

Wrap it up

With a multitude of festive bags, boxes and tubes available from LCBO and Vintages, beautiful presents are a snap. But what to put inside? Read on for some suggestions.

BY DRÉ DEE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES TSE

DOUBLE THEIR PLEASURE

Two-bottle boxes are perfect for creating a complementary pairing. Treat those with specific travel dreams to bottles from that region. Or give someone who's new to wine two examples of a varietal with differing flavours.

We longed for the excitement of the Olympics this past summer, but we can look to next summer and still celebrate all things Japanese with a gift from the Land of the Rising Sun. **Shochu Yokaichi Mugi Barley Liquor** (LCBO 31070, \$37.10) is a floral-scented spirit with sweet, candy-like notes. Wrap it up with one of the land's favourite whiskies, **Suntori Whisky Toki** (LCBO 465484, \$59.95), an elegant blend with subtly

sweet flavours of citrus, green apple and thyme.

Chardonnay fans will enjoy trying two versions from California: **J. Lohr Riverstone Chardonnay** (VINTAGES 258699, \$19.95) with its banana, mango, grilled pineapple and smoke flavours and **Robert Mondavi Private Selection Chardonnay** (LCBO 379180, \$17.75), crisp with citrus, anise and apple notes.

Keepsake Box
LCBO 16681,
\$8.95

Give the gift of choice. Tuck in an LCBO gift card.

Grab and go

Choosing host gifts to thank all your party-planning pals is easy when you pick from our selection of holiday classics, stylish bottles and premium spirits.



Our Favourite Bag
LCBO 16621,
\$1.00



This big brew has a delightful Champagne-like effervescence. **Unibroue Blonde de L'Enfer** (LCBO 17084, 750 mL, \$9.95) is a smooth balance of spice, malt and hop flavours.



A festive fave with delicate floral aromas of apple and pear, and a dry, medium body, **Vanguard Pinot Grigio** (LCBO 84186, \$16.95) is positively toast-worthy.



Baileys Red Velvet (LCBO 17085, \$31.95) tastes like the trendy dessert. This holiday, they can have their cupcake and drink it too.



With aromas of dark berry, red fruit, mint and vanilla, **Callia Alta Cabernet Sauvignon** (LCBO 12454, \$10.00) is a treat for red meat.



Remy Martin VSOP Cognac (LCBO 4101, \$99.95) has been a French favourite since 1724. It's superb with spiced cookies.

Wine with everything

Heading to a dinner party? No matter what's on the menu, these duos—each featuring a food-friendly red and white—will go with any holiday feast.



With its light body and flavours of raspberry and cherry, **Henry of Pelham Pinot Noir VQA** (LCBO 13904, \$16.95) is an Ontario classic. Buddy it with **Freixenet Italian Rosé DOC** (LCBO 11222, \$19.95) and you have wine for all types of mains and appetizers.



Angels Gate Gamay Noir VQA (LCBO 107714, \$14.95) is a fruity light red renowned for its ability to complement both white and red meat. Its partner in pairing? Dry and citrusy **Blu Giovello Prosecco** (LCBO 85316, \$16.05).



Two-Bottle Reusable Bag
LCBO 16612,
\$1.50



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WRAP IT UP



Vintages One-Bottle Gift Box
VINTAGES 16679, \$4.95

How to wow

Give the connoisseurs on your list a special bottle from VINTAGES to open and sip now or to cellar for holidays to come.



With rich apricot, dried fruit, praline and roasted nut flavours, **Taylor Fladgate 20-Year-Old Tawny Port** (VINTAGES 149047, \$69.95) is a delicious accompaniment to holiday desserts and blue-veined cheeses.



For Bordeaux, 2015 was an excellent year, especially for **Château Simard Saint-Émilion Grand Cru** (VINTAGES 12090, \$49.95). Medium-bodied, fruity and elegant, this 91-point wine (robertparker.com) drinks from 2018 to 2031.

LCBO One-Bottle Gift Box
LCBO 16680, \$4.95



Best-kept secrets

Secret Santa gifts can be challenging. You can be confident that all of these deliver impressive quality for the price.

This Piedmont beauty is a youthful, livelier cousin to famous Barolo. **Ascheri Barbera D'Alba DOC** (LCBO 219790, \$15.05) holds its own with blackberry and cherry flavours and a lovely balanced acidity. Riesling, the pride of Ontario white wine, shines in **Cave Spring Riesling Dry VQA** (LCBO 233635, \$15.95) with its fresh notes of grapefruit and pineapple and crisp finish. Whisky fans will love **Jameson Black Barrel** (LCBO 292615, \$50.15)—concentrated spice, nutty notes and vanilla are balanced by nectarine, apricot and ripe apple flavours.

A New Year's Eve to remember

Help loved ones celebrate a fresh start with these unexpected international bubblies from Vintages.



Bernard-Massard Cuvée de l'Écusson Pinot Noir Brut Sparkling Rosé (VINTAGES 369074, \$19.95) is a unique, juicy sparkling wine from Luxembourg made from 100 percent red grapes. Mark your calendars for the Dec. 12, 2020, release of **Peller Estates Signature Series Classic Ice Cuvée Sparkling VQA** (VINTAGES 284547, \$35.95). Classic Ontario icewine flavours of apple, peach and apricot meet joyful effervescence.

Kiwi bubbles? They're wonderful. Try full-bodied **Oyster Bay Sparkling Cuvée Rosé** (VINTAGES 280172, \$22.95), made from renowned Hawkes Bay Chardonnay and Marlborough Pinot Noir for persimmon and berry flavours. Say *na zdorovya* to the new year with a semi-sweet sparkling red from the Ukraine. **KrimSekt Semi-Sweet Red Sparkling** (VINTAGES 141655, \$19.95) has dark plum, strawberry and spice flavours. A chocolate-lover's dream.

Vintages Wooden Two-Bottle Box
VINTAGES 17377, \$12.95



Ready to gift

This year, the LCBO is offering an even easier way to say happy holidays with delicious wines beautifully wrapped up with delectable treats. Perfect for the boss, a neighbour or that foodie friend. Hurry to lcbo.com—these online-exclusive gifts have limited quantities.



Fruity compotes bring out notes of leather and dark fruit in these reds.

Toast the host

Entertainers will love this holiday-level snack collection.

A divine duo of **Tom Gore Cabernet Sauvignon** and **Pèppoli Chianti Classico** pairs up with Toronto's Wildly Delicious fig compote and mulled red wine compote, plus black-pepper wafers from Verduijn in the Netherlands. Add a wedge of Brie and serve on the cutting board included (LCBO 18719, \$99.95).



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Bubbles and sweets

Holiday luxuries get the festive treatment in this Champagne chiller for two.

Give this "can't miss" French icon.

When you want to really let someone know they're adored, offer this sophisticated Champagne. **Moët & Chandon Brut Imperial** comes with two finely crafted flutes, a chic ice bucket and 16 indulgent Belgian chocolate truffles from Toronto chocolatier, Dolce (LCBO 18722, \$149.95).



Sweets made in Ontario.



White wine and chocolate

Two popular varietals wrapped up with white and dark chocolate.

Full-bodied and rich **Kendall-Jackson Vintner's Reserve Chardonnay** and **Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio**, a Vintages favourite, arrive under the tree with a wine-bottle cooler, cookies and cream white chocolate and sea salt caramel dark chocolate bark. Perfect for a sweet-toothed friend (LCBO 18718, \$99.95).



WHAT TO SERVE

With the acidity of the tomatoes, robust spices and salty cheese, this dish calls for a soft white wine with low acidity, for balance.

Sandbanks Summer White VQA
LCBO 414268, \$14.95

**Roasted Cauliflower
with Crispy Chickpeas, Spiced
Tomato Sauce & Feta**

Recipe on page 134



**Gorgonzola & Walnut-Stuffed
Roasted Beets with Vanilla
Pear Purée**

Recipe on page 144



**Sautéed Root
Veggie-Stuffed
Stromboli**

Recipe on page 142



WHAT TO SERVE

Fortified wine has the strength and sweet character to complement the bold flavours of blue cheese and beets, yet it won't overpower the delicate purée.

Fonseca Bin No. 27 Reserve Porto
LCBO 325504, \$1700

Syrah (a.k.a. Shiraz) is a robust red that not only balances out creamy cheeses but also pairs wonderfully with resinous herbs like rosemary found in the stromboli.

Creekside Syrah VQA
LCBO 66654, \$1595



Wicked sippers

Halloween awakens many a spooky spirit—and wine, beer and cider. We've chosen six of our favourites, and there are dozens more online and in store. Cheers to your fears!

BY DRÉ DEE

The Walking Dead Cabernet Sauvignon

LCBO 576736, \$18.95

As thrilling as the TV show, this Cab has lively flavours of raspberry jam, vanilla and oak. Its dry, medium body make it excellent with meaty starters.

Crystal Head Onyx

LCBO 16178, \$69.95

This hauntingly beautiful black skull contains a brand-new vodka—made with blue agave! Clear and ultra-smooth, with just a hint of sweetness, it's lovely neat or with a splash of soda.

Dixon's Wicked Citrus Gin

LCBO 634899, \$35.15

An award-winning juniper-forward gin with delicate lemon and grapefruit aromas. Flavours of fresh herbs and black pepper are delicious mixed with citrus juice.

Two Blokes Hex Press Dry Cider

LCBO 13701, 473 mL, \$3.50

A blend of Ontario heirloom and bittersweet cider apples creates a spectacular, U.K.-inspired dry cider with full-bodied fruit flavours.

Voodoo Ranger IPA

LCBO 16473, 473 mL, \$3.45

Five hop varieties—including Nugget, Cascade and Chinook—and 7% ABV (alcohol by volume) provide a kick to balance juicy tropical-fruit flavours.

Diabolica White VQA

LCBO 576942, \$13.95

This food-friendly Ontario blend has wonderful aromatics and notes of pineapple, grape, tropical fruit and orange blossom. A fantastic sipper.

VAMPIRE'S DELIGHT

This sparkly blood-red punch is packed with a medley of fresh tart berry notes, citrusy gin and hints of bittersweet from the aperitivo—equal parts fun and serious flavour.

- 16 oz Northern Landings Cranberry Ginberry (LCBO 10614, \$44.95)
- 8 oz Campari Aperitivo (LCBO 277954, \$30.00)
- 12 oz Chambord Royale (LCBO 111443, \$42.85)
- 24 oz fresh pomegranate juice
- 8 oz Homemade Grenadine (recipe follows)
- 26 oz Riunite Lambrusco Frizzante (LCBO 13492, \$9.95)
- 30 lychees (for garnish)
- 30 blueberries (for garnish)

- 1 The day before the party, fill a Bundt cake baking mould with water to make an ice ring.
- 2 The day of the party, add all liquid ingredients except Lambrusco to a large pitcher and stir. Pour into punch bowl. Add frozen ice ring. Top with Lambrusco.
- 3 Carve small holes into lychees and insert blueberries into each one to make lychee eyeballs. Float on top of punch.
- 4 Serve 4 oz punch—and an eyeball—in each ice-filled punch cup.

Serves 20

Homemade Grenadine

Heat 1 cup (250 mL) pomegranate juice, 1 tbsp (15 mL) pomegranate molasses and 1 cup (250 mL) white granulated sugar in saucepan over low heat until sugar and molasses are dissolved. Let cool, add 1 oz vodka, then bottle and refrigerate. Lasts 2 to 3 weeks.

Makes 1 cup (250 mL)



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