



CELLAR *Dine*®

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At CellarDine we have been designing and making innovative wine accessories for twenty years and I personally conduct many in-store events to showcase our products. As such I get the opportunity to meet our wonderful customers, many of whom frequently ask me specific questions regarding wine.

I am delighted to have put this booklet together with our friends at Alchemy Wines who have added their knowledge and expertise to answer those key questions that we all wanted to know, I hope you find it a useful read!



SUGGESTED TEMPERATURES FOR WINES

These are guide figures at which level the finest characteristics of the wines are likely to be displayed.

LIGHT REDS	12°-13°C
MEDIUM REDS	12.5°-15.5°C
FULL-BODIED REDS	15.5°-18°C
OAK-AGED RESERVE REDS	19°-22°C
WHITE WINES SUCH AS MOSCATO	6°C
SIMPLE WHITES WITH A RESIDUAL SWEETNESS	7°C
DRY NOT TO HEAVY WHITES AND CHAMPAGNE	8°C
LESS SUBTLE VARIETIES AND FULLER WHITE WINES	8°-10°C

Many consumers prefer their reds warmer in winter and cooler in summer. So simply select warmer temperatures for cooler weather and vice-versa.

LETTING YOUR RED WINE BREATHE

This is particularly important with red wines. The only risk occurs with wines that are 15 or more years old, and the only danger is that such an old wine can occasionally be allowed to breathe for too long, hence permitting its peak to be missed.

DO NOT!

Do not just remove the cork and think a wine is breathing satisfactorily. The actual surface area exposed will be so small it will not help the exercise.

FOUR CHOICES

The most important criterion is to get the largest possible surface area exposed to the air to develop all the finest characteristics of a wine.

- 1 IF YOU HAVE A DECANTER, USE IT.
- 2 IF YOU DON'T POSSESS A DECANTER USE A WATER JUG OR SOMETHING SIMILAR.
- 3 IF NOT, THEN HALF-FILL THE LARGEST GLASSES.
- 4 OR USE OUR ORIGINAL ROUGE O₂ WINE BREATHER.

HOW LONG?

For any young reds allow one hour minimum. For older reds of average quality – after 30 minutes taste them to see if they are open. If so then re-cork them. If not keep repeating the exercise up to a maximum of 2 hours.

Remember that if an old wine doesn't develop properly with breathing, you may have done nothing wrong. It is possible that the wine has not aged well.

- For oak-aged reserve wines like a French chateaux or top quality Spanish or Australian reds allow 1-2 hours.
- For long oak-aged reds like Rioja Reservas and Amarone from Italy 2-3 hours.
- For Rioja Gran Reservas 3-4 hours.

AGING WINE

If you have a traditional cellar you are very fortunate. If not you should follow these rules when storing your wine.

- 1 Keep your wine in the dark. As both daylight and artificial light have a detrimental effect in the long term.
- 2 Store your bottles at a consistent temperature, ideally around 12-15°C (50-53°F) but don't worry unduly if you are as much as 15% higher or lower than that.
- 3 Place them well away from anything that vibrates like a dishwasher or refrigerator.

TURNING YOUR WINES

If you have valuable wines, keep an accurate cellar book or chart and note every time you turn a bottle. Best reds should be turned one quarter every 12 weeks. This is to prevent uneven aging and large sediment deposits forming.

THE UNUSUAL... FINDING THE BEST VALUE FOR MONEY

SOME LESS USUAL SUGGESTIONS:

- 1 Look for wine producing countries that have suffered major devaluations of their currencies like Argentina and South Africa. The latter has had a drop in value of its Rand by around 300% during the last 10 years. This has made its exports, including wine, much more competitive.
- 2 Look for when the winery was established. Then read the back labels carefully, for often they indicate that the wines come from independent family owned wineries. Usually they either bought their land for a small price or even, in some New World countries, received land grants and no longer have any capital cost for land involved.
- 3 Vineyard land in South America can be purchased for \$4,000 an acre whilst in California's Napa Valley it can cost over \$100,000. There are some world class Napa wines but also plenty that are not at that level. Spanish wines don't generally claim world class status but there are many superb values.

BUYING SPARKLING WINE

If you are having a party, buying real Champagne can be very expensive. To find the best quality alternatives buy sparkling wines that identify their use of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, the same grapes as the Champagne producers. You should be able to get 3 really good bottles for the price of one 'Grande Marque' Champagne. Spanish Cava or Blanquette de Limoux from France offers the opportunity to enjoy pleasant fizz from indigenous grape varieties at a reasonable cost.

BUYING CHAMPAGNE

Do not be tempted by cheap Champagne offers, unless you have a very thorough knowledge of Champagne or can really trust the retailer. Champagne is not cheap. It is the finest sparkling wine in the world and at its best can be glorious. However if you see a well-known brand on special offer, it can make a good purchase.

Don't buy a bottle of Champagne and drive it home, shaking it as you go, then open it within hours. Its contents will be excited and it will not taste special. Instead always keep a couple of bottles of Champagne in sensible conditions in your home and that does not mean in the fridge. Your Champagne will settle and drink at its best if allowed to stand for a month or so then chilled for just a few hours in the refrigerator.

DEALING WITH THAT WINE WAITER

When dining in an up-scale restaurant and feeling a little apprehensive about ordering the wine.

THE 40% PLAN

Decide if you want white or red. For this example let us select white and presume that you know Chardonnay is the most popular white grape varietal on Earth. So you plan to order one.

When you see the wine waiter approach make a point of smiling at him or her and saying that you need help. Then ask to see all the Chardonnays on the wine list. This is likely to include a wide selection from different countries, all identified by the varietal name and all the White Burgundy wines from Macon Blanc to Puligny-Montrachet.

Then simply play your trump card by asking for the finest value Chardonnay in the lowest 40% of the list. The waiter will not say that those wines are of poor quality and in order to give a good impression will make a special effort to choose you the finest example.

THE FOUR KEY FACTORS

There are many factors that influence the taste, style, character and quality of a wine, but in general terms, these are the 4 most important.

1 THE SOIL

It is possible in some vineyard regions to find limestone, sandstone or even volcanic rock within a few yards of each other. When it rains the water is drawn through the rock and soil into the roots of the vines. A good example is Champagne, which lies on the same strata of chalk that is seen in the famous White Cliffs of Dover. The chalky water helps contribute to Champagne's unique flavour. In general terms it is believed that great wines come from poorer soils and lesser wines from richer soils.

2 MICRO-CLIMATE

The temperature, sun and wind exposure will vary depending upon the geographical position of a vineyard. Vines at the top of a hill will be exposed to more sun and wind than those at the foot and this will affect their ripening. The lie of the land will also affect the drainage and influence the strength of the vines.

3 THE GRAPES

These largely determine the flavour but different clones also produce different characteristics.

4 THE WINEMAKERS

A good winemaker working with the first 3 factors can make a good, or even great, wine. Unfortunately a bad winemaker can spoil things. The exciting news is that it is very difficult for bad winemakers to survive any longer and we live in the best era for wine quality ever known.

- To preserve opened bottles of wine, we recommend the ZOS wine preservation system which will remove 100% of the oxygen and keep wine fresh for two months. Independently tested and verified. www.zoswine.com

WINE WORDS

CORKED

This word is used to cover many faults, but most often it implies that a faulty or infected cork has made the wine foul and bitter. Often it will have a smell like a damp glossy magazine. The use of the word has become more confusing with the introduction of artificial corks, because it is still possible to find faulty wines in bottles with such closures.

TANNIC

A dry texture, found particularly in red wines and usually felt on the back of your teeth. It comes from the skins and pips and even bunches in some cases, and also from new oak casks. Tannins provide structure enabling a wine to age well.

BLEND

A much misunderstood term that suggests the mixing together of different wines or varieties. It should not be used in a derogatory manner. Most Champagnes are excellent examples of blends from different vineyards and different grape varieties.

Be careful in using unfamiliar wine words when complaining about a wine. There are 2 simple guidelines when you are not happy about the quality of the contents of a bottle. They take the responsibility off your shoulders.

- 1 In restaurants offer your glass to the waiter, or manager to taste it, saying I am not sure about this wine. If it is an honest establishment, if there is a fault, it will immediately replace the wine or offer you an alternative. Do not use the word 'corked' unless you are completely sure.
- 2 Retailers will expect a bottle to be at least half-full when you return it. Ask them to taste it. All reputable retailers will normally replace the wine.

Both restaurants and retailers are usually able to get unsatisfactory bottles replaced.

MATCHING WITH FOOD

Consider selection of wine in the same way one might choose a sauce. In other words to enhance a dish and not to overpower it.

WHITE WITH WHITE AND RED WITH RED

The traditional method of selection still demonstrates a lot of common sense but rules are made to be broken.

- 1 For example try a bone dry white wine like Muscadet with shellfish and it will be superb but try it with strawberries and cream or a rare steak and for the vast majority of the population it will not work.
- 2 Fresh tuna or salmon is quite meaty so try a red, perhaps a Pinot Noir or Merlot with them.
- 3 Try plain dark chocolate or Tiramisu with Cabernet Sauvignon.
- 4 Avoid drinking sparkling wine or Champagne with cheeses. It seldom works.
- 5 Drink the same red wine with a Lasagne as you used for the recipe.

6 Don't waste exceptionally fine wines in casseroles.

7 Try adding a drop of Champagne to best quality fish sauces.

8 A very old fashioned and superb idea is to add a glass of dry Sherry to soups.

WHO IS RIGHT?

After all your palate is personal and no-one else knows its preferences. If you like Chardonnay with steak who has a right to argue? Only you know what your tastebuds tell you.



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