



HOLIDAY COUNTDOWN

SEASONAL CHEERS

Here's a list of some great beers, wines, and spirits that would make a nice gift for your adult friends and family. A major assist for this list was provided by this reporter's brother, Sean Rosenkrans, who slings drinks at two Pittsburgh establishments: Tender Bar + Kitchen, named Best New Bar and Best Cocktail List this year by the Pittsburgh City Paper, and the Allegheny Wine Mixer.

— Nolan Rosenkrans
BLADE STAFF WRITER



◀ **Angostura bitters and Peychaud's bitters** — Bitters are an important part of many classic cocktails. Having these two stocked at home will open up your cocktail repertoire. **Angostura, The Andersons, \$12.99.** **Peychaud's bitters** may be harder to find. It is included as one of the bitters in the **Kegworks Aromatic Cocktail Bitters Collection, Set of 5, at sears.com**, but the collection is not available in the store.

▼ **Buckeye Beer** — **Maumee Bay Brewing Company** — Some people want an inexpensive, light beer. But if you're going to go that route, why not skip the Budweiser or Miller Light and buy local? Maumee Bay in the Warehouse District makes this historic beer, which has roots to 1838. It recently started canning the beer, for those who aren't fans of bottled brewskies. **Maumee Bay Brewing Company** and many local stores. **Joseph's Beverage Center, 6-pack cans, \$6.95.**

▶ **Chateau Grand Traverse Lot 49 Riesling** — The Midwest isn't exactly wildly known as a wine haven, but you can get quality bottles from the region. Made in the Old Mission Peninsula American Viticultural Area near Traverse City, Mich., Chateau Grand Traverse focuses on cool climate, European varietals, such as Riesling. The Lot 49 Riesling is made in a balanced German Kabinett style, a style that's the lightest, and typically least sweet. It has a bit of residual sweetness to balance out the Riesling's high acids. It sells for **\$21** on its Web site, **www.cgwines.com**, but call local stores for availability.



◀ **Dolin Dry Vermouth** — There are two principal variations of vermouth: dry and sweet. Buy the smallest bottles possible, and store them in the fridge after opening, to ensure they stay fresh. **Marino's Beverage Depot, \$10.99 for a pint.**



▲ **Old Apple Brandy by Laird and Co.** — Apple brandy isn't the most popular of drinks these days, but it's perfect for cold weather sipping and gaining in popularity. Laird, America's oldest native distillery, makes several versions, including its Apple Brandy 100 proof — referred to as the Laird's Bonded Apple Brandy — its 12-year-old Rare Old Apple Brandy, and its 7½-year-old Old Apple Brandy, which tastes a lot like whiskey. A check with Ohio's Division of Liquor Control showed the Old Apple Brandy was the most likely to be locally available, but if you can find other versions, those are great, too. Avoid the Applejack; real applejack is a cold distillation of apple brandy, but Laird's is a blended apple brandy. **The Old Apple Brandy is available at Joseph's Beverage Center, \$28.20.**



▲ **OYO by Middle Western Spirits** — You also can find quality spirits made in Ohio. Based in Columbus, the company makes bourbon and rye whiskey, but try its vodkas. Pronounced "O-Why-O," the OYO line is an homage to the Iroquois name for the Ohio River. Should be about **\$28**. It is widely available, including at the local **Kroger, \$27.95**. (Here's a tip for the home bartender from pro Sean Rosenkrans: Focus on collecting a variety of liqueurs. You can have just a bottle of gin and still be able to make a variety of cocktails if you have 10 liqueurs in a cabinet. You'll want to add green and yellow Chartreuse and some kind of curaçao or other orange liqueur along with the products mentioned here.)

▶ **Luxardo Maraschino** — Maraschino is an Italian cherry liqueur, which is used in small doses in many classic cocktails, such as the Aviation, which includes two ounces of gin, half a lemon, ¾ ounces of Maraschino, and two teaspoons Violette Liqueur. The Luxardo brand can be found in many area stores. **Pauken Wine and Liquor, \$33.40.**



▲ **Frosted Frog Christmas Ale by Hoppin' Frog** — You can't go wrong in the holiday season with a Christmas ale. Plenty of breweries make a version of the spicy winter brew. Hoppin' Frog is brewed in Akron and is one of several quality craft breweries based in Ohio. The company only bottles in "bombers," or 22-ounce bottles, which makes a single a good stocking stuffer. **Joseph's Beverage Center, \$7.99.**



▲ **Mon Ami Winery gift card** — Maybe you have a wine-loving friend but aren't sure what exactly he or she wants. Since it seems everyone gives gift cards today, you still can show you had your friend's particular tastes in mind without giving him or her a bottle that won't ever be opened. The Mon Ami Winery and Restaurant in Ottawa County has a variety of items for sale online at **www.monamiwinery.com**, from wines, corkscrews, to T-shirts.



▲ **Bull Frog Stout by the Great Black Swamp Brewing Co.** — Great Black Swamp is another Toledo microbrewery. It's got a smaller footprint than Maumee Bay, but you can find its beers in plenty of Toledo-area stores. Dark beers tend to go well with the cold weather. The company says it makes its stout for spring and fall, but it tasted just fine in the winter, too. Many local stores, including **Joseph's Beverage Center, \$4.99, 22-oz. bottle.**

* Prices and availability subject to change