



TODAY Holiday Guide

Dear wine Santa: Here's my holiday wish list

Edward Deitch picks the best smooth sips, whether for meals or as a gift

It's that time of year when I think of wines I'd like to give — or receive — based on those that have stood out in my recent tastings. The wines I've chosen for you to consider this holiday season reflect a range of regions and prices, will match well with your festive meals and will also make memorable and unexpected gifts for wine lovers on your list.



Russian River Valley

A top Sonoma pinot noir and chardonnay

Ken and Akiko **Freeman** are making distinctive, small-production wines (about 5,000 cases in all) at their **Freeman Vineyard & Winery** in Sonoma's Russian River Valley. Using fruit sourced from 13 growers in the Russian River Valley and the adjacent Sonoma Coast appellations, they strive for a balanced, elegant style — and succeed. "We wanted to do a food-friendly wine, an understated style of pinot," Ken Freeman says. The relatively light-colored pinot noirs have an earthy minerality, a hint of eucalyptus and pretty cherry fruit. The 2006 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is the lightest of the pinots and also has a rosemary note; the 2006 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir is a bit richer, with a touch of licorice. The 2006 "Ryo-fu" Russian River Valley Chardonnay is a model of balance and clarity, notable for its muted oak treatment. It's among the best chardonnays I've tasted this year. All the wines are \$44.

By Edward Deitch, wine columnist, TODAYshow.com

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