

Finding the right wine for Thanksgiving

By Mike Dunne, Sacramento Bee

Summer wasn't even over before the most popular wine question of fall popped up: What wine do you serve at the Thanksgiving feast? Judy Laverty asked this as she moderated the Blazing Pans cooking competition in early September at the Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival in the Village at Northstar.

This is a cook-off in which two of the Tahoe area's more celebrated chefs go head-to-head in a format and with an intensity akin to the popular TV series "Iron Chef."

This year's contestants were defending champ Mark Estee of Campo in Reno and challenger Ben "Wyatt" Dufresne of Plumpjack Café in Squaw Valley, the ultimate winner.

Within 75 minutes, the chefs were to prepare four courses featuring an ingredient they learned of only as the clock started its countdown. This year, that was a whole organic free-range turkey.

Thus Laverty's question to the five judges, one of whom was myself. I was more-or-less ready with my usual answer: Set the table with whatever wine you like and whatever you expect your guests will like. If it's a big gathering, almost surely someone about the table will expect Chardonnay. Another will be looking forward to Cabernet Sauvignon. Not my first choices, but go ahead, be the most hospitable of hosts.

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