

Pair It With a Present

THE PERFECT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS FOR WINE LOVERS

ARTICLE MIKE TORNATORE

The holiday season is in full swing—Christmas music plays in stores and decorations dot the city—and that means shopping. It can be a dreaded task for some, but if you've got wine lovers in your midst, this article shares some great gift ideas for them—whether you're shopping for a boss, brother-in-law, or your Secret Santa. The gift suggestions are all things I personally use, recommend, and give as gifts.

TRIBELLA® WINE AERATOR

We hear it all the time: “Let the wine breath.” A wonderful way to make this happen is with a wine aerator, a device that immediately “treats” a wine by infusing it with oxygen. Decanting—gradually pouring the entire contents of a bottle of wine into a vessel, allowing oxygen to have its effect—accomplishes this but not as effectively or quickly. This is the point where the wine aerator comes in.

This exciting new TRIBella aerator design features a finely dimpled rubber material on its exterior and the stealth-like device, sleek and petite, is a welcome addition to the majority of aeration devices, which tend to be larger and just plain clunky. It comes in a case you might expect to find in one of Q's latest gadgets for James Bond.

Both easy to use and clean, the TRIBella aerator performs three basic and essential functions. First, it settles a wine's tannins, the tactile sensations we feel in our mouth from grape skins, stems and seeds. Second, it allows the wine to be infused with oxygen, revealing its aromas and taste sensations. In a glass, if wine is not aerated or decanted properly, the wine takes much longer to present correctly. Third, in the case of white wine, this aerator helps warm the wine just slightly before it hits your glass. Most white



wine is served too chilled and the extra bit of warmth allows the true aromas and flavors to become more distinguishable.

I use this aerator regularly, with whites and reds. It simply makes for a better glass of wine.

CHOCOLATE

Pairing chocolate and wine is a gift from the gods. It's a match made in heaven! Similar to food and wine pairings, it's better to enjoy chocolate with wines that are lower in alcohol content. Think Italian and French wines. Typically, Old World wines are lower in alcohol as they have, for centuries, been made specifically to pair well with foods. The same rules apply with chocolate.

To pair wine and chocolate, you want to choose wines that are not too dry or too sweet. Choose a smooth and supple wine. In general, this type of wine will pair well with your chocolate, whether dark or milk or white. Also important is texture. Delicate chocolates (milk) do well with lighter-bodied wines while darker chocolates do better with a slightly heavier-bodied wine.

I've found that both men and women of all ages love it when I serve chocolate at wine tastings. I enjoy the chocolates and truffles made by the Montana Chocolate Co., a local Montana-based chocolatier whose recipes date back more than 100 years. Their chocolates and truffles never miss the mark. You simply can't go wrong with great chocolate!

WINE GLASSES

Wine glasses make a good glass of wine even better. Although there are many different types of glasses on the market, I recommend keeping it simple with quality generic red and white glasses. Glasses made specifically for red and white wine deliver those wines in a way that brings out the nuances of their aroma and flavor.

GOURMET CHEESE

Of course, gourmet cheeses are perfect to pair with wine, yet it's not something many wine drinkers buy for themselves. The right cheese selection is a very personal choice, so a great gift idea is a gift certificate from a local store with a gourmet cheese selection. Any wine lover is sure to enjoy and appreciate that.

Mike Tornatore, aka Wine Guy Mike, is a wine consumer advocate who is passionate about sharing his love of wine, especially the notion that great wine often comes in very affordable bottles. Wine Guy Mike conducts monthly wine tastings at Katie O'Keefe's Casino and Bar in Missoula. Visit WineGuyMike.com for upcoming events and more information.



WINE RECOMMENDATIONS

Château Redortier's Gigondas

- Region or Area: Rhône Valley, France
- Nose: Violets, crushed berries, dark stones, and garrigue
- Palate: Lush, smooth, fresh red and dark fruits
- Finish: Beautiful juicy fruit and essence of violets
- Pairings: Chocolate and cheese

Muscadet-Sèvre et Maine sur lie "Saint-Fiacre"

- Region or Area: Loire Valley, France
- Nose: Sea salt, ocean spray, citrus and just a faint whisper of pear
- Palate: Fresh with zest and lively acidity
- Finish: Orchard fruits and subtle minerality
- Pairings: Chocolate and cheese

For more wine recommendations and ideas for holiday gifts for wine lovers, visit WineGuyMike.com or feel free to email questions to Mike@WineGuyMike.com.