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Wine Etiquette With Ease

By Ben Bicaïs

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Correct wine etiquette makes the tasting experience more comfortable and enjoyable. Like most interests, there is a set of protocol that most wine lovers adhere to. Good taste dictates that tasting at wineries, ordering wine at restaurants, and hosting a dinner party all require certain formalities.

Tasting Room Etiquette

In a winery's tasting room, white wines are generally tasted first, followed by reds, and then dessert wines. Within these categories, lighter-bodied wines precede fuller-bodied ones. Water and crackers may be offered to cleanse the palate between each wine. Correct wine etiquette does not require that you must finish every glass. Winery tasting rooms provide jars to dispose of excess wine. Do not feel that you need to sample every wine offered— taste what appeals to you.

If you ask for a second tasting of a particular wine, it is in good taste to buy a bottle. Many wineries charge tasting fees which are generally applied to any purchase. It is not mandatory that you buy wine; purchase only what you desire. That being said, if you have made an appointment at a small winery, it is in good taste to make a purchase.

General Restaurant Wine Etiquette

Wine service at a nice restaurant can be an unnecessarily difficult ordeal. The following tips will allow you to follow the customs of wine service with ease and confidence.

When choosing a wine from a restaurant's wine list, the main goal is to accomplish a suitable pairing with the entrees of your party. If the food orders are too different to generalize with one wine, consider purchasing splits or ordering by the glass. Waiters and sommeliers are there to answer your questions, but availing yourself to their services and advice will be much more beneficial if your questions are relatively specific.

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For example, don't ask the sommelier, "What goes well with a rack of lamb?" Rather, ask, "I'd like to balance the spiciness of the lamb with a full-bodied, Syrah-based Rhone. Do you have any favorites?" Your effort will be appreciated and service and interaction will be more seamless. I guarantee you will be pleased with the outcome.

After ordering, the waiter/sommelier will retrieve your selection, and then present it, label forward, to the host of the party. This is merely to verify it is the correct wine. The cork is removed and placed on the table. Unless it is clearly tainted, (the waiter/sommelier should notice if it is) do not touch or smell it, as it means nothing.

A small amount will then be poured for the host. Swirl the wine in the glass, smell, then taste. This is to make sure the wine is not spoiled and it is not an opportunity to send back a sound wine that you are not crazy about. After approval, the wine will be poured clockwise to the right, ladies first. The host's

glass will be topped last.

Corkage Etiquette

It is increasingly customary in many parts of the country for restaurants to extend corkage policies for patrons whom wish to bring their own wine. However, this is not the case everywhere, (especially on the East Coast), and proper wine etiquette dictates that several things be kept in mind.

Always call the restaurant in advance to verify that corkage is allowed. Ask what the fee is to avoid any surprises. In my experience, very few restaurants charge over \$20 as a corkage fee. Some restaurants will waive this fee if an additional bottle is purchased from the wine list, but do not assume that this is the case.

Wine brought to a restaurant should be relatively unique or rare, and definitely should not appear on the restaurant's wine list. After the waiter/sommelier opens and pours the contents, proper wine etiquette requires that you offer them a taste. Following these guidelines will ensure an enjoyable corkage experience.

The Duty of the Host at Dinner Parties

The duty of the host toward his/her guests is one of the most ancient and enduring forms of etiquette in human civilization. When serving wine, making sure that your guests are comfortable with the process is your paramount concern.

Before serving, always allow wine time to breathe at room temperature. Never pour wine for guests immediately after opening. It is the host's responsibility to discreetly ensure that the wine is sound and unspoiled. This should be done away from company, and a small amount should be sampled.

Always serve wine to your guests in clean, spotless glasses. This may seem obvious, but it is a very common mistake. Additionally, if more than one wine is served, make sure that they are poured in a logical progression.

Especially with older wines, be aware that there may be a significant amount of sediment at the bottom of the bottle. Keep this in mind when deciding the portion given to each guest. Avoid the embarrassing situation of the last person receiving an unacceptable amount of solids in their glass. If this is a concern with a particular bottle, refrain from pouring the last half glass.

It may be necessary to decant a wine to either remove sediment or to expose it to oxygen. Be cautious with this practice, as older wines may quickly fade if left in a decanter for too long.

Wine enjoyment should be an enjoyable and unintimidating process. With these tips in mind, you are prepared for the majority of social situations that involve wine.

Ben Bicais lives in the Napa Valley and is the webmaster of

Why Are Wine Cellars Beneficial?

By Julia Martinez

Drinking wine is not only for occasions as we all know. What happens when you feel like drinking wine and it is not available? You have a surprise visitor and you want to have this wine but it is not on the market? These situations would be less tough if you have a wine cellar.

A wine cellar could store the wines you have and keep them more delicious as time passes by.

Is having a wine cellar not expensive?

Like any other home equipment, you need of course a sum of money to buy your own wine cellar. The expense will not be that long–termed for sooner you could gradually attain the long–term benefits of the wine cellar you have.

How does a wine cellar improve one's entrepreneurial skills?

Owning a wine cellar and increasing the number of wines you store on it is a way of polishing you as a future entrepreneur. As your knowledge of wines improves along the process, you could never ignore the fact that you would also be interested in starting your own wine business.

What is the best wine cellar?

Different wine cellars have their individual strengths and they vary a lot. It depends on how one sees a good wine cellar. To make your choices better, you could read about helpful tips on choosing the right wine cellar. To add, online search would be convenient and effective too.

Why is a wine cellar important?

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Wine is more than a delightful drink. It has with its contents healthful benefits. Having a cellar to keep it with you without having to worry much every time you need some of it is the meaning of convenience and assurance as well.

Wine cellars are the chest that holds within them the treasure– the bottles of wine!

Julia Martinez is a freelance writer for the Wine Times. She writes a regular column which is published every Thursday. Her latest 'favorite pick' is

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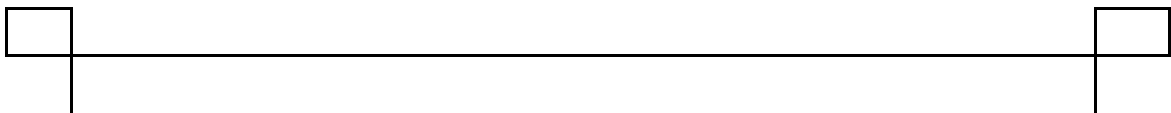
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