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Wine

Holiday Pours Priced to Please Even Scrooges

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Depending on the crowd, a contrarian attitude doesn't necessarily make for effective cocktail-party conversation. But if you're trying to find wines to complement a range of foods at a holiday get-together, at a price point that won't rob you of the seasonal spirit, that's just the mind-set you need.

The best wines to serve to crowds are lighter-bodied, fruit-forward and food-friendly. And one way to find affordable versions of them is to forget for a moment about the wines that particular reputable regions are known for and investigate their other varietals instead.

More price-sensitive holiday shoppers can opt for the 2005 Hogue Cellars Riesling (\$9). While Washington state's Pacific Rim Winemakers have the motto "Riesling Rules," we enjoyed their 2006 Pacific Rim Chenin Blanc (\$12) even more. It's dry but well balanced, and terrific with foods spanning the globe.