



HOLIDAY



DRINKS

Give the Gift of Spirits

The swirl of holiday parties is in full swing and you find yourself without a gift to take to the next soiree.

Never fear, the liquor store is near. Alcohol is generally a welcome gift to any holiday party, unless you know the host is on the wagon or if it's hosted at a venue that frowns on alcohol. But the aisles are brimming with choices and time is of the essence. Here's what to do.

GO SEASONAL

Many beer, wine and liquor companies will bring out special, festive seasonal products just for the holiday season. You want to start there. Next, consider that the cooler temperatures outside lend themselves nicely to bolder flavors in the glass, so move toward your fortified wines, spirits and big, bold reds.

Next, avoid the sales. You want quality, not quantity, unless you're on your way to a frat party. Then, by all means, look for the BOGO deals. If you're like most of us, go for affordable but not cheap and look for unique, seasonal blends, bottles and labels that your hosts (not the guests!) will enjoy.

PRESENTING THE PRESENT

What's on the outside matters as much as on the inside. Fortunately, this time of year, most quality liquor stores (and

you really should be in a quality liquor store for this errand, not the local convenience store) have specialty gift bags and boxes designed to hold bottles. You should fill it with something new to your host; ask the staff for something that maybe just came out.

COMING UP SHORT?

If your gift bag still feels light, look for accessories and accompaniments to give it more heft. Turn to the staff again and ask them what goes best. They probably have a mixer, garnish or even glassware you can add to it. Some

stores will even have recipe cards (or you can make one yourself) for cocktails to try using your chosen spirit.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, GO LOCAL

Ask the staff to point you to local libations that would

please your host's palette. If your holiday season is also bringing you some travel, take several small bottles of a locally made beer, wine or liquor with you to give out as gifts as you make the holiday rounds. Your hosts will sample it and think of you.



Hot Cocktails for a Cold Night

Nothing warms up a chilly night like a few hot cocktails. Here are a few cozy recipes to get your party crackling like a yule log in no time.

BLACKBERRY MULLED WINE

- 1 bottle of red wine
 - 2 cinnamon sticks, plus extra for garnish
 - 4-5 cloves
 - 2 star anise
 - 1 orange, juiced, plus strips of zest for garnish
 - 1 cup apple cider
 - ½ cup brandy
 - 1 cup blackberries
 - ¼ cup maple syrup
1. Pour the wine into a large pot. Add the spices and the rest of the ingredients.
 2. Simmer for 30 minutes to an hour, but don't let the mixture boil. Serve in mugs with garnish.

HOT GIN TODDY

- 1.5 oz. gin
 - .75 oz. fresh lemon juice
 - 2 oz. hot water
 - 1 tsp. sugar
1. Pour all the ingredients into a wine goblet, brandy snifter or glass mug. Stir well. Garnish, if desired, with a cinnamon stick.

ST-GERMAIN CHOCOLAT EPICE

- 1 oz. silver tequila
- ½ oz. St-Germain
- 4 oz. hot chocolate



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1. Heat the hot chocolate until warm. Add the tequila and the St-Germain and stir well.
2. Pour into mugs and garnish with marshmallows.

HOT RUM PUNCH

- 2.5 cups rum
 - 12 oz. demerara sugar
 - 4 lemons
 - 4 limes
 - 1 cup cognac
1. Peel the lemons into thin strips. Muddle the sugar and

lemon peels and let sit for at least an hour.

2. Add 12 oz. boiling water to melt the sugar and remove the lemon peels. Juice the lemons and limes, then add the juice to the sugar mixture.
3. Pour into a punch bowl and add the liquor. Add a quart of hot water to heat and dilute.

IRISH COFFEE

- 2 oz. heavy cream
- ¾ oz. simple syrup

- 4 oz. hot coffee
 - 1 oz. Irish whiskey
1. Whisk the cream and ¼ oz. simple syrup in a chilled bowl until soft peaks form, or about 30 seconds.
 2. Add the coffee, whiskey and remaining simple syrup to a warm mug. Stir, then dollop on the whipped cream and serve.

JOLLY JUICE

- 1.5 cups hard cider

- 2 cups water
 - 1 cup cranberry juice
 - ½ cup brandy or spiced rum
 - ½ cup light brown sugar
 - 3 bags of chai tea
1. Add water to a pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and add the tea bags. Allow to steep for 2 minutes.
 2. Remove the tea bags and add the rest of the ingredients and stir. Simmer over low heat and serve hot.

Punch Recipes to Rock Your Party

Grab your grandma's crystal punch bowl and get ready to set a stunning holiday table. No party is complete without a punch and a punch bowl for hopeful singles to linger by. Here are some recipes to get your function jumping.



CITRUS AND WHITE GRAPE JUICE PARTY PUNCH

4 cups white grape juice, chilled
 1 12-oz. can frozen lemonade concentrate, thawed
 1 12-oz. can frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
 2 2-liter bottles of lemon-lime soda, chilled
 Orange and lemon slices and green grapes to garnish

1. In a punch bowl, combine grape juice, juice concentrates and soda. Garnish with fruit and serve immediately.

CRANBERRY FIZZ

1 32-oz. bottle of cranberry juice
 1 cup orange juice
 1 cup ruby red grapefruit juice
 ½ cup sugar
 2 cups ginger ale
 Orange slices and fresh or frozen cranberries for garnish
 1. Combine cranberry, orange and grapefruit juices,

and sugar. Stir, then refrigerate until chilled.

2. Stir in ginger ale and serve with ice and garnish.

POMEGRANATE PUNCH

48 oz. pomegranate juice
 2 large lemons, juiced
 4-5 large navel oranges, juiced
 24 oz. soda water
 2 tbs. maple syrup
 16 oz. bourbon, brandy or white rum (optional)
 Pomegranate seeds, mint

leaves, star anise and orange slices, for garnish

1. Place all ingredients in a punch bowl, adding the soda water last.

2. Top with garnishes and serve.

TWO-HIT FIG PUNCH

12 fresh figs, halved
 12 oz. simple syrup
 24 oz. bourbon
 24 oz. spiced rum
 12 oz. lemon juice
 6 oz. orange juice
 Grated nutmeg and lime

wheels, for garnish

1. Muddle the figs and simple syrup in a bowl.

2. Add a large block of ice to your punch bowl, then pour over the fig mixture and the rest of the ingredients. Stir to combine.

3. Garnish with lime wheels and nutmeg before serving.

CHAMPAGNE PUNCH

1½ cups genever
 1 cup Champagne
 ½ cup Cointreau
 1 cup club soda

¾ cup lemon juice

½ cup simple syrup

8 dashes of Old Fashioned bitters

Pineapple slices, star anise and grated nutmeg for garnish

1. Add a large block of ice or 2 cups of ice cubes to a punch bowl.

2. Add the genever, Champagne, Cointreau, club soda, lemon juice, simple syrup and bitters. Stir to combine.

3. Garnish with the rest of the ingredients and serve.

Pairing Wine and Hors D'oeuvres

The weather outside is frightful, but your party is going to be delightful. Especially when you've got these wine and hors d'oeuvres pairings on your side.

BUBBLY AND SALTY

Nothing gets the holidays popping like the sound of Champagne corks. This year, pair your bubbles (you know, prosecco or Moscato could work, too) with salty snacks. The acidity level in the sparkling wine will keep the palate refreshed and refine no-frills snacks such as popcorn and french fries. Consider spicing your kernels with rosemary and cayenne pepper or whipping up your own thin-sliced potato chips at home and flavoring them with local spice blends.

BRING THE SPICE AND THE RIESLING

Try a light, sweet German Riesling with spicy holiday fair. Typically lower in alcohol, this white wine carries notes of apple and citrus to keep the season bright. Even hot wings will find a home with this cool vintage.

FRUIT AND WINE TANGO

Open a few of these popular blends with a fruit bar for a light, refreshing evening or a pause in your tasting party to rest the stomach and the palate. Pair sparkling wines with



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apples and pears. Cabernets go with plums and blackberries. Set the sauvignon blanc down with pears, bananas and cantaloupes.

SNACKS TO COMPLETE A FULL WINE TASTING

Get jolly with a gathering of

friends for a wine tasting. Have everyone bring a bottle or two of their favorites while you supply the food. Think finger nibbles such as a gorgeous charcuterie board and a crudite platter. Add a couple of dips, such as hummus with pita and spinach and artichoke dip with

chips or toast points, and a couple portable bites (think brie and cranberries in phyllo cups) and you've got a hearty spread to accompany any vintage.

SWEET SIPS

When it comes to the end of the evening, break out the

desserts. The Riesling can go with milk chocolate while pinot noir snuggles up to caramel chocolates. Dark chocolates go with merlot. White chocolate pairs well with sauvignon blanc (look for fruitier blends) while tart citrus pairs nicely with oaked chardonnay.

Candy Cane Cocktails

Nothing says Christmas like the candy cane. These cocktails take the simple symbol of the season to the next (boozy) level.

CANDY CANE COCKTAIL

Crushed peppermint candies for the rim of the glass

- ¾ oz. berry vodka
- ¾ oz. peppermint schnapps
- ¾ oz. white crème de cacao
- ¼ oz. grenadine
- 1 oz. half and half
- 1 splash soda water

1. Rim a cocktail glass with the crushed candies, using one of the liquid ingredients to wet the rim.

2. Pour the vodka, schnapps, crème de cacao and grenadine into a shaker with ice. Shake well.

3. Strain into the cocktail glass. Fill with half and half and soda water. Serve.

CANDY CANE LANE

- 4 parts prosecco
- 1 part peppermint vodka
- Chocolate chips and crushed candy canes for the glass

1. Melt the chocolate in a microwave bowl, stirring every 30 seconds. Pour the crushed candies into a bowl and dip the rims of the glasses into the melted chocolate, then into the crushed candy. Place the glasses in the fridge to harden.

2. Fill glasses with prosecco and peppermint vodka. Serve.

CANDY CANE SWIRL

- 1 oz. vodka
- 3 oz. cranberry juice
- ½ oz. grenadine
- ½ oz. peppermint schnapps
- Splash of Sprite or 7Up



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Ice cubes
Crushed candy canes for garnish

1. Dip the rim of the glass in water, then into the crushed candy canes.

2. Add ice to a shaker, then add vodka, grenadine, schnapps and cranberry juice.

3. Strain into the glass, then top with soda.

WHITE CHRISTMAS COCKTAIL

- 16 oz. peppermint schnapps
- 16 oz. white crème de cacao
- 2 quarts half and half
- Splash grenadine syrup
- 16 mini candy canes

1. Mix the first four ingredients in a pitcher. Refrigerate until chilled, at least an hour.

2. Stir the mixture well, then

pour into martini glasses. Garnish with a mini candy cane and serve.

CANDY CANE SHOOTERS

- ½ oz. peppermint schnapps
- ½ oz. white chocolate liqueur
- ½ oz. half and half
- Candy cane sticks
- Whipped cream

1. Muddle the candy cane sticks.

2. Rim a shot glass in corn syrup and muddled candy cane sticks.

3. In a mixing glass with ice, add schnapps, liqueur and half and half. Shake.

4. Strain into the shot glass. Top with whipped cream and serve.

Beers to Put Under the Tree

While wine (particularly the bubbly ones) gets a lot of attention this time of year, let's not forget the humble beer. Or not so humble, when you consider these seasonal delicacies.

The holidays are too short for bad beer, so try some of these brews.

CHERRIES JUBLEALE, DESCHUTES BREWERY, OREGON

Oregon cherries and notes of vanilla shine in this barrel-aged Super Jubel. East Kent Goldings hops and a caramel malt complete this seasonal beer, born when Deschutes founder Gary Fish said his favorite Jubelale pairing was cherries jubilee. Mind the alcohol content, though. It's 9.2% ABV. So go easy.

REVOLUTION BREWING FISTMAS, ILLINOIS

Only available in November and December, this holiday red ale is steeped with ginger and orange peel for a ka-pow of flavor. It has notes of fresh-baked bread and caramel and a 6.5% ABV.

BRECKINRIDGE CHRISTMAS ALE, COLORADO

A malty, full-bodied beer



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that envelops you like a warm sweater. This ale carries notes of caramel and chocolate while Chinook and Mt. Hood hops provide a kick to a clean finish. It's a dark, strong ale for a long winter's night at 7.1% ABV.

KENTUCKY CHRISTMAS MORNING BY HARDYWOOD, KENTUCKY

Packaged in a short, vintage

bottle, this gingerbread stout is aged in Kentucky bourbon barrels that give it the flavor of vanilla, coconut and toasted oak. Before it hits those barrels, it's filtered with locally roasted coffee beans for a morning jolt. You'll need it, too. It's 11.5% ABV.

DOUBLE MOUNTAIN FA LA LA LA LA, OREGON

The winter night is dark, but your Christmas beer

doesn't have to be. Centennial hops bring an bright, ever-green taste to this crisp winter IPA. Its 7.5% ABV is stout, but the taste isn't.

SHINER HOLIDAY CHEER, TEXAS

Peaches and pecans shine in this Southern seasonal. It smells of peach with hints of banana and caramel. It's moderately sweet with a caramel or graham cracker fla-

vor, depending on who you ask.

AVERY BREWING CO. OLD JUBILATION ALE, COLORADO

It's a strong ale in more ways than one, weighing in at 8.3% ABV. A pip of hazelnut and a mocha finish wrap you in a warm winter blanket fresh from Colorado. It's available October through December in six-pack cans.

Cookies and Cocktails

Spice up the traditional holiday cookie exchange by providing cocktails to go along with.

PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH CHRISTMAS COOKIES AND HOLIDAY MILK PUNCH

For the cookie:

- 3½ cups flour
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 cups vegetable shortening
- 2¼ cups sugar
- 6 large eggs
- 2 tbs. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 1½ cups currants
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 1 tbs. water

1. Combine flour and salt.

In a large bowl, cream the vegetable shortening and sugar. Beat in the eggs, lemon juice and zest. Gradually blend in the dry ingredients and fold in the currants. Cover and chill for four hours.

2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

3. Drop the dough by spoonfuls 1½ inches apart onto an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 8-10 minutes, until lightly colored. Transfer to wire racks to cool.

4. Add the powdered sugar in a small bowl. Beat in the water and continue beating until the icing reaches the desired consistency. If the icing is too thick, add more water. If it's too thin, add more sugar. Drizzle the icing



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over the tops of the cooled cookies.

For the punch:

- 2 oz. brandy
- 1 oz. aged rum
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 tbs. half and half or heavy cream

Ice

Ground nutmeg for garnish

1. Put sugar in a small bowl. Add water, stir until sugar is dissolved. Add rum and brandy.

2. Combine milk and cream and place in a shaker with ice.

Add rum mixture and shake well. Strain into an Irish coffee glass. Sprinkle with nutmeg and serve.

MEXICAN WEDDING CAKES AND MID-WINTER MARGARITAS

For the cookies:

- 1 cup vegetable shortening or butter
- 6 tbs. confectioners sugar
- 1 tsp. tequila
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- Powdered sugar for rolling

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

2. In a large bowl, cream the shortening and confectioners sugar. Beat in the tequila and gradually add the flour. Fold in the pecans.

3. Pinch off walnut-sized pieces of dough and roll into balls. Place an inch apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until lightly golden. Roll in powdered sugar while still warm, then cool on wire racks.

For the margaritas:

- 4½ oz. tequila
- 2¼ oz. triple sec
- 2¼ oz. fresh lime juice
- 2¼ oz. fresh grapefruit juice
- 2 lime wheels for garnish
- Chili salt – 1:1 sea salt and ground chili peppers – for the glass

1. Combine the tequila, triple sec, juices and ice in a cocktail shaker. Shake for 15 seconds.

2. Strain into a chilled rocks glass rimmed with chili salt. Garnish with a lime wheel.