



Hoosier Wineaux: Beaujolais Nouveau brings a touch of class to your Thanksgiving spread

by Frank Piaskowy
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The third Thursday in November is a banner day in the **Burgundy** region of France. Excitement is generated throughout the world each year with the release of Beaujolais Nouveau. Parisians have been heard to exclaim, "Le Beaujolais Nouveau est arrivé!" or "The New Beaujolais has arrived!"

Why all the fanfare? As far as I can figure, it is part tradition and part clever promotion. The event began as a benefit to vineyard workers in the 14th century. The wine's notoriety spread to the bars, cafes and bistros in the south of France by the 19th century.

Beaujolais Nouveau wasn't officially recognized by wine authorities until 1951 after the phenomenon had already reached Paris. The wine's release was highlighted by an annual race where the objective was to see who could arrive in Paris first with the first Beaujolais Nouveau of the year. By the 1970s, the race was receiving press worldwide. Events celebrating the wine's arrival were staged in almost every major city of the wine drinking world by the end of the 1990s. The result is a **marketing triumph** which has increased sales from around a million bottles to more than 70 million bottles in the last 45 years.

Not to be confused with **Cru Beaujolais**, Beaujolais Nouveau is made by a rapid fermentation called **carbonic maceration** and promptly bottled. It is made fast

to drink while the better Cru Beaujolais is given more time to mature.

According to French regulations, wine made from grapes harvested the same year of release must be labeled nouveau. Furthermore, Beaujolais Nouveau can be released no earlier than the third Thursday of November. What were clusters of grapes in a vineyard just weeks prior is, amazingly, now wine for public consumption. As for vintage, it is recommended to only drink it in the year it was produced. This is definitely NOT a wine for cellaring.

There is a yin and a yang to the quality of Beaujolais Nouveau. I have had fun, easy drinking versions while also experiencing some I couldn't finish. Here are a few recommendations you might be able to find locally:

- **BOUCHARD AINE & FILS** Beaujolais Nouveau: Another very good Burgundy producer who makes Beaujolais. Quality is reliable and a great value.

Beaujolais Nouveau has become a popular addition to many Thanksgiving meals for several reasons:

- Beaujolais Nouveau is prominently displayed on shelves at the same time people are shopping for Thanksgiving groceries.
- It is recommended to drink slightly chilled. In my experience, this seems especially appealing to non-red wine drinkers.
- The wine is festive, easy drinking and affordable — it generally costs less than \$15 per bottle.
- With typically bright cherry fruit profile, it matches well with the staple holiday turkey, cranberries and stuffing.