

MY WINE  
*Journal*





# WINE ETIQUETTE

## Thoughts and Observations on Entertaining with Wine

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Whether you are about to taste your first glass or you are a true wine connoisseur, a wine journal can help you identify your particular taste and refine your lifestyle. A few suggested guidelines for pairing wine with food, ordering wine at restaurants and the proper amount of wine to serve are also detailed in this journal.

### Which wines should be served?

The most important considerations are (1) whether the wine you serve is ready to drink, and (2) whether the wine is compatible with the food. When pairing food and wine, the goal is synergy and balance. The wine shouldn't overpower the food, nor should the food overpower the wine. It matters not that you have a 95 rated wine that costs \$75 per bottle if the wine needs to be aged 3 more years to be at its best. There are no hard and fast rules regarding pairing wines with food. Personal tastes vary significantly. However, one should know what has customarily worked over the years, as there is no reason to reinvent the wheel. Classic pairings are good information to have at your disposal.

### Here are a few:

<i>Oysters</i>	<i>Chablis (Dry Chardonnay)</i>
<i>Lamb</i>	<i>Red Bordeaux, Pinot Noir or Chianti</i>
<i>Walnuts &amp; Stilton cheese</i>	<i>Port</i>
<i>Salmon</i>	<i>Pinot Noir</i>
<i>Braised beef</i>	<i>Barolo, Cabernet or Shiraz</i>
<i>Beef or steak</i>	<i>Red Burgundy, Cabernet Sauvignon or Zinfandel</i>
<i>Lobster</i>	<i>Chardonnay</i>
<i>Grilled chicken</i>	<i>Beaujolais or Merlot</i>
<i>Chocolate</i>	<i>Cabernet Sauvignon</i>
<i>Gumbo or other spicy dishes</i>	<i>Zinfandel or a sweeter Gewurztraminer for balance</i>

Again, these are suggestions at best and represent what others have found likeable. You should begin to learn what you and your friends like and expand upon your own personal experience. A safe alternative is always to offer two choices with your meals. This allows those who have very strong likes and dislikes to avoid their dislikes.



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### How much wine should you buy?

If you plan to serve several different bottles with different courses, you will need to buy fewer bottles of each type. However, a general rule of thumb is that you should have one bottle of wine per guest. While this may sound like it is too much, if you are serving a lot of food spread over several hours, it won't be too much. It is far better to have too much than too little. Besides, all that your guests don't consume is more for you. As a final note, be sure that you have different glasses for each different type of wine. It is not good to expect your guests to drink Chardonnay out of the same glass from which they drank Cabernet Sauvignon—if nothing else, be sure that the glass is rinsed and the red traces are gone before you pour the white wine.

Do yourself a favor this week and buy a new bottle of wine and really think about it as you drink it. If you like it, decide what you like about it and why. Then buy a similar bottle and compare. This is the way you develop your personal taste.

### How to make the evening flow

When entertaining guests for dinner, it is customary to offer a before dinner wine—aperitif. Typically, this is a simple white wine (can and should be inexpensive but tasty and pleasant), as you don't want this wine to be your best offering. Whether you serve hors d'oeuvres or not, you should offer your guests a drink when they arrive, and white wine is the usual choice.

Some prefer to serve Champagne at this time in lieu of white wine because the opening of a bottle of Champagne is a ceremony that brings together everyone in the group and honors your guests. A glass of Champagne is compelling enough and guests typically understand that champagne is too special to ignore. Unlike many white wines, Champagne stands alone without food.

After the aperitif, wines should be served based on the flow of the food. If the wines are properly matched to the food and you have judged the quantity carefully, there will be just a little left over after each course. Don't feel as if you have to finish each wine at each course. They are all likely to go by the end of the evening.



# ORDERING OUT

## How to Choose a Bottle in a Restaurant

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Few of life's pleasures go together better than a fine restaurant meal paired with an excellent bottle of wine. Oftentimes, however, an extensive wine list makes ordering wine at a restaurant seem difficult. You've got to pick a wine that complements everyone's meal choices, impresses your friends and looks smart in front of the waiter. With a little knowledge and some practice, however, ordering wine at a restaurant becomes a fun experience, even a chance to experiment with local or international styles. After all, most people try new dishes at restaurants without any thought, so why not do the same with wines? It is a good idea to call ahead and get some suggestions from the sommelier at the restaurant. Be prepared with some choices from the list for various food scenarios.

### **How restaurants sell wine**

- House wines
- Bottles found on the wine list
- Premium wines frequently available both by the bottle and by the glass
- Reserve wines featuring rare or unusual selections

### **When ordering wine for a table, a few basics will guide your decisions**

Assume you'll need half a bottle per person drinking wine. As for price, aim for a bottle about the same price as an average person's meal. It may prove useful to agree upon a type of wine—red vs. white, full vs. light bodied, Merlot vs. Zinfandel—before looking at the wine list. If just a few want wine and they want different styles, consider ordering by the glass; just remember bottles generally prove a better value. House wines, which restaurants mark up considerably, tend toward lower quality.

### **Tame the Wine List**

Extensive wine lists frequently appear so complicated it's a wonder anyone but a wine expert understands them. But with a little background you will tame any wine list and order a bottle everyone will enjoy. Indeed, consider the wine list a selection of wine carefully picked to go well with the restaurant's menu.



## How to Choose a Bottle in a Restaurant

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### **Wine lists do vary in organization, but most divide the selection into:**

- Reds and whites
- Sparkling wine and Champagne
- Dessert wines
- Wine number for quicker ordering
- Appellation & sometimes vineyard
- Vintage—the harvest year
- Grape varietals such as Chardonnays, Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon
- Price

### **Beyond that, the restaurant may further subdivide the selections into:**

- Country or region of origin such as French, Italian, Australian wines or the Napa Valley or Sonoma regions of California.
- Varietals such as Chardonnay and Fume Blanc under the white section.
- Price—many restaurants order their selection by price, either highest to lowest or the reverse.
- Or you may stumble across a wine list with some other organization, by weight and richness for example.
- However the list is organized, take a few minutes figuring it out before moving to selection.

### **Ask for advice**

What if you don't recognize any names on the wine list? Ask for help of course. You would ask your server questions about the food menu, right? The same idea applies to the wine list. Most restaurants train their staff to know what wines pair well with the menu, so feel free to tap that knowledge when ordering. In fact, you may discover your new favorite wine that way.

### **When asking your server for help:**

- Give the server a general price range.
- Explain clearly the type of wine you want (for example, ask for advice on the Chardonnays or explain you wish to try an Italian red).
- If the server doesn't know his or her wines, ask to speak to someone with more knowledge.

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## Order with confidence

After you've considered everyone's preferences and asked for advice, it's time to make a selection. When choosing a bottle with a difficult name, feel free to order by the menu number ("I'd like two bottles of number 110 please") or simply point to the bottle you want. Many times diners want wine before dinner and wine with their meal. That's an opportunity to try two wines in one setting, say a white before eating and a red with the meal. In such situations, save time by ordering all the wine at once. Just make sure to tell the server clearly when you want a particular wine served.

Restaurants occasionally run out of particular bottles, either from an outdated wine list or simply because the wine sells out. In such circumstances, simply ask the server for a good substitute within the same price range. Remember, if you treat ordering wine the way you treat ordering your meal, you'll do just fine.

## When the wine arrives

Be assertive—you've made a good selection. Now what happens? Your server follows an elaborate ritual when bringing out your wine:

- **Presentation:** The server holds the bottle label-first for your inspection. Be sure to check the label against what you ordered. If it's a different variety or vintage, point that fact out now.
- **Pulling the cork:** The server makes a great show of removing and presenting the cork—simply nod.
- **The test pour:** The server next pours a small amount for you, or someone you designate, to sniff and taste the wine. If the wine either smells or tastes off, say so. Treat bad wine as if it were a poorly prepared entrée—send it back. If the wine tastes good, accept the wine with a smile and enjoy your meal. After the test pour, each guest will be given a long pour, starting with the ladies and ending with the person that ordered the wine.

## Tips on rejecting wine

Say immediately if it tastes off. If you are unsure, ask a knowledgeable fellow diner for their opinion, be assertive—restaurants want you to enjoy your experience. With a little bit of knowledge and willingness to try new things, ordering wine at a restaurant becomes enjoyable.



# THE GIFT OF WINE

## Selecting Wine for Gifts

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### **Gifts should be appropriate for the recipient**

It is very important that the gift of wine is a gift that more than one person may enjoy. Try to pick wines that will bridge the gap between sophisticated wine drinkers and beginning wine drinkers. The red and white blends are good examples of wines that can bridge the gap as they are usually dry, but are very fruity.



## WHAT'S NEXT

## Tips and Resources for Learning More About Wine

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### **Learn through experience**

The best way to learn about wine is to drink it. If you find one that you like, it is a lot of fun to research that wine on the internet or buy a wine book. Make friends with your wine store buyer and have them start to learn your taste profile. Soon they will be suggesting wines that fit your profile; it can be a lot of fun.

### **Tasting notes**

It is a good idea to keep tasting notes on the wines you like so you know how to describe them when asking for something similar or when inquiring as to whether a client will like the wine. We have included a tasting note sheet as a sample at the end of this brochure.

### **Books can be a great tool**

Start with *Wine for Dummies*, then move on to more sophisticated books and periodicals, such as *Wine Spectator*.

Remember, the most important thing is that entertaining with wine is supposed to be fun—for you and your guests!



# WINE TASTING

## Create Your Own Wine Tasting Record

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**Directions:** As you follow the steps below, record your thoughts on the next few pages. This is the same type of comment sheet used by wine experts in blind tastings. It can be used to help you remember your wine tasting experience so that you can compare wines and discover what you like and don't like.

- Pour a small amount of wine in your glass.
- Check the color and heft (or body) of the wine. Place your hand beneath the glass as you look at the wine for color.
- Smell the wine. Don't be afraid to put your nose right into the glass.
- Vigorously swirl the wine and re-smell it. Any new flavors or aromas?
- Take a mouthful of the wine. Comment on characteristics like sweet/dry, fruit, acidity, tannins.
- Sit back and savor. How was the aftertaste? Was the finish long or short?
- You've seen, smelled, swirled and savored the wine. Take a moment to record your overall thoughts on the next few pages for each wine you taste.



# WINE TASTING NOTES

**Clarity:** Cloudy, hazy, clear, brilliant

**Color:** Shade & color

**Bouquet/Aroma:** Weak, nice, complex, brawny, powerful, oak, fruit, spice, floral, wood, veggie, chemical

**Acidity:** Flat, fresh, tart, sour

**Taste:** Oak, fruit, spice, floral, wood, veggie, chemical

**Body:** Light, medium, full, huge

**Balance:** None, well, partly

**Finish:** None, short, long, or never ending

**Score:** 1=Blah! 10=Nectar of the gods!

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