

Wine 101

Wine 101: A Quick Lesson in Serving, Opening and Drinking Wine

To take the mystery out of wine, Stone Hill Winery has compiled a list of the basics to help guide you during your next party or restaurant visit. The information was taken from Edmund Osterland's "Wine and the Bottom Line" from the National Restaurant Association/Washington D.C.

The Importance of Temperature

It's true that white wines are most refreshing when served cool, but if you allow a white wine to get too cold, you paralyze the wine's ability to communicate its distinct aroma to you.

When a red wine is served too warm, it renders the wine out of balance. There are several reasons why this happens. As the wine gets too warm, its vapors become a bit overwhelming; the alcohol evaporates more rapidly. This is particularly true of robust reds that contain more than 13% alcohol. Their aromas will begin to resemble ether. Alcohol's role in wine is to contribute sweetness, so that the degrees of acidity and bitterness are balanced. The proper serving temperature will accomplish that.

Following is a guide for chilling your wine to the proper temperature:

Temperature in most homes:
77-68 degrees Fahrenheit

Red Wine:
Chill between 65-55 degrees Fahrenheit for 5-7 minutes

Light Reds, Dry Whites, and Rosé:
Chill between 55-45 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes

Champagnes, Sweet Wines, Liquors:
Chill between 45-40 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes

Tips for Opening Wine

1. Cut the capsule evenly at the point where the first indentation occurs. Never tear the capsule away, because it is part of the aesthetic presentation.
2. Remove the top of the capsule and dispose of it properly (neither in the ice bucket, nor on the table).
3. Using a clean napkin, clean off the top of the bottle so the wine can be poured cleanly over the glass.
4. Insert corkscrew and open bottle (slightly different methods depending on type of corkscrew you use).
5. Remove cork and place by host. Do not smell cork! You can't tell anything about the quality of wine from the smell of the cork.
6. Always pour on the right side and make sure the label can be seen. Never touch the bottle to the glass.
7. Continue counter-clockwise around the table. To avoid dripping, give slight twist of wrist before raising bottle from glass.
8. Leave bottle on table by host. It is proper to have guests pour second glass by themselves.

Wine with Food

Food tastes better with wine. Wine cleanses the palate of oils from the food and makes every bite a new taste sensation. Wine has been part of the dining tradition for centuries in Europe, but only in the last few decades has the enjoyment of wine with the meal become popular in our country.

Basic Rules to Follow (When Serving More than One Wine):

1. Serve young wines before old wines. Young wines should be simple and refreshing; they are served to prepare the palate for more complex, or robust, older wines.
2. Serve white before red. White wines, usually more delicately flavored, are best served first.
3. Serve light-bodied wines before full-bodied wines. Because light-bodied wines are delicate and easy to drink, they should be served first so that full-bodied wines will not overshadow the subtle flavors of the lighter wines.
4. Serve dry before sweet. Dry (meaning absence of sugar) usually connotes wines of higher acidity (more tartness). If you serve a sweet wine and follow it with a dry wine, the palate will be jolted. A dry wine, whose acidity level is noticeable, cannot compete with the lusciousness or fullness of a sweet wine, so it will seem sour or thin in comparison. Sweet wines tend to have a powerful influence on the palate and can cancel out the flavor of a light dry wine.
5. Keep wines in perspective with foods. It is better to serve simple wines with simple, everyday meals. It is better to serve complex or subtle wines with "fine" or complex meals. There is always an exception to the rule. No two people have exactly the same taste experience of the same food. It is precisely that element of personal discovery which lures people into uncovering the pleasures of wine and food.

Wine and Food Guidelines

Shellfish:

Light-bodied whites

Fish (light sauce):

Medium-bodied whites

Fish (heavier sauce):

Full-bodied whites

Veal:

Medium-to full-bodied whites; medium-bodied reds

Pork:

Medium-bodied whites; medium-bodied reds

Chicken:

Medium-bodied whites; light-to medium-bodied reds

Ham:

Medium-bodied whites; light-to medium-bodied reds

Goose/Duck:

Full-bodied whites; medium-bodied reds

Lamb:

Full-bodied whites; medium-bodied reds

Beef:
Medium-bodied reds

Stew:
Medium-to full-bodied reds

Game:
Medium-to full-bodied reds