



# Wine Tasting

## A Guide to Learning about Wine with Friends

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## **Introduction – Wine Tasting with Friends**

Wine tasting is considered to be a sophisticated past time for many people. Before you begin wine tasting there are many things you should know about wine. To some people wine tasting is considered to be a skill.

Learning about wine is easy. There are many types of wine and it is produced all over the world in many different regions. Wine tasting requires knowledge of the types of wine. It is important to know which types of glasses to choose for different wines and how to wash them. It is also important to know how to properly pour and serve wine. Wine tasting consists of many things. The purpose of this e-book is to introduce you to everything you need to know about wine so you can begin wine tasting with your friends.

## About Wine

Wine is a beverage fermented from grape juice containing alcohol. Grapes have a natural chemical balance which allows them to ferment without the need to add any sugars, acid, enzymes, or any other types of nutrients to the ingredients.

When wine is produced, grapes are crushed using different types of yeast. The yeast consumes the natural sugars found in grapes. This consumption converts the grapes into alcohol. Depending on the types of wine produced, many different grape varieties are used to produce wine.

Evidence shows that the earliest productions of wine took place as early as 6000 BC in places like Georgia, Iran, and Israel. Some archaeologists say that as early as 7000 BC grapes were mixed with rice to produce other types of fermented beverages in China. This is considered to be the precursors of what we call today, rice wine.

In Europe, wine dates back to as early as 4500 BC in some of the archaeological sites located in Greece. These same sites contain the earliest evidence in the world of grapes being crushed. Ancient Egypt has a recorded history of wine being used ceremonially. Places like the Roman Catholic Church found wine necessary to celebrate Mass. In France, the monks made wine for years and stored it in caves underground for aging.

During the Islamic Golden Age, wine was forbidden until the pioneering of the distilling methods, which led it to be approved and legalized for medical and cosmetic uses only. There were many recipes made with wine during this time.

## Grape Varieties

Wine is made from many different grape varieties. The *Vitis vinifera* is the predominant grape. This grape is defined by law as having a minimum of 75% to 85%. The result coming from these types of grapes is a varietal. This type of wine is known to people as the Chardonnay, Merlot, or the Pinot Noir. The areas of the world where these grapes are grown include regions like the Rhone Valley and Bordeaux.

Wines are not always made from the same species of grapes. They may be from the same vintage but of different species. When two species of grapes are crossed it is called a hybrid. The Concord grape is a hybrid grape coming from different species of grapes like the *Vitis labrusca*, *Vitis rupestris*, *Vitis aestivalis*, *Vitis riparia*, and the *Vitis rotundifolia*. These grapes are primarily grown in North America for general consumption. There are many foods made from these grapes which include things like jelly, jam, grape juice, and even sometimes wine.

## **Classifications**

Wine is generally classified depending on the different parts of the world. There are regulations that govern the way wine is classified. For example, in Europe wine is classified by the region it comes from. If it comes from Bordeaux or Chianti the wine is classified as this.

Countries that are not European do not classify their wines by the different regions the wine is produced. They classify the wine according to the type of grapes used to make the wine. Wines classified by the different grape types include the Merlot and the Pinot Noir.

Some regions of the world and wine valleys have recognized the classification regulations put to standard in Europe. Wine is being recognized more often by the locale rather than by the grape. Some wines recognized by the location of the vineyard and not by the grape variety include wines like Napa Valley, Australia, Willamette Valley, Barrosa Valley, and Marlborough.

There have been attempts by wine valley regions around the world that are non-European to classify wines by the quality of the wine. However, these attempts have failed and short lived.

## **Vintage**

The vintage wines are wines specifically grown in a certain year. These wines are labeled by the year they were grown rather than by the different region or grape used to make the wine. These grapes are usually all grown in the same year also. Every year the same wine may have a different variation in color and slightly in taste.

Many other characteristic differences noted with vintages include the nose, palate, body, and the development. They are considered to improve in flavor with age when they are stored properly. It is very common for wine collectors to hold onto a vintage bottle of wine for a special occasion to consume.

## **Non-Vintage**

Non-vintage wines are wines produced from grapes and wines not from the same vintage. They do maintain the consistency with the taste of the wine and the other characteristics. These wines often sell better because they maintain the same flavor. Even in a bad year these wines can be blended and produced because the grapes come from different vintages.

# Different Types of Wine

## Fruit Wines

There are many wines considered to be 'fruit wines'. These wines are received the name as they have ingredients of different types of fruits contained in them, rather than by the use of grapes. They usually will have a name referring to the type of fruit used to make the wine. Apple wine and plum wine are good examples.

However, fruit wines will not be called 'wine' as the term wine is designated specifically as a drink made with grapes. The name of the fruit must be in front of the word wine. This is to eliminate confusion. This also includes country wine which is the Great Britain version of fruit wine and a good indication that the wine is not made from grapes.

Many people make their own fruit wine. It can be made from any type of food that is sufficiently sweet. You might have to add a little table sugar or honey for the proper amount of sucrose.

Fruit wine is not always made from fruits. It can be produced from different plant sources that are not considered to be fruits. These types of fruit wines are often made from things like rice, dandelion, flowers, and more.

Apple wine is a German fruit wine which is made from apples. This wine is called Apfelwein in Germany. This is a form of cider that has an alcoholic content of 5.5% to 7%. Some say the taste of this wine is tart and sour. Some North Americans consume a drink in the winter months called apple cider. This most often is the very same thing but does not contain the alcoholic content. Apfelwein is often sold by the jug rather than in bottles like other wines around the world.

Wine can be produced with most fruits and berries around the world in cooler climates. It depends on the types and the amount of fermentable sugars contained inside of the fruits. Some fruits that have excessive levels of citric and malic acid can be fermented also.

Fruit wines usually need to be consumed at least a year after they are produced. These are not wines that get better as they age because of the fermentation issues. Because fruits most often need added sugars to make fruit wines these are not the natural sugars grapes have. They do not ferment the same and often need things like phosphorus, nitrogen, and potassium added, which only allow the flavor to last for approximately one year.

There are many different fruits used to make fruit wines. The fruits that make the best fruit wines are elderberries, plums, peaches, blackberries, huckleberries, blackcurrants, and pomegranates. These fruit wines resemble grape wines and taste very similar.

Fruit wines are made from other fruits such as apricot, bananas, cherries, pineapple guava, and blueberries. Wines can also be made from flowers such as hibiscus, elderberry, and dandelions. Vegetables such as potatoes, rhubarb, and parsnip are also used to make fruit wines.

### **Rice Wines – Starch**

Rice wine is a wine famously known as sake. This is a Japanese alcoholic beverage. Rice wine is made by fermenting naturally sweet grapes, in addition to other fruits. Rice starch is fermented to make rice wine. The fermentation turns the rice starch into sugars. This process is very similar to the process used to make beer except a mashing process takes place.

There are many different types of rice wine. These types include Tuak from Malaysia, Raksi from Tibet, Lihing from Sabah, and much more. Korea also makes an unfiltered rice wine that is known as snake wine.

### **Barley Wine**

Barley wine originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It actually came from the 18<sup>th</sup> century ales brewed in October and November. This is a terminology used but it is actually a beer. However, this is as strong as wine but often misconstrued as a wine because of the name.

### **Pinot Noir**

Pinot Noir comes from the variety of species of grapes known as the *Vitis vinifera*. These grapes are primarily for red wine. The name is French and means 'pine' and 'black'. This refers to the tightly clustered pine cone shaped, purple colored fruit. These grapes are most commonly known as coming from Burgundy France.

These grapes are difficult to cultivate but are known to produce the finest wines in the world. This wine is also considered to be one of the most romantic wines in the world also. Pinot wine tends to have a light to medium body with an aroma that might remind you of black cherries, raspberries, or currants. When the grapes are used young the wine is often much lighter than other red wines. Pinot Noir is also used with Chardonnay.

Many of the places around the world known for producing Pinot Noir include the United States, Italy, Australia, Austria, Moldova, new Zealand, Canada, England, Switzerland, Germany, France, and Spain. There are California wine regions in the United States known for producing Pinot Noir which include the Sonoma Coast, Monterey County,

Carneros District of Napa and Sonoma, and San Luis Obispo County / Arroyo Grande Valley.

## **Chardonnay**

Chardonnay is a white wine made from a green skinned variety of grapes. The flavors associated with a Chardonnay is terroir and oak. It is considered to be a neutral wine, light in flavor. Many of the places around the world known for producing Chardonnay include France, Burgundy, Champagne, North America, California, Australia, Italy, and the New World Wine Regions.

There are many types of Chardonnay from dry still wines and sweet late harvest wines. If a Chardonnay has not gone through a malolactic fermentation the wine will have an apple flavor. The harder the malic acid is when it is converted through fermentation it will have a more buttery flavor.

The oak is also charred to a certain degree which introduces a toastiness flavor. Many wine tasters mistake this flavor to the grapes but it is from the charring of the oak. Some of the flavors that Chardonnay can taste like due to the charring of the oak include coconut, cinnamon, cloves, spice, smoke, cream, caramel, and vanilla.

When Chardonnay is fermented it also affects the flavor of the wine. For instance, the colder the fermentation process is the more fruity the wine tastes. These flavors include mango and pineapple. Some wineries also use yeast that is specially cultivated which gives the wines an aromatic quality.

Chardonnay is the most difficult wine to recognize in a blind tasting because there is not a distinct universal trait or style that is directly applied to the wine. There are many different flavors, blends, and more. Not all Chardonnays have a smoky note to them either.

## **Merlot**

Merlot is made primarily from the *Vitis vinifera* species. The many wines associated with a merlot include the Bouchet, Bouche, Petit-Bouchet, Petit-Cabernet, Petit-Vidure, Vidure and Sauvignon Rouge. The origin of the wine is from the Bordeaux grape. It is also thought to be produced from a mutated grape from Biturica. Merlot is a red wine. The word is French and means many kinds of thrushes.

Merlot is produced in France, Italy, California, Romania, Australia, Argentina, Canada, Chile, South Africa, Croatia, Hungary, and more. The role of Merlot is to add body and softness. Some blends have a sweet taste and it is most commonly noted for the balanced acid levels.

# Production

## Countries Producing Wine

The Table below lists the top 10 wine producing countries in the world. The number next to the country reflects the amount of tons of wine is produced annually by each country. The countries are listed from 1 to 10, one being the top producer in the world.

1. France – 5.3 million
2. Italy – 4.7 million
3. Spain – 3.6 million
4. United States – 2.2 million
5. Argentina – 1.5 million
6. Australia – 1.4 million
7. China – 1.4 million
8. South Africa – 1.4 million
9. Chile – 977,000
10. Germany 890,000

The best wineries and growers are at least fifty degrees north or south of the equator.

## Uses of Wine

There are many different uses of wine. It is not only for consumption as it is a beverage with significant value and considered sophisticated. Wine is significant to many different cuisines, religions, and it has many different health related benefits.

There are many different wines used for cooking purposes. Many deserts have wine in them, such as the Black Forest Cherry. Many people like to marinade meats in wine before grilling or baking in the oven.

Wine has many religious uses. Because wine induces a mind altering state, the Dionysus used it as a sacramental entheogen. It is an integral part of the Jewish laws, such as Kiddush. This is a blessing which sanctifies the Jewish holiday with wine.

The Christianity religion uses wine also during the Eucharist. The last supper shows Jesus Christ sitting with his disciples drinking a glass of wine and sharing bread. There are many denominations that believe in the Eucharist, including the Roman Catholics and the Protestants.

Islamic law forbids wine. Although Iran used to have a thriving wine industry it was abolished in 1979, due to the Islamic Revolution. Any type of alcohol is strictly forbidden.

There are also many health benefits of wine. Red wine contains a chemical called resveratrol. This chemical has cardio protective and chemo protective effects in studies of animals. Procyanidins are known to have heart benefits and they are most commonly found in red wines. Procyanidins suppress the process in the body that constricts the blood vessels.

Sulphites are contained in all wines due to the fermentation process. Some wines have more than others. Sulphites have been known to cause problems with people who have asthma.

Wine is known to be healthy to drink occasionally. If you drink one glass of wine a day it is considered to be healthy for your heart. Pregnant women are also okay to drink a small glass of wine each day. It is known to be a heart healer and healthy for the body because it provides a relaxing affect on the muscles and the brain.

Excessively drinking wine can lead to problems and cause health issues if it is on a constant basis. It is not advised to drink excessive amounts of wine due to the high alcohol content in most wines.

# **Glassware**

## **Choosing a Glass**

When choosing wine glasses it is important to think about a few things. You usually want a large bowl on your wine glass when tasting red wines. This gives you adequate room on the glass to swirl the wine and more of a surface area. These glasses should allow you to pour in from 10 to 20 ounces of wine in them. The best red wine glasses are oval shaped and they narrow slightly at the top of the glass.

The white wine glasses should be a slender flute shaped glass. This is necessary if you want to enjoy a white wine to the best of its flavor. A glass of white wine should be significantly smaller than a glass of red wine.

## **Holding a Wine Glass**

When you are wine tasting it is still important to know how to properly hold your wine glass. This will show you are well versed and you have proper etiquette. You should always hold your glass by the stem.

Never hold your glass of wine by the bowl of the glass. Your hands are warm and if you hold the glass by the bowl you will warm the wine. You also want to be sure you don't put any fingerprints on the bowl of the glass either.

## **Washing Wine Glasses**

There are many different approaches you can take to washing wine glasses properly. You want to be sure you get the glass completely clean. Some people like to do a rinse method with hot water. If you choose to use only water with your wine glasses be sure to get all of the residual wine out of the glass before you set it out to dry. You can wash your wine glasses with a mild soap and a sponge too.

Some people like to use soda to wash their glasses. This is common for washing expensive glasses like crystal. Some glasses you can wash in the dishwasher. It is best to only wash the wine glasses that have short stems in the dishwasher. When you wash a long stemmed glass in the dishwasher, the stems are often prone to break off.

After you wash wine glasses you should set them out to air dry. Lay the glasses on a towel and let them dry. You won't have hard water stains on the glasses. If you do wash your dishes in the dishwasher it is best to cancel the dry session and pull the glasses out to air dry.

# About Wine Tasting and the Different Ways

## Order of Tasting

When you have a wine tasting party or you taste wine with your friends it is very important to serve the wine in the proper order. The appropriate order of wine tasting goes like this. Elderly tasters are always served first, no matter what the gender is. Women will be served next. The men should be served after the women. The host is always served after everyone in the room has a glass.

When you taste different wines you also have to think about the order of the wines being tasted. If you taste heavy or sweet wines before light wines they may leave a taste in your mouth. This is because they tend to dominate the flavor.

A wine taster must taste the lighter wines first or their taste buds will be skewed for tasting other wines. The order wines should be tasted is as follows: sparkling, light white, heavy white, roses, light red, heavy red, and sweet wine.

If you have never tasted the wine it can be hard to know if it is heavy and if it should not be tasted first. You should assess the wines by other characteristics such as the nose, color, and appearance.

## Assessing Characteristics

When you assess wine there are a few things to consider. The sweeter and heavier a wine it is you will be able to tell. This is by the swirling method. Red wines that are sweet and heavy will leave swirls on the glass, also known as 'legs'. This is why you want to drink your red wines out of a bigger bowl shaped glass. You need to be able to swirl the glass to assess the sweetness and heaviness of the wine.

The varietal wines present an aroma of the grapes. A good wine taster will be able to tell the varietal blends by the grape smell. Integration is also considered by a wine taster. Integration includes many different components such as acid, tannin, alcohol and others. These components must all be in balance. The proper term when a wine is in balance with these components is 'harmonious fusion'.

When a wine's quality is assessed the term expressiveness is used. This is when the aromas and flavors are well defined in the wine and clearly projected through the taste.

## **Scoring Wine**

There is a set system when you score wines. It is important to compare the merits of different wines. Different aspects are often weighed when you score wines. It is important to know how to score wines when you taste them with your friends. The aspects you will look at in the wine include the appearance, the smell, also known as the nose, the palate or taste, and the overall taste of the wine.

Not all wine scoring systems are the same. Some are weighted differently. For example, the appearance may be 15% of the score and the nose may be 35%. The nose of the wine being better on one glass of wine may make the wine score higher. Most critics have their own preferred system. It is important to come up with a system before you begin wine tasting so you and your tasters are not confused.

## **Wine Tasting Etiquette**

As wine tasting is considered to be a very sophisticated practice there is a specific etiquette you have to follow. This etiquette should remain the same whether you are at a vineyard, a wine tasting private party, or in a restaurant.

When you have a wine tasting party you should only invite the amount of people that you can fit comfortably in the room you want to have your party. A crowd may be intimidating. You do not want any of your guests to feel like they are being rushed when they are pouring a glass or tasting the wine.

Always be sure to have bottled water on hand when you are having a wine tasting. This allows your guests to rinse their mouths out between tasting different wines. If you have just tasted a very heavy wine you must have water ready for the guests. If you do not then their next tasting may be tainted due to the heaviness lingering in their mouths. In addition, water is good because guests will get thirsty and they need to drink something other than the wine.

When you have a wine tasting it is important to provide foods for your guests. However, you also want to be sure to have food on hand that will not change the way the wine tastes in any way. The best snacks to have on hand include unflavored things like bread or unsalted crackers.

## **Decanting**

Some people practice decanting before they serve wine at a wine tasting. This is very controversial to many different wine enthusiasts. Decanting is the process of letting wine breathe before you serve it.

Some people let their wine breathe for a few hours before they serve it. However, decanting is not just letting your wine breathe but it is when you pour your wine into a completely different container to allow the breathing. Some people even apply a special filter when decanting to remove bitter sediments that might have formed in the wine.

Younger bottles of wine benefit more to an aeration process than the older bottles. However, the sediment is more common with the older bottles. Many people say that airing out the bottle can relax the flavor of the wine, making them taste smoother. The wine might have better integration. However, all wines do not benefit from this method. Some wines are meant to drink immediately after popping the cork from the bottle.

The best way to tell if you need to let a bottle of wine air out or be decanted is to taste it first. As soon as you pull the cork off of the wine bottle you can tell by tasting if it needs to air out a little.

## **Blind Tasting**

The best way to hold a wine tasting is by blindly serving the wine to your guests. This means that you do not want the guests to know what you are serving to them. You might want to serve the wine in a black wine glass. However, the guests should also not see the shape of the bottle of wine nor should they ever see the label on the bottle.

You never want a wine taster's judgment to be altered because they know specific details of a certain wine. Certain considerations that can alter a taster's judgment about wine include the price, reputation, color, and the geographic region the wine came from.

People have expectations about wine when they know these considerations. If a wine is very expensive or comes from a certain geographical region some people tend to have expectations of the different varietals. Eliminating expectations of the tasters allows a wine tasting to go smoother and the scores of the wines will be more accurate.

## **Vertical Tasting**

When you have a vertical wine tasting you will have one varietal of wine from the same vintage. This means you might have the same wine from different years; 1999, 2000, 2001, etc. The most common purpose of tasting wines like this is to get a good idea of a certain wineries style and composition. You can also get an understanding how the different weather patterns affect grapes during certain years.

## **Horizontal Tasting**

When a horizontal tasting occurs you will use the same wine from many different producers. This type of tasting will allow you to determine which wineries you think produce the better wine. This wine will be from the same year and the same type of wine but from different wineries.

## **Tasting Flights**

When you hold a tasting flight you will have many glasses of wine out for the tasters to test. Next to each glass of wine you will have a card including the specifics of the wine; winery, geographical demographics, type, and more. Some flights include up to 50 glasses of wine to be tasted.

This gives a taster an idea what types of wines come from certain parts of the world and more. You can also get a good idea of the different tastes of the different types of wines when you taste wine through a flight.

## **Old World versus New World Tasting**

Many people enjoy this type of wine tasting. The Old World according to wine enthusiasts is considered to be countries like France, Italy, Austria, Spain, etc. The New World is North America, South America, South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia.

The reason these countries are considered to be the New World is because they are new to the wine producing industry and late starters. However, these countries are significant in producing wines.

Many people like to feature the same types of wines from the old and new worlds to determine which they like better. Some people like to do a horizontal or vertical method with this also. There are many ways to mix it up so you can make your wine tasting successful.

## **Wine and Cheese Tasting**

There are many different palate influences that cheese has when you drink a particular wine. When you taste specific wine combinations properly you will understand how well cheese and wine really do go together.

The best way to serve a Cabernet sauvignon is with blue cheese. All you need is just a little. You might serve the blue cheese with an unflavored French bread also. The blue cheese acts by coating the mouth and laying a foundation which will soften the wine and make it taste very good.

The best way to test this is by taking a taste of the wine first. Wait a minute. Then take a bite of the cheese and take another drink. You will see a big difference.

## **Wine and Chocolate Tasting**

Chocolate and wine can go together if you do it right. Some people completely disagree but this is because they do not know how to pair up the two together. When you drink wine with chocolate it is important to be sure the wine is as sweet as the chocolate you are serving. If you have a wine that is not as sweet as the chocolate it will cause the wine to taste very sour.

If you want to serve lighter wines at a wine tasting with chocolate it is best to stick with chocolates that are lighter also. For instance, the white chocolates are the best with the lighter wines. A white zinfandel will go very well when you pair it with a chocolate that is bittersweet.

## **Priceless Tasting**

Priceless wine tasting is not telling the guests how much the bottle of wine costs. If you have several bottles of wine you don't want to let anyone know the price of the wine. When guests know what the price of the wine is their judgment is tainted. Never reveal the price of the wine.

If you feel you must tell the guests the price of the wine, be sure you tell them after the tasting is over. This is because it is a natural perception that an expensive wine is superior to a wine that costs a low dollar amount of money. This may be true in some circumstances but it isn't always the case. You don't want assumptions to be made before the wine has been tasted or it will ruin the wine tasting.

## **Price point Tasting**

The price point tasting method is very similar to the priceless tasting. However, you will use wines that are in the same price range when you serve the wines. The important factor is to establish a baseline for the dollar amount and stick to it.

## **Big 8 Tasting**

A Big 8 tasting includes a wine tasting of the different varietals of the Big 8 wines in a tasting flight. The big 8 wines include red and white wines. The red wines included in the Big 8 are Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Shiraz, and Merlot. The white wines included in the Big 8 are the Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot, and the Sauvignon Blanc.

This is a great way to have a wine tasting if your guests don't know the differences with the different varietals. They can work their way through the wines and find out for themselves what each of the wines taste like and the differences.

This is a fun way to learn about the wines. When you have newer wine tasters this might be the first type of wine tasting you want to have at home. This way, the next wine tasting you have your friends will know what to expect with the different blends of wine.

## How to Taste Wine

There is a proper method to tasting wine when you and your friends get together to taste wine. If you follow these steps you will find you improve with your general knowledge of wine and have a more successful wine tasting.

The first thing you need to do is to look at the color of the wine and the clarity. You will do this by pouring the wine in a glass and look at it. Tilting the glass, you need to look at the color of the wine from the middle of the glass to the edges.

It is easier to see the color of the wine if you have a white background behind your wine glass. If you are in a restaurant you might want to hold up a paper napkin or a white tablecloth.

When you assess the color of the wine there are a few things to look at. If you are looking at a red wine, is it red, purple, maroon, ruby, garnet, brick, or even close to beige brown? A white wine may appear pale yellow, green, golden, amber, or light brown also. The colors make a big difference.

As you look at the wine in your glass you also want to see if there is any sediment in the wine. You can tell this by swirling the glass. It is important to measure the opacity of the wine also. The wine may be watery looking, dark, opaque or translucent. Is the wine dull in color or brilliantly shining? It may even be cloudy or clear. These aspects are very important.

When you swirl a glass it helps you see many things. You can see if there is any sediment in the wine. It also helps by vaporizing some of the alcohol and release the natural aromas in the wine. This will help you gain a good impression of a wine immediately. It is important to learn how to properly smell wine.

Be sure to put your nose almost in the glass so you can inhale the wine. Think about what you smell. You might smell things like berry, flowers, oak, citrus, and more.

Swirling the wine allows you to smell the natural and true aromas of the wine. The aroma of the wine is the best indicator of the characteristics of the wine that are unique. You can also tell the quality of the wine by smelling it.

You will next take a taste of the wine. Sip the wine gently and roll it around in your mouth. Think about the initial impression the wine has on your palate. This is where integration comes in; alcohol content, tannin, acidity, and residual sugars.

All of these should be balanced. You might notice one component has more than the other. There may not be a specific flavor that you notice with the intensity of the wine. You are looking to see if the wine is heavy, light, crisp, sweet, dry, and the entire complexity.

Next you will really taste the wine. This is called the middle range phase. You will need to decide on the actual flavor profile of the wine. You might taste a fruit or a spice.

After you taste the wine you will also decide how long the flavor remains in your mouth after you swallow it. The aftertaste is very important. Some very sweet tasting wines often go bitter after a few moments of tasting. This is where you really will decide if you like the wine or not.

## How to Host a Wine Tasting Party

Having a wine tasting party is a lot of fun. Although, this might seem to be for only the sophisticated crowd, anyone can learn about wine and hold a wine tasting. This is a great way to get together and experiment with new varietals. You can use any method of a wine tasting when you have a party.

The first thing you need to do is determine the type of wine tasting you want to have with your friends. The best 'first' wine tasting method is the Big 8 because this gives everyone a good idea the differences of varietals right up front. You can choose from the horizontal, vertical, pairings with cheese or chocolate, or other methods. It is up to you as it is your wine tasting party.

You will next need to determine who you are going to invite to the party. Be sure there is enough room for all of the guests you want to invite before you send out any invitations. You want enough chairs for people to sit comfortably. You also don't want to have too many people as it could be a bad situation if people feel rushed.

When you think about the amount of people you have at your wine tasting party will help you know how much wine you need to buy. Be sure to have enough so all of the guests are able to taste the same wines.

Thinking about the 'who' in who you are going to invite is important also. You might not want to invite friends who think they are experts on wine or they might get a little annoying. They also might take over the entire learning process of the different wines. This is supposed to be fun so be sure to invite fun people and people who are open minded.

You should design a card for each wine being tasted. This will be filled out by each guest as they taste each wine. They will be able to record the aroma they smell from each wine, the flavor, what it tastes like with a specific cheese, etc. You can also have them score the different wines on the back of each card also.

The best way to do a wine tasting with your friends is by holding a blind wine tasting party. You will need black or dark colored glasses so the guests cannot see the colors of the different wines. This way their perceptions will be more honest and accurate.

You also do not ever want to tell your guests what the prices of a specific wine was because they will immediately pass judgment on whether or not it is a good wine. Some people immediately assume wine is no good if it is less than \$100. Never tell the price to your guests, especially if you have many different wines varying greatly in price. It is okay to tell prices after the wine tasting is over.

It is important not to have labels on the bottles or anywhere they can be found. If you leave a label on the counter then you may have a cheating guest. Allow the guests to incorporate their senses properly without any help or hints.

You don't have to go all out when you decorate for a wine tasting party. It is important to have a white table cloth so the wine color can be properly assessed. Many people like to decorate with candles, paintings, and flowers. It is entirely up to you how you want to decorate at your party.

Be sure you have plenty of light at your wine tasting party. This is important or you will have difficulty with proper assessments of the color of the wine. You might serve a very cloudy wine but if the room is dim and candle light is shining it may look brilliant.

When you serve wines at a wine tasting party be sure that they are served from dry to sweet. Start with the light white wines first and work your way slowly to the dark and heavy red wines. You should also start with younger wines to the older wines. If you are doing a vertical test based on years then you will be sure to start with the newest wines first.

When you pour wine at a wine tasting be sure you pour enough in the glass to taste the wine and not too much. Two ounces is usually a perfect amount to pour for your guests to get the right amount for a proper tasting of the wine.

Be sure to provide snacks like unflavored, unsalted crackers and bread to your guests. You don't want your guests to be hungry. This will also cleanse their palate so they are ready for the next wine to try on your list.

The most important thing to consider at a wine tasting party is driving. If your wine tasting party consists of people drinking the wine and not just tasting then they will need to find a ride home. Be sure rides have been arranged so all of your guests are safe when the party is over.

# Serving Wine

## Opening a Bottle of Wine

When you open a bottle of wine you might find it is difficult at first. You should become familiar with the corkscrew you are using before you plant it in the cork. You don't want the cork to crumble or end up inside of the wine. This can be frustrating, especially if there are tiny pieces in the wine and hard to pick out.

When you put a corkscrew in a bottle of wine be sure the end is right in the middle of the cork. Turn the top of the corkscrew until the screw is almost entirely inside of the cork. As you turn the top handle you will notice the sides of the corkscrew will rise. You will push these two side handles down simultaneously and the cork will be removed from the bottle.

## Temperatures

Wine is best when it is served at the right temperatures. Some wines tastes horrific if you serve them when they are too warm or even too chilled. Some wines are not meant to be chilled but to be served at room temperature. You should know what temperatures are best or you could ruin your wine tasting party with your friends.

The best wine temperatures for serving wines at a wine tasting party or any time is as follows:

White Wines: 45 to 50 degrees

Sparkling Wines: 41 to 51 degrees

Rose Wines: 45 to 55 degrees

Red wines: 50 to 64 degrees

Fortified Wines: 54 to 65 degrees

## **Properly Chilling Wine**

Many people think they can toss a bottle of wine in the freezer for a few minutes and it is perfectly chilled. The best method of chilling a bottle of wine is in a bucket of ice water. You don't want just a bucket full of ice.

Fill a bucket up almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with ice. Then mix the bucket with water. Bury the bottle inside of this and allow it to chill for at least half an hour. When you chill wine in a refrigerator it usually takes up to several hours to get to the right temperature.

You can produce a bad wine if you leave it in the refrigerator too long also. You don't want to ruin a good bottle of wine. When you decide you are ready to drink it be sure to put it on ice water. The freezer and wine do not mix well together and you will not like the taste of the wine.

## **Storing Leftover Wine**

When you store leftover wine be sure not to put it in the refrigerator because it will be tainted the next time you want to drink it. Recork the wine and store it in a good place. The best way to store wine bottles is by ensuring the cork remains moist, the wine will be at the lowest stable temperature as possible, there is no vibration in the storage location, and it is not a storage area for other items that might smell bad.

One thing to keep in mind is that you should never invest in those little miniature wine racks and put them on top of your refrigerator. This is the best way to ruin a good bottle of wine. It might look chic in your kitchen but the warmth of the refrigerator ruins the wine.

If you plan on storing a wine for a long period of time that may be longer than six months then you should be sure that the storage place is dark, has a high humidity, and a low temperature. The ideal temperatures are between 50 and 55 degrees with a 70 percent of humidity.

## **Signs of Oxidation**

It could be really embarrassing to serve a bottle of wine to your friends at a wine tasting party that is oxidized. You should take proper care of your wine so you never have this problem. There are signs you will notice for oxidation.

These things include discoloration of a red wine to a brown tint. White wines will go from white to golden yellow. The wine might smell funny and not how it should. The flavors might be very strange and out of the ordinary.

Tainted wine really is ruined and undrinkable. It won't make you sick but it really is unbearable to drink and you won't want to. When you have a wine tasting the best thing to do is buy more than one bottle of wine in case one of the bottles becomes tainted. It happens from time to time and sometimes it isn't even your fault.

## Conclusion

There are many considerations when it comes to wine tasting with your friends. Anyone can hold a wine tasting party. Wine tasting is not just for the sophisticated. It is a lot of fun to learn about wine tasting and wine.

Before you hold a wine tasting party you should familiarize yourself with wine, the origin, and more. Find out the history of the different wines before you serve them to your friends. It will be fun for everyone to learn about the different wines. In addition, you need to know how to properly taste wine. You don't just take a sip of wine and give your opinion on whether or not it tastes good or not. Be sure to give it your best wine assessment you can.

Your wine tasting party will be successful if you have down the proper etiquette and rules. Be sure to follow guidelines as these are unwritten rules and considered common sense to wine enthusiasts.