



Katie Kelly Bell, Contributor

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This Wine Is For the Birds: Your Thanksgiving Wine Of The Week



Should you perchance have an herb-roasted bird on your menu this Thanksgiving you might want to consider a wine with some herbal essence for the meal. Dried herbs are wonderful in wine, imparting a soulful and complex thread to the fruit. I like to compare the mood-lifting sensation of dried herbs to that feeling inspired by the first mown lawn of spring...winter has been bearing down with a fierceness and then, one sunny warm day the slightly dried cut-grass aroma wafts your way, peace. You can find this quality in many Rhone wines, as well as wines from the Languedoc, where wild herbs grow side by side with the grape vines. A few California producers are also working some magic with the varietals that show best with herbal notes: Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre.

The Donelan family is one such producer, toiling away in Sonoma County and crafting elegant, seriously delicious wines. This family operation focuses on small batch wines. According to winemaker Tyler Thomas, the team likes “Drawing on the diversity of Sonoma County *terroir*, seeking out unique growing sites to produce inimitable wines offering an unmistakable sense of place and origin.”

And, yet, it begs the question, Why? This is supposedly Cabernet Country.

To that Thomas notes, “The bottom line of why: we love to drink Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre. Sonoma County can produce some of the best versions of these varieties in the world. The wines are amplified in their flavor diversity, depth, and texture all the while maintaining a lightness of foot that makes them quaffable and food friendly. It is no coincidence that many chefs and wine producers love drinking wines built from these varieties.”

Donelan Cuvee Moriah, \$40, 54% Grenache, 26% Syrah and 20% Mourvedre. A silky wine with notes of currant and raisin with some lavender undertones and herbs de Provence; it really is a pitch perfect Turkey match. A wine that understands the role of food, Winemaker Tyler Thomas notes, I like to think of it as the perfect Thanksgiving pairing wine because it complements the classic flavors and texture of a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Moriah is lighter bodied than our Syrahs, goes well with a variety of foods, but also has a flavor profile that includes parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme, similar to what is often used in stuffing. “

Indeed, but it also has ripe cherry notes, balance and elegance and yes, notes of cranberry. Uncork the leftovers (if there are any) the next day for a turkey sandwich with cranberry relish. The pilgrims would be proud.

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Happy Thanksgiving!