardamom-infused simple syrup (see recipe below)
½ ounce fresh lime juice
1 lime twist, for garnish

Shake liquid ingredients with ice. Strain into a martini glass. Garnish with lime twist.

Cardamom-infused simple syrup

1 tablespoon green cardamom
1 cup sugar
1 cup water

Place cardamom in a saucepan and heat over a low flame for 1 minute. Add sugar and water. Bring to a boil. Remove from heat and infuse for 15 minutes. Discard cardamom and cool. 🍹

