



# Wine Appreciation 101

*“There are no standards of taste in wine, cigars, poetry, prose etc.  
Each man’s own taste is the standard,  
and a majority vote cannot decide for him  
or in any slightest degree  
affect the supremacy of his own standard”  
~ Mark Twain, 1895*

## **Wine Basics**

Answers to common questions.

## **Grapes At A Glance**

Reference charts on red and white grapes

## **On Tasting Wine**

Wine tasting can be broken down into five steps; color, swirl, smell, taste and savor.

## **Reading Our Wine Menu**

Understand the simple methods by which a 'progressive wine list' is used to group wines.

## **Pairing Wine with Food**

Drink what you like, but there are some common sense things to keep in mind.

## **Our Wines**

You don't have to memorize what the wine makers have to say about their wines but you will begin to notice consistencies when you read the descriptions of the different varietals.

## **Notes**

Here are some random bits of wine trivia you may use to impress your friends.

## **Glossary**



# Wine Basics

## **Is all wine made from the same kind of grapes?**

The major wine grapes come from the species *Vitis vinifera*. Examples of *Vitis vinifera* are the Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. The most important native grape species to America is *Vitis labrusca*. Examples of *Vitis labrusca* are the Concord and Catawba grapes. Hybrids are a cross between *Vitis vinifera* and *Vitis Labrusca*. The most important factors in winemaking are geographic location, soil, weather, grapes and vinification (the actual winemaking process).

## **Can white wine be made from red grapes?**

Yes. The color of wine comes entirely from the grape skins. By removing the skin immediately after picking, no color is imparted to the wine, and it will be white. In the Champagne region of France, a large percentage of the grapes are red, yet most of the resulting wine is white. California's White Zinfandel is made from red Zinfandel grapes.

## **What is tannin and is it desirable in wine?**

Tannin is a natural compound and preservative that comes from the skins, stems and pips of the grapes and also from the wood in which wine is aged. It acts as a preservative; without it, certain wines wouldn't continue to improve in the bottle. In young wines, tannin can be very astringent and make the wine taste bitter. Generally, red wines have a higher level of tannin than do whites, because red grapes are usually left to ferment with their skins.

# Grapes At A Glance

## MAJOR RED GRAPES OF THE WORLD

TEXTURE	GRAPES	TANNIN	WHERE	COLOR
AGEABILITY		LEVEL	GROWN BEST	LEVEL
LIGHT	Gamay Pinot Noir	LOW	Beaujolais, France Burgundy, France Champagne, France California, Oregon	LIGHTER
↓	Tempranillo Sangiovese Merlot	↓	Rioja, Spain Tuscany, Italy Bordeaux, France California Washington State	↓
	Zinfandel Cabernet Sauv. Nebbiolo Syrah/Shiraz		Bordeaux, France Piedmont, Italy Rhone, France Australia California	
FULL		HIGH		DEEPER
				DRINK YOUNG
				WINE TO AGE

## MAJOR WHITE GRAPES OF THE WORLD

TEXTURE	GRAPES	WHERE	COLOR	COMMON
		GROWN BEST	LEVEL	AROMAS
LIGHT	Gewurztraminer	Alsace, France	LIGHTER	"gewurz" means spice Delicate fruit
↓	Riesling	Germany Alsace, France New York state Washington State	↓	Fruity Lychee nut Sweet
	Pinot Gris Pinot Grigio	Oregon Italy, California		Melon Floral
	Sauvignon Blanc	Bordeaux, France New Zealand California (Fume Blanc)		Grapefruit Grass Herbs Cat pee
	Chardonnay	Burgundy, France Champagne, France California Australia		Apple, oak Butter, vanilla Citrus, melon Pineapple, toast
FULL			DEEPER	

# On Tasting Wine

Wine tasting involves five basic steps; color, swirl, smell, taste and savor.

**Color** The best way to get an idea of the wine's color is to get a white background—a napkin or tablecloth—and hold the glass of wine on an angle in front of it. In general, the lighter the color the more perceived acidity.

White wines may have more color for three reasons:

1. It's older
2. Different grape varieties give different color. (For example, Chardonnay usually gives off a deeper color than does Sauvignon Blanc.)
3. The wine was aged in wood.

**Swirl** Swirling allows esters, ethers, and aldehydes that combine with oxygen to yield a wine's bouquet. In other words, swirling aerates the wine and releases more of the bouquet and aroma.

- **Bouquet** the total smell of the wine.
- **Aroma** the smell of the grapes.
- **"Nose"** a word that wine tasters use to describe the bouquet & aroma of the wine.

**Smell** This is the most important part of wine tasting. You can perceive just four tastes—sweet, sour, bitter, and salt—but the average person can identify more than two thousand different scents, and wine has more than two hundred of its own. Now that you've swirled the wine and released the bouquet, I want you to smell the wine at least three times. You will find that the third smell will give you more information than the first smell did. What does the wine smell like? What type of nose does it have? Smell is the most important step in the tasting process and most people simply don't take enough time on it. Pinpointing the nose of the wine helps you to identify certain characteristics. The problem here is that many people want to be told what the wine smells like. This is as difficult as asking you to describe what steak and onions smells like. You will likely answer, "Like steak and onions". See what I mean?

Since the pretentious words of a sommelier are subjective, you may say a wine smells like a French white burgundy, for instance. The best way to learn your own preferences for styles of wine is to memorize the smell of the major grape varieties.

**Taste** You have taste buds all over your mouth—on both sides of the tongue, underneath, on the tip, and extending to the back of your throat. Many people will gulp the wine and bypass all of those important taste buds. Instead, leave it in your mouth for three to five seconds before swallowing. Taste sensations occur on different parts of your mouth. The tip of your tongue will identify sweetness. If the wine has any, you'll get it right away. Acidity is found at the sides of the tongue, the cheeks and the back of the throat. Bitterness is found on the back of the tongue. Bitterness is created by high alcohol and high tannin. Tannin is not a taste; it is a tactile sensation.

**Savor** Sit back and take it all in. You can compare this to browsing an art gallery. Your first impression tells you whether or not you like something. But once you decide, you want to know more. And so with wine.

# Reading our Wine Menu

## **What are the hot areas in wine?**

The wine craze has spread around the world since the 1990's and is showing no signs of stopping. Different regions have historically represented the best in certain wines; France has its Bordeaux and Italy has its Sangiovese. Germany still has its lighter, sweeter Rieslings, New Zealand produces excellent Sauvignon Blanc, and Argentina has its Malbec.

In California there are few traditions and a wide range of climate and winemakers are able to take full advantage of modern technology. Furthermore, there is freedom to experiment and create new products, such as combining different grape varieties to make new styles of wine, which is prohibited by some European wine-control laws. Chile, Argentina, Australia and much of the world now follow this mindset. Their cavalier attitudes have given them the ability to produce many of the world's greatest wines; red and white.

Our wine menu tries to identify those wines which best represent the greatest wine producing regions of the world. Our wines are listed in order from top to bottom, from the lightest style to the heaviest style wines. We lead off the whites with Rieslings, then the Sauvignon Blancs and then the Chardonnays. For the reds, we begin with Pinot Noirs, the Merlots and then the Cabernet Sauvignons. Other grape varieties and blends are peppered throughout.

## **What is the most versatile wine if everyone orders something different?**

I recommend a 'safe' wine. My two favorite choices for a white wine are a Chardonnay with little oak or a Pinot Grigio. As for reds, my number one choice is a Pinot Noir. Wine from a given region always seems to compliment the foods from that region. The grapes are coming from the same soil and climate that the livestock thrive upon. Even vegetables and fish fall into this logic. For example, Chianti (made primarily from the Sangiovese grape in Italy) makes an excellent choice for pastas, cheese and red sauce.

## **Is there a difference between two bottles of the same varietal?**

Yes. For instance, a Riesling from Germany is very different from a Riesling from Alsace, France. A German Riesling is known for its sweetness because they add a small amount of naturally sweet unfermented grape juice back into the wine to create a distinctive German Riesling. 99 percent of all Alsace wines are totally dry. German Rieslings have about 8 to 9% alcohol content while Alsace Rieslings have 11 to 12% alcohol content.

# Pairing Wine with Food

“Drink what you like” but remember that not everything goes with everything. You wouldn’t put mustard on a sundae, would you? These guidelines will help you get the most pleasure from the whole experience.

1. SAUCES DETERMINE THE WINE– the texture and primary ingredients in sauces is #1 factor!
2. WEATHER - a cold German Reisling is ideal on a hot summer day!
3. INTENSITY of FLAVOR - a powerful Bordeaux will overwhelm a delicate fish.
4. GEOGRAPHY REIGNS- climate has similar effect on food & wine; ie. eat & drink Italian!
5. OPPOSITES *usually* ATTRACT- spicy foods do well with a light, white wine
6. CHAMPAGNE –when in doubt, open this true chameleon that suits all foods
7. SEQUENCE– follow these logical progressions when having several bottles
  - DRY → SWEET
  - WHITE → RED
  - YOUNG → OLD
  - SIMPLE → COMPLEX
  - LIGHT → HEAVY

## Safe Bets

Meal	Wine Type	Recommended Wine
Pasta with Tomato Sauce	Italian red	Chianti, Zinfandel, Sangiovese
Pasta Puttanesca	light Italian red	Bardolino, Sauvignon Blanc
Pasta Meat Sauce	powerful Ital.red	Barolo
Pasta with Garlic & Oil	white variety	Pinot Grigio
Pasta Primavera	white variety	Pinot Grigio, Viognier
Fettucini Alfredo	white variety	Orvieto, Pinot Noir
Pasta and shellfish	white variety	Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc
Seafood in cream sauce	buttery white	Chardonnay, Vouvray
Mussels	white variety	Chardonnay
Crab	non-oaky Chard.	Maconnais Chardonnay
Cheese Pizza	red variety	Sangiovese, Zinfandel, Chianti
Hamburgers	red variety	Cabernet Sauvignon, Valpolicella
Veal Marsala	classic Spanish red	Merlot, Rioja
Veal Piccata	classic Italian red	Brunello di Montalcino
Filet Mignon	classic French red	Bordeaux
Prime Rib	light red	Pinot Noir
Steak	California red	Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon

# White Wines

TRIMBACH Gewurztraminer (Alsace)	32
CHATEAU STE. MICHELE Riesling (Washington)	18
CARL REH Riesling Spatlese (Rheinhessen, Germany)	20
VILLA SPARINA Gavi (Piedmont, Italy)	40
PRIMA TERRA Pinot Grigio (Lazio, Italy)	22
TRALCETTO ITALO CESCO Pinot Grigio (Friuli, Italy)	24
MASIANCO Verduzzo & Pinot Grigio (Friuli, Italy)	24
ARAUCANO Sauvignon Blanc (France)	20
TARIQUET Sauvignon Blanc (France)	24
DRYLANDS Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough, New Zealand)	38
LOUIS JADOT Chardonnay (Burgundy, France)	28
MARK WEST Chardonnay (Sonoma, California)	26
MASTROBERARDINO Falanghina (Campagna, Italy)	40
SUTTER HOME White Zinfandel (California)	13
KENWOOD YULUPA Brut (Sonoma, California)	18
FANTINEL Prosecco (Friuli-Venezia, Italy)	24
CLICQUOT YELLOW LABEL Champagne (France)	72

# Dessert Wines

FONSECABIN 27 Port

This sweet, fortified wine is served in an aperitif glass enjoyed best with complimentary Wilbur dark chocolate buds. They are both rich, sweet, satisfying, and sometimes even decadent together!

BANFI ROSA REGALE  
Sparkling (187 ml bottle)

# Red Wines

GEORGES DUBOEUF Beaujolais (Burgundy, France)	18
DYED-IN-THE-WOOL Pinot Noir (Canterbury, New Zealand)	25
BOUCHAINE Pinot Noir	45
ACACIA CARNEROS Pinot Noir (Napa, California)	54
GRAN FAMILIA Rioja (Spain)	28
MONTEVINA TERRA D'ORO Sangiovese (California)	44
COL DI SASSO Sangiovese / Cabernet (Tuscany, Italy)	18
GABBIANO RISERVA Black Label Chianti	40
DONNA LAURA ALTEO Chianti DOCG	20
WALNUT CREST Merlot (Chile)	13
JERRY GARCIA Merlot (Sonoma, California)	36
ROUND HILL Merlot	20
PIO CESARE Dolcetto D'Alba (Piedmont, Italy)	25
ELSA Malbec (Argentina)	20
GOATS DO ROAM Pinotage, Shiraz, Grenache (South Africa)	20
FONTANAFREDDA BRICCOTONDO Barbera (Piedmont, Italy)	26
REMO FARINA Valpolicella Ripasso (Piedmont, Italy)	36
JERRY GARCIA Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma, California)	32
TWO TONE Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa, California)	28
VILLA DONORATICO Bolgheri (Bolgheri, Italy)	50
HOPE 'The Ripper' Shiraz (Australia)	26
NINE STONES Shiraz (Australia)	32
KENWOOD OLD VINE Zinfandel (Sonoma, California)	27
ROSENBLUM Rockpile Road Zinfandel (California)	64
COPPOLA DIRECTOR'S CUT Zinfandel (California)	40
RAVENSWOOD MONTE ROSSO Zinfandel (California)	64
COPERTINO Negroamaro (Puglia, Italy)	30
CERETTO Barbaresco (Piedmont, Italy)	80
COLLE VENTI Barolo (Piedmont, Italy)	60

# Notes

- A wine barrel contains 300 bottles of wine.
- A champagne bottle contains 49 million bubbles.
- All opened wines (red and white) should be corked and stored in refrigeration overnight to extend the life of the wine.
- An opened bottle will only last so long. Avoid contact with oxygen. Remember, if all else fails, you'll still have a great cooking wine.
- Red wine stains can be removed with an equal mix of liquid soap and hydrogen peroxide.

# Glossary

**Alsace** A major white wine-producing region of France.

**Aroma** The smell of the grapes.

**Body** The feeling of a wine's weight in the mouth

**Botrytis cineria** A mold that grows on the grapes, known also as 'noble rot', which is necessary to make Sauternes and Trockenbeerenauslese.

**Bouquet** The total smell of the wine.

**Brut** The driest style of Champagne.

**Chaptalization** The addition of sugar to the must (fresh grape juice) before fermentation.

**Chianti** A DOCG red wine from the Tuscany region of Italy.

**Chianti Classico** One step above Chianti in terms of quality, this wine is from the inner district of Chianti.

**Chianti Classico Riserva** The best-quality level of Italian Chianti, which requires more aging.

**Cote de Beaune** (coat duh BONE) The southern portion of Cote d'Or known for white wines

**Cote de Nuits** (coat duh NWE) The northern portion of Cote d'Or known for red wines

**Cote d'Or** (coat DOOR) The district in Burgundy known for some of the finest wines in the world

**Decanting the process of pouring wine**

**DOC** Abbreviation for Denominazione di Origine Controllata, the Italian government agency that controls wine production.

**DOCG** Abbreviation for Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita, the Italian government agency only allows this marking to appear on the finest Italian wines.

**Dry** Not sweet. A wine is dry when all the sugar in the grapes has been fermented into alcohol. The sense of dryness may also be attributed to acid content.

**Fortified Wine** A wine such as port or sherry that has additional grape brandy that raises the alcohol content.

**Gewurztraminer** The 'spicy' white grape grown in Alsace, California and Germany.

**Lees** Residual yeast and other particles that precipitate to the bottom of a vat of wine after fermentation and aging. Normally the wine is transferred to another container (racking), leaving this sediment behind. Some wines, (notably Muscadet), are sometimes aged for a time on the lees (a process known as sur lie), leading to a distinctive yeasty aroma and taste.

**"Nose"** A word that wine tasters use to describe the bouquet and aroma of the wine.

**Pinot Noir** All red French Burgundy wines, except Beaujolais, are made from 100 percent Pinot Noir grapes.

**Reserve** Although it has no legal significance, it usually indicates a better quality wine.

**Ripasso** Italian process of refermentation of the wine on its lees. Used for Valpolicella.

**Spatlese** A white German wine made from grapes picked later than the normal harvest.

**Tannin** A natural compound and preservative that comes from the skins, stems and pips of the grapes and also from the wood in which wine is aged.

**Tannic** Term that describes a wine that produces an astringent, mouth-puckering sensation.

**Varietal Wine** The term for wine made wholly or predominantly from the principle grape which appears on the label. Examples: Chardonnay, Merlot.

**Vintage** The year the grapes are harvested.