

Weekend Sip's 12 bottles of Christmas

[marketwatch.com/story/the-12-bottles-of-christmas-2019-12-06](https://www.marketwatch.com/story/the-12-bottles-of-christmas-2019-12-06)

Charles Passy



Ah, the inevitable challenge of finding the perfect holiday gift. Should you go the luxury route or keep it practical? Should you buy one present or many?

Our advice: Buy a bottle. There are enough options in the world of all things alcoholic to find a gift to suit every sipper on your list. With that in mind, we present our 12 bottles of Christmas once again, with choices to suit every taste.

In case you don't find something on this list, see [our picks from 2018](#), [2017](#), [2016](#), [2015](#), [2014](#), [2013](#) and [2012](#). And happy holidays!

The ugly sweater bottle

In recent years, the ugly sweater has been a holiday meme of sorts, celebrated for all its seasonal tacky glory. So it was only a matter of time before an enterprising spirits maker would find a way to booze-ify this new tradition. [Savage & Cooke](#), a California-based distillery, has done just that with its Bad Sweater release (\$28), a holiday offering of whiskey smartly flavored with seasonal spices, including cinnamon and nutmeg. It's a bit like a plum pudding in liquid form.

The red bottle

Many cocktail enthusiasts are quite familiar with Luxardo cherries, the perfect garnish for

many a mixed drink. But what about taking that cherry flavor and wedding it to gin? That's the idea behind [Luxardo Sour Cherry Gin](#) (\$35), a gin with the properly fruity flavor and deep red color that is in keeping with the season. It can be enjoyed on its own or in a lively variation on a classic cocktail – say, a holiday-minded gin and tonic.

Read more: [Who needs a cork? Winemaker bottles his bubbly with a cap](#)

[Now Playing: Johnson's Big Victory Makes Investors Happy—At Least for Now](#)



[Visit our Video Center](#)

The green bottle (er, can)

In this case, we don't mean a liquid that is colored green but one that is "green" in an environmental-minded way. [Sans Wine Co.](#) is a brand that offers wine made with grapes sourced from organically farmed vineyards — it is sans (meaning without) additives or chemicals, hence the name. It is packaged cleverly as well — in ready-to-go cans. A six-can variety pack (\$85) includes varietals ranging from Riesling to Zinfandel.



lichiko USA

Rather than give your Japanophile friend yet another bottle of sake, here's a shochu that makes an excellent gift.

The Japanese bottle

Yes, you can always buy a quality bottle of sake, the alcoholic drink long associated with Japan. But shochu is a lesser-known — at least in the U.S. — but just as worthy option. It is a distilled spirit made from rice, barley or other ingredients. (By contrast, sake is brewed much like beer.) A good one to gift, especially for a first-timer, is lichiko Saiten (\$30). lichiko is a leading name in shochu and this particular version, made from barley, has a delicately intriguing taste. The brand says you should pick up notes of honeydew melon and white grapes.

The other Japanese bottle

On the surface, there's nothing even vaguely Japanese about WhistlePig, a Vermont-based rye maker that's become something of a cult favorite in recent years. But the brand has put out a special release, dubbed The Boss Hog: The Samurai Scientist (\$500), that has a Japanese connection. It's a 16-year-old rye that has been aged in barrels that formerly stored umeshu (or Japanese plum wine). And the whiskey indeed has an ever-so-subtly sweet, plum-like character. The brand rightly calls it "distinctly unique from anything WhistlePig has introduced before."

The ready-for-a-martini bottle

A bottle of Absolut PDRDY, -0.53% vodka makes a fine holiday offering, particularly the Swedish brand's top-of-the-line Elyx edition, made in a vintage copper still. But you can take the gift to the next level pairing the bottle with some of the items found in the Elyx online

“boutique,” which features copper-plated bar tools. The basic cocktail set, with shaker, jigger and strainer, is a classy and straightforward option (\$109, vodka not included).

The \$500 Bob Dylan bottle

We know Bob Dylan, the folk-singing icon-turned-Nobel laureate. But what about Bob Dylan, the whiskey maker? The musician is another boldface name with a line of spirits — in his case, a brand of whiskey called Heaven’s Door (the name refers to a classic Dylan song). Now, Dylan has gone beyond that with limited-edition offerings that are dubbed “Bootleg” releases (like bootleg albums). The first of these is a 26-year-old, high-priced Canadian whiskey (\$500), made from what’s billed as a “low rye mashbill.” It’s a welcome affair, aged in Japanese wood (yes, another semi-Japanese bottle). And the singer’s fans should take note: The bottle features a Dylan painting, too.

Don’t miss: This long and silky tequila was 99,000 hours in the making

The smoky bottle

When we think of smoky flavors in booze, we usually think of Scotch — in particular, the peaty expressions that come from the Islay region. But here’s a vodka with that same tell-tale “burnt” taste — the Chase Oak Smoked Vodka (\$33) from England’s Chase distillery. The spirit is made by combining water that has been “smoked” for five days — that is, sitting in a smokehouse to soak up all the ashy flavor — with Chase’s vodka, made from English-grown potatoes. The result is something curiously delectable. The brand says it goes great in a Bloody Mary.



Michter's

This bourbon is aged for 20 years, far longer than the standard 10 to 12 years.

The really old bottle

You can find Scotches that have been aged for several decades. But in the world of bourbon, few are aged more than 10-12 years and even fewer are aged past 15 years. The concern is that bourbons beyond a certain time simply become too woody in flavor. But that is not the case with Michter's recently unveiled, limited-edition 20-year bourbon (\$700, though it often sells for more). This is a stunner of a sip, with notes of sweetness and spice and a memorably dry finish. Buy this one — if your budget allows — for the bourbon fanatic in your life.

The bearish bottle

Cakebread Cellars is one of California's most revered wineries, a Napa Valley-based name with a history going back to the early '70s. It's known especially for its Dancing Bear Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, with the moniker deriving from the property where the grapes are grown, a place where bears have been known to roam. The wines have received acclaim aplenty, with 90-plus scores from critics. In a special holiday gift set (\$3,500), the winemaker is featuring different vintages of the signature "bear" release, with one bottle each from 2006-2010 and two bottles each of 2012 and 2016. The wines come packaged in a cherrywood case.

The French bottle

The French make great wine, of course. And great brandy, too (as in Cognac). But they're also now in the whisky business. In recent years, Cognac maker Alfred Giraud has been offering a French malt whisky — like Scotch, but from, well, France. It's more than just an oddity, however. It's a truly refined, gift-worthy sip that has an especially French signature by virtue of being aged in casks that once stored Cognac. The brand's offerings include Harmonie (\$190), a blend of peated and non-peated whiskies, and Heritage (\$155), a strictly non-peated affair.

The calendar's worth of bottles

If you're having trouble settling on one bottle as a gift, why not buy 24? As in the Advent calendar tradition of a card with two dozen windows. Drinks By the Dram, a British company, offers such calendars (priced starting at around \$135), with ones devoted to Scotch, gin and bourbon, among other possibilities. There's even an Advent Calendar for Japanese whisky.

We Want to **Hear from You**

Join the conversation

SmartAsset.com