

Wine of the Week: Beaujolais Nouveau



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WASHINGTON — Like the swallows returning to San Juan Capistrano or the annual running of the bulls in Pamplona, there are certain events in life that you can just count on. In the wine world, it is the release of the current vintage of Beaujolais Nouveau on the third Thursday of November each year.

As recently covered in a Wine of the Week segment a few weeks ago, Beaujolais is a red wine made from Gamay grapes produced in the Beaujolais region of France, located just south of Burgundy.

Traditional Beaujolais wines are produced by the winemaking technique of semi-carbonic maceration, and then aged for a short to medium period of time. Standard Beaujolais wines are released the year following harvest and can be stored for one or more years before consuming.

The wines show definite variation between vintages and as such are considered to be an early indicator of the quality of the vintage from the region.

However, Beaujolais Nouveau — also made from Gamay — is fermented for just a few weeks before being released for sale on the third Thursday of November. Current vintages are shipped around the world ahead of time in order to make sure that the wine is released in the local markets at 12:01 a.m. local time, for “Beaujolais Nouveau Day.”

While Beaujolais Nouveau is popular, it is not necessarily taken seriously by devout wine collectors and critics. Renowned wine critic Karen MacNeil wrote my favorite quote about Beaujolais Nouveau. She said, “Drinking Beaujolais Nouveau gives you the same kind of silly pleasure as eating cookie dough,” which is great, since I love eating cookie dough ... during Thanksgiving!

While the 2016 Beaujolais Nouveau has not been released yet, here are some producers with excellent track records. Keep an eye out for them when the wines hit the market next Thursday.

All Beaujolais Nouveau wines come from the Beaujolais region of Burgundy and all would be great accompaniment for Thanksgiving dinner. Best of all, most of them are under \$15.

The **Mommessin Beaujolais Nouveau** is usually a bit different from most of its peers due to the intriguing scents of banana, pear and berry on the nose. A little bit more serious than a typical Nouveau, featuring black plum, ripe strawberry and dark cherry on the palate. Over all, it is very smooth with notes of tropical fruit on the easy drinking finish. **\$14**