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## Drink up Beaujolais Nouveau

By **Jim Hammond**

*For the Journal*

WINE COUNTRY: Starting a wine cellar is a big step up from simply buying and consuming wines. For those of you who view it with fear and trepidation, I have a solution. If you focus on Beaujolais Nouveau, you will not need to start a wine cellar.

In fact, cellaring is not what you do with Beaujolais, Nouveau or older. Beaujolais is meant to be drunk young, and Beaujolais Nouveau is meant to be drunk right away.

For anyone who hates delayed gratification, this is your wine— or as the French would say, "Le Beaujolais Nouveau est arrivé!" which means "The new Beaujolais is here!"

### **Vive le Nouveau**

If you log on to Georges Duboeuf's Web site ([winewithoutrules.com](http://winewithoutrules.com)) in the fall, you will be treated to a countdown to zero hour, which was on Nov. 16 this year. The actual release time is one minute after midnight on the third Thursday in November.

This is a highly anticipated wine event in Europe, where the release ushers in a glorious celebration at wine bars, cafes, and bistros.

You can also see the 10 top wine toasts in case you are at a loss for what to say before clinking glasses with family and friends this Thanksgiving day. Here is one: "Music is the wine that fills the cup of silence." (King Edward). In fact two of the top 10 toasts are attributed to this English king; he must have been a party animal.

### **Good as last year**

Along with your Thanksgiving toast, consider Beaujolais as one of your wine choices, and ask for Beaujolais Nouveau at your favorite wine store.

According to Duboeuf, who is the event's biggest advocate, not to mention the biggest Beaujolais Nouveau winemaker, this year's crop is as good as the 2005. His tasting notes indicate, "The nose is fruity and elegant, meaty with lots of fermentation notes that show hints of strawberry, raspberry and blueberry. It is a beautiful palate of flavors."

Beaujolais is also a great wine to begin your appreciation of red wines. It can, and should be, drunk chilled, and is very low in tannins. Tannin is the element in red wines to which most nouveau wine lovers must adjust to hone

the palate toward reds. Since it can be quaffed cold (55 degrees Fahrenheit), keeping it in the refrigerator is no problem, unlike most reds that will not age properly at typical fridge temperatures.

About one-third of the entire crop of the Gamay grape, the only grape permitted in Beaujolais, goes into the making of Beaujolais Nouveau. Beaujolais and Beaujolais-Villages are the only vineyards, along with those of the Champagne region, where hand harvesting is mandatory. The winemaking process that creates Beaujolais Nouveau is called carbonic maceration— also called whole berry fermentation. It results in a very fruity, low tannin wine that is easy to drink. It is easily enough an indulgence that more than 70 million bottles will be sold and drunk this year.

### **When to drink**

Whatever you do, do not cellar this wine, unless it is just a temporary repository before your next party. Don't make the mistake a good friend of mine made, gifting me with a 25-year-old bottle of Beaujolais that has just about turned to dust. Except for exceptional years, Beaujolais Nouveau should be consumed before the following May.

If you decide against the hoopla over Beaujolais Nouveau, do try Beaujolais when a lighter, fruitier red is what you want, although trying its younger sister first will provide insight into what to expect for that year's crop. It's almost like barrel tasting, but with more anticipation and fireworks. Barrel tasting we'll save for another time. Salut!

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