

Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — TJ's Wine Club: Wines for Thanksgiving 2024

[Light upbeat music begins.]

Tara: Happy Thanksgiving, Matt.

Matt: Happy Thanksgiving to you, Tara, and to all of our customers and to all of our hardworking crew members at each and every Trader Joe's. We're so thankful for all of you.

Tara: Okay, that's our podcast.

Matt: That's it?

Tara: No. Let's bring James in to talk about some great values on some really delicious holiday wines.

Matt: Nice. Let's go *Inside Trader Joe's*.

[Theme music begins with two bells at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]

Tara: We want to give our customers some inside tips on the new wine selections at Trader Joe's that we're really excited about because they're such good values. So occasionally we are going to plan to bring you a mini episode like this one. We'll call these the Inside Trader Joe's Wine Club.

Matt: And we're all members. It's a free club and worth every penny. No shipping charges.

Tara: Actually, there's no shipping at all. It's not really a wine club. It's just a cute name for some episodes.

Matt: I guess if *Inside Trader Joe's* was a TV show, thank goodness it isn't, the Trader Joe's Wine Club, it could be considered a spinoff.

Tara: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Like *Rhoda* or *Better Call Saul* or *Law and Order SVU*.

Matt: Maybe more like *Mayberry R.F.D.*

[Theme music ends.]

Tara: Okay. I don't remember that one.

[Light music begins.]

Matt: Exactly.

Tara: This is going to be memorable because we have James here to talk about wine at Trader Joe's.

Matt: James, no pressure. Let's make some memories.

James: Hi. Happy to be back.

Tara: It's holiday season. Thanksgiving is a tough meal to prep the wine list for because there's so many flavors happening with the food, so many textures, heavy food, not so heavy food. What's going on and how do we approach Thanksgiving wine?

James: Two very reliable choices are chardonnay and pinot noir. We have two here to talk about that are both in stores for a limited time, but very timely for Thanksgiving.

[Music transition.]

James: Let's start with the Carneros Chardonnay 2023 Vintage in our Grand Reserve label, also labeled as Lot 20.

Tara: What is special about this wine?

James: Coming from the Carneros region in Northern California just at the southern end of Sonoma and Napa. It does benefit from some of the cooler climate elements that are drifting up from the Bay Area or the San Pablo Bay at the north end of the Bay Area. It's an area where chardonnay thrives, even at the southern end, has really warm days throughout the growing season.

Matt: There's so many ways that a chardonnay can be turned into a wine or so many flavors that might come through. What are we hoping to find with this relative to Thanksgiving dinner?

James: Ripening of the grapes is important, and with those warm temperatures, it allows for developing some of those riper fruit, like even like apple and pear characteristics. And then the cooler elements of overnight temperatures helps balance it out by retaining acidity, which is really important for food pairing. This particular label has a history with Trader Joe's, but it's been on a little break and has been about six or seven years since we've had it.

Tara: This is not a no-folie artist. This is real sound. (popping cork from bottle) That was fantastic.

James: That was central casting.

[Pouring wine into glass.]

Tara: Tell us about this wine as we're about to drink it.

James: As a great representation of classic chardonnay and we're looking for some of those stone fruit or as well as apple and pear. Maybe some citrus on the nose too. This wine did have oak treatment, so some of that will come through on both the aromas and flavor profile.

Tara: But it doesn't give off that super oak-y, big California chardonnay vibe, and to me that kind of chardonnay would be a little overwhelming for food.

James: Yeah, that's a good point. The oak use, only a portion of it was actually new. There's a higher percentage that was used prior and that reduces some of the strength of the oak intensity.

Tara: Okay. Oh, that's interesting. All right. I'm going to give it a try.

Matt: I forgot to spit.

Tara: Turkey dinner just makes perfect sense with that. I want a bite of stuffing right now.

Matt: I'm going to go with a baseball metaphor. I think the chardonnay steps up to the plate and bats clean up because I like how it starts with a full swing. There's this big flavor, but the acidity, you talked about that acidity, James, this is clean, and it makes me want to have another bite of food, so it creates this cycle of richness, embracing just enough acidity that I really like, and I think it would work well. The Thanksgiving plate has all the things, all the flavors, and it is so tricky, but it doesn't need to be tricky to figure out what to serve by way of a beverage, a drink, some wine. It's such a fun chardonnay because it's not that gigantic California, over the top, so overt, so obvious, so much oak treatment, so much buttery-ness. Let's save the butter for the mashed potatoes. This would be a really nice opening, aperitif wine. If you're doing little bits, if you're doing olives and pickles and cheeses and crackers, this would be good too. James, if we're looking for this because we're in the not-so-visual realm of podcasting. This is Trader Joe's Grand Reserve. It's that black label Chardonnay Carneros. This is a steal, so get this while you can.

Tara: Okay, but what if I want red wine with my Thanksgiving meal? I know there are some people who would automatically say, "It's turkey. You don't want red wine. It's poultry. You want white wine." I disagree with that. I like red wine most of the time. What do I pair with my Thanksgiving meal?

James: This pinot noir from Carneros as well is a great direction to go with wine pairings for Thanksgiving. I think it can work well with turkey as well as a combination of side dishes, the stuffing.

Tara: What are customers going to be looking for on the shelf?

James: Customers should be looking for this Platinum Reserve label. It is listed as Lot 79 like the chardonnay also around just for this season.

Tara: I think we should try it.

Matt: I think we should, and I think we should do a whole show around serving red wine with fish.

Tara: It's a great idea. Not today.

Matt: I'll wait.

[Popping cork from bottle.]

Tara: Oh, that was a quieter pop. Pinot noir, excellent wine choice for Thanksgiving dinner. Tell us why.

James: It has a lot of nice moderate flavors as well as body and intensity overall. A lot of great red fruit, cherry characteristics, but this also has some oak treatment, so there's some added elements of spice and even a little vanilla coming through.

Tara: Okay. Time to try.

James: So it's kind of the lighter to medium body, which helps with some of the pairings, especially with a turkey or perhaps even roasted chicken. The lighter, smoother tannins on the wine help with some of the pairings for this meal.

Tara: A lot of American pinot noirs are a bit bigger, a bit bolder, and this really feels like the more classic lighter, more approachable French style.

James: Yeah, I think that's true, with a little bit of California coming through.

Tara: This one also comes from the Carneros region. That climate, does it have the same impact on these grapes as it does on the chardonnay?

James: Compared to other red wines like cabernet and zinfandel and syrah, the pinot noir does especially well in the climate of Carneros, and because of that it's also a great region for both of these grapes that are used in sparkling wine as well.

Matt: Very cool. I like this pinot noir's attitude. It has just enough backbone. The lightness and brightness is followed up by this structural rigor, but it's not like a giant knock your taste buds out kind of thing. This is really, really nice. It is absolutely classic as you were talking about, Tara. Burgundian with no offense to this winemaking team in Carneros, but this is all about nuance. This is all about what happens over time after the wine leaves your mouth, after your palate is given a moment of air. Not to overthink this kind of thing because it is a beverage, and yet this is a really enjoyable flavor after you take a sip, after you drink.

James: Yeah. One of my favorite things about these wines is the balance and how it makes you want to go for another bite of what you're enjoying with it, as well as just I think they both check the box of being elegant as well. I think they're great representations of the Grand Reserve and Platinum Reserve labels in that if these wines were in other labels in a different brand, they could easily be twice what we're offering them for.

Matt: Absolutely, and I so appreciate your team working on this, tasting through things to come up with this kind of offering because this is a stellar deal. I mean, this feels like you're getting away with something by being able to get this level of quality at the prices at Trader Joe's is just amazing. It makes setting the Thanksgiving table that much easier.

[Music transition.]

Tara: We don't talk about price all that often on this podcast, but I do think in this case it's important. The Grand Reserve Chardonnay is \$12.99. That's a steal. The Platinum Reserve Carneros Pinot is \$14.99. Is that accurate?

James: That's right.

Tara: It's entirely possible that prices may vary due to some regulations in different parts of the country, but generally speaking, this is what we are going for. This is the price point that you're going to find at Trader Joe's. It's just shocking to me because they're such high quality wines. And if we're talking about being in a wine club, you will not find a wine club that will get you wines like this at prices that come anywhere near this price.

Matt: What you might get is a lot of marketing hooey that stands in for actual product quality, and I was full disclosure, wondering what I was going to serve with Thanksgiving dinner, and truly I'm going to serve each of these wines.

Tara: Yeah, I think I am too. I have to make sure I get them before they disappear. We'll have them for a bit.

Matt: A bit.

Tara: A bit.

James: Probably not too long after Thanksgiving.

Tara: Okay. Well, yes.

Matt: Hopefully, that's the goal. Get these out into customers' houses.

Tara: Yeah. James, we hope that we can reserve the right to call on you again to talk to us about other wines that are exciting to us.

Matt: We've got a whole spinoff show to manage, so we need you to come back.

James: Look forward to it.

[Transition to closing.]

Tara: I'm Tara Miller.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan and the *Inside Trader Joe's* Wine Club picks for Thanksgiving this year (popping cork) the Trader Joe's Grand Reserve Chardonnay from Carneros Lot 20 (popping cork) and Trader Joe's Platinum Reserve Pinot Noir, also from Carneros Lot 79.

Tara: We'll have another Trader Joe's Wine Club meeting, another mini episode of *Inside Trader Joe's* for you soon, and lots of other episodes too.

Matt: Short ones, long ones, really long ones.

Tara: Until then, thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.

James: And Happy Thanksgiving.