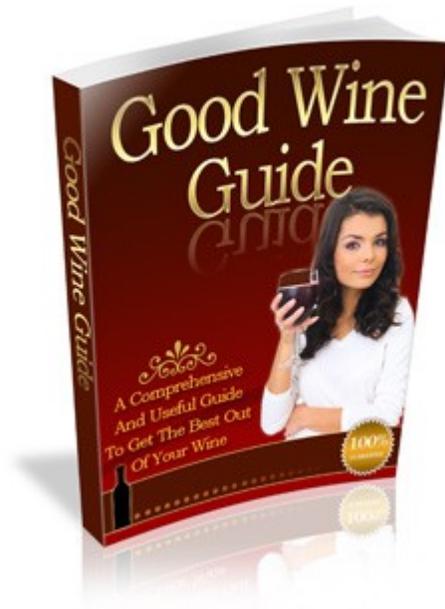


# Good Wine Guide



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## **Becoming Familiar with Wine**

Many of us are not even vaguely familiar with the different varieties of wine that are available for purchase. In fact, some of us probably thought red wine and white wine were the only ones in existence. Most of us don't have any idea of the number of varieties of wine that are in existence. We have dinner wines, dessert wines, red wines, white wines, dry red wine, dry white wine, sweet red wine, sweet white wine and much more. Before you serve your first dinner that includes wine, make sure to understand something about wines. Know what is proper to serve with different meals.

A general rule of thumb is white wine with white meat and red wine with red meat, but there may sometimes be variations to that. For instance, although chicken is a white meat, red wine is the customary wine of choice because it complements a chicken meal better than white wine. Another variation is turkey which has both white meat and dark meat. Because of both white and dark meat on turkey, one can choose to serve either white or red wine while some may actually serve both—red to the guests who choose dark meat and white to those who choose white meat.

Another thing that is important to understand is the relationship between red wine and fish. Customarily you would serve white wine with fish but in the event you choose to serve red wine, it's important to choose one that does not contain any tannins since the presence of tannins in wine you serve with fish may give the wine a metallic taste. Though the taste itself is not going to cause any harm, one drinks wine for the flavor thus having a metallic taste takes away from that. To avoid this possibility either serve white wine with fish or make sure the red wine you serve is free of tannins.

Before you have your first party or even serve your first wine with dinner make sure you know exactly what you should serve with the meal you have chosen. Taking the time to research and learn about how wines complement food, you will be able to make a better selection of wine to go with the dinner you are serving. The more dinners you serve the more educated, you will become about the proper wine to serve.

## **Choosing a Dessert Wine**

Most people know you should choose white wine with white meat and red wine with red meat, but what about dessert wine? Is there a protocol for choosing a dessert wine? One of the most important things to remember is to not serve desserts that are so sweet that they give the wine an overpowering taste. You want to choose a wine that will complement your dessert and add to an already elegant taste. If you do anything less you are not doing a service to your dessert, wine or guests.

One of the dessert wines is that of port and comes in tawny, ruby, and vintage varieties. These wines are usually very sweet and are a good pairing for fruit desserts including pumpkin pie and cobblers. The tawny ports have a nutty flavor and are a good pairing for anything in the milk

chocolate variety while vintage ports work well with dark chocolate. Some of the French wines that have a very high fruity taste are recommended with cheeses, creamy desserts and fruity creamy desserts. Ice wines are a good pairing with grapes, light-flesh fruits, tropical fruits and hazelnuts. They are also a very good complement to nutty or desserts containing Carmel.

There are other varieties of dessert wines as well that you may wish to pair with different desserts you may be serving. You may want to take the time to try the wine on your guests by having them over for a tasting party before you actually serve any of the dessert wines. Choose one or two that you feel would be good matches and get the opinions of some people you normally invite to your dinner parties. . Getting some opinions before you pair any dessert wine with a dessert will allow you time to make another selection if your first selection is not well received. You may even want to have a few different dessert choices in order to discover which ones your guests feel may go the best with the wine you plan to serve.

Keep in mind that dessert wines are not like ordinary wines—they are much sweeter and as such will have a much stronger flavor if you serve a dessert that is too sweet. You are much better off staying with fruity desserts and choose a dessert wine that will complement your dessert rather than overpower it.

## **Choosing a High Quality Wine**

If you're not familiar with the various winemakers, it is unlikely you really have an idea how to choose a high quality wine. Making a good choice means you have to know the wine making process of the manufacturer you choose. If you are unable to research a wine maker, you can certainly take the time to ask different friends, relatives and associates for their preferences in wine. Whether you're serving wine for a family dinner or a dinner party, you want to make sure you serve a high quality variety.

One thing to keep in mind when buying wine is that "cheap" wine can often make a person drinking it ill. That doesn't mean cheap in price but rather a cheap quality product. One cannot judge wine by price alone—you can have a highly priced wine that is cheaply made, so it's important to become familiar with different brands and varieties so you will know where to find the high quality wine. Remember each manufacturer may have a different processing method, so the same type of wine will taste different when it is made by different winemakers. That is why you will find some people tell you to buy one brand while others will specify a different one yet they are the same type of wine.

Although you may want to obtain advice from other people, you want to make the final decision based on information you have obtained and your own taste test. You want to take the time to make sure you can form your own opinion so that the next time you buy wine you will know what the signs of quality are. You don't want to choose just any wine nor do you want to make a decision based solely on information from others. The best you can do for yourself as a newbie

to wine buying is to seek guidance from others, obtain some recommendations but do your own quality testing and make a decision based on that.

You are looking for high quality at the lowest price but you are not looking for “cheap” wine that is both low in price and quality. Become familiar with the names of wine makers so that you know those that speak of quality without looking. When you learn the famous wine makers, it will be easier to choose a quality wine.

## **Choosing a Wine with Dinner**

Some people don't see the necessity in choosing a special wine for dinner and may simply serve whatever they have in the house. Others however wish to stay with protocol and serve the proper wine to go with the meals they serve. Except in formal settings, the choice is a personal one for the most part although some foods naturally taste better when they are consumed with the right wine. That doesn't make it mandatory although some people do prefer to follow wine protocol even in an informal setting. There are others that will even go so far as to tell you if you don't drink the correct wine with your food you will become ill. This again equates into personal choice and has no substantiated evidence to support it.

In general the rule of thumb for serving wine is white wine with white meats and red wines with red meat. The exception is chicken which tends to go better with a fruity red wine. The same is true when serving fish—you may prefer to serve red wine with fish instead of white wine. Sweet seafood such as lobster are quite tasty with a sweet white wine instead of red wine. The rules are not always ironclad, and there may be reasons you choose to change the protocol such as serving a White Bordeaux with bluefish. Sometimes you have to make choices that are out of the ordinary realm of things for various reasons, so don't think you are doing anything wrong. The rules for serving white wine with white meat and red wine for red meat are not in stone and are therefore subject to change as circumstances dictate.

Another thing to remember when serving wine is to avoid serving any wine when you are serving salad. The reason for this is because vinegar and wine do not mix well together. Even with your appetizers you have to consider the ingredients in order to choose the proper wine to serve. With cheese trays you will find that cheddar is best when it is served with dry red wines while Merlots and Cabernet, Sauvignon, and Pinot Noir are best with Swiss. Camembert and brie go very well with a Chardonnay while the Italian cheeses such as Parmigiano, Romano and reggiano match perfectly with Italian dry red wines. You can serve white or red fruit wines to offset the oil if you are serving fried appetizers.

## **Cooking with Wine**

When most people think about cooking with wine, they think about things like cooking Sherry that you find in the grocery store, but in reality most people who cook with wine cook with the real thing. Many ethnic groups including Italians, Hispanics and many others use wine in their cooking to enhance their flavor. Some people have added a small amount of Italian red wine to their deviled egg mixture. There are many different ways you can use wine without even drinking it, much like our grandparents used to add rum to applesauce cake to keep it moist and fresh throughout the holidays.

If you search you will find many recipes for cooking with wine, but there is no reason to invest in a new cookbook. All you have to do is begin practicing and experimenting by adding a little bit of wine to some of your recipes, especially meat and casseroles. If you add wine to fish remember the rule about avoiding any wine with tannins if you use red wine. One of the most common places to add wine is in recipes containing tomato sauce such as spaghetti sauce, pizza sauce and marinara sauce. You can also add it when you are cooking red meats such as beef or steak to enhance the flavor.

When cooking with wine you want to be careful of how much you use, especially if you will be serving the food to children. While a small amount of wine in food is not likely to cause any ill effects, depending on the age of the child, larger amounts might have detrimental effects. It's important to understand how much wine is safe for all family members and where you have to be economical because children will also be eating what you prepare. There is very little wine necessary to enhance the flavor of the food so do not go crazy with the wine bottle think more is better.

When you are cooking with wine, also be mindful of anyone who is not able to consume alcohol such as those on special medications or recovering alcoholics. Though the small amount of wine you use in cooking may not cause a problem, make sure you ask before you add wine to anything you cook. If anyone has a problem, set out a portion for that person before you add any wine to the recipe.

## **Do Wine Glasses Matter?**

When it comes to serving wine at your next dinner party, you have probably spent a good amount of time picking out the right type of wine. Have you thought about the right type of wine glass though? Wine glasses are available in a variety of shapes and sizes and generally they are priced to match in size and quality. Yet, for many people, there is a lot of confusion over what type of wine glass to purchase. Does it actually matter?

To some degree it can matter what type of glass you serve wine in. First, consider the options. Tall thin glasses are not necessarily meant for wine. It is important to note that these are champagne flutes and designed this way to accommodate the high top that happens when champagne is poured (and their small width helps to make it look like you have more than you do, especially good with high priced items.) Wine glasses should have a more rounded middle and do not need to be very tall. They may or may not have a large stem on them. Most should fit

nicely between the index finger and the middle finger when held in your hand, so that your hand can easily cup the actual bowl of the glass.

Wine glass quality can be important, but only to the point of being functional. Some of the very best crystal is very thin and can easily break. It is best to have a more heavy piece so that it sits properly and provides more stability for the drinker. In addition to this, you want the wine glass to be easy to pick up and not likely to break if they chime together in a toast.

Besides this, you may be asking, why in the world does the type of glass matter? In truth, all you need is a larger bowl on wine glasses. This allows for you to slowly swirl the wine around. Doing this helps to activate the small molecules within it which provides you with the better flavour and the best overall texture. This is especially true in fine wines and in homemade wines where you want to have a good ability to taste the wine closely.

Give it a try. Try using several different shaped glasses to find out just what type of difference it makes overall. You may be impressed with the subtle differences in the wine's flavour.

## **Does Price Define Quality in Wine?**

Purchasing wine may seem like one of the most confusing things for an individual. After all, there are countless types of wine on the market, many of which are imported from different areas of the country. How will you ever find the right type to serve at your important meal? One mistake many people make is to purchase a wine that is high priced assuming that the wine is high quality. Price and quality do not always go hand in hand, unfortunately. Yet, there is hope for those looking for a balance here.

The first step is to know what type of wine you actually like and which type of wine you are most likely to enjoy. If you have little experience with wine, you will need to make a few purchases or do some wine sampling before investing. The fact is, everyone's taste buds are slightly different which means that you may enjoy a slightly milder taste or a more tart taste than the next person. Therefore you do need to spend some time figuring out what is right for you specifically. Also, take some time to look at the type of food you will be serving and what types of wine go well with that dish. Nearly all dishes can be found to match well with some type of wine, depending on its nationality, the ingredients used and particularly the sauces used. With this basic information, you can head to the wine store to look at some options.

A good place to start is at an actual wine store where you are most likely to find wine tastings available to you. Speak with the representative and ask them about the options available that would fit your menu or your tastes. They are sure to be able to help you and you may be surprised that they do not reach for the top shelf, high end wine that they have. Quality wine sellers will help you to pinpoint what you are looking for in quality rather than trying to make the highest profit from you.

There is no doubt that the least quality wines will cost the least amount. Yet, this does not mean that the opposite is true. Rather than investing in a type of wine that you are not sure about, spend some time finding a wine that does work well with your taste buds. Quality should always come over price.

## **Following the Wine Serving Rules**

Although there are exceptions to the rules due to personal preferences or differences in taste, for the most part you want to remember to serve red wine with red meat and white wine with white meat. If you are serving beef, steak and lamb, you should choose a dry red wine or a burgundy wine. Another possibility that goes very well with red meat is one of the Italian red wines. Of course, you do not have to serve red wines with red meats but failing to do so can make a difference in the way your meal tastes.

When you are eating or serving fish you want to say with a dry, crisp white wine. The actual vintage may differ based upon the fish you are serving though for a change of taste you may also choose a fruity red wine that has no tannins. It is essential to be very careful when you serve red wine with fish, especially that of the white delicate variety because any wine that contains tannins may leave a metallic taste in your mouth when they combine with fish.

Although poultry, pork and veal follow the rule of white wine with white meat and red wine with red meat, turkey is a little different because it has such a large variety of both white and dark meat. With turkey you may want to choose a wine that is fruity and tart in either a white or red variety. On the other hand if you want to serve red wine with chicken choose a fruity variety. Sparkling wines without tannins in the fruity variety are best with spicy foods. You also want to serve wine cold when you serve spicy foods.

When it's time for dessert, you want to serve a dessert wine which is a sweeter wine and usually served in smaller bottles than ordinary wine. If your party guests are all of drinking age you may choose to eliminate the dessert and serve only the dessert wine. Of course, this is also assuming all of yours guests drink wine or want dessert wine instead of dessert. These are things you will need to find out before you plan your party so that you will know how to plan. Even those who drink wine may not want dessert wine instead of dessert and would prefer wine only with the main course.

## **Fruit and Specialty Wines**

In addition to red and white dry and fruit flavored wines, there are few specialty wines that you may see from time to time. During the winter and during the holidays you will be able to find spice wine that you can heat and drink on a cold and snowy night. This time of year you can also find pumpkin wine in addition to other holiday varieties. Although you will not ordinarily keep these holiday type wines in the house, you may want to keep them on hand beginning on Halloween and on through New Year's.

When can you serve spice, pumpkin and other holiday wines? You may want to consider the wine from which they are made and go from or you can serve them with any holiday meal. You are not going to customarily drink these specialty wines as a dinner drink but you may drink

them as a dessert wine or after dinner drink. Spice wine may be a dinner drink because it is heated and put into a cup like coffee or hot tea. Of course, you can also include the specialty wines with other drinks from the holidays as well thus making it a real occasion for celebration.

You can also add some of the holiday way to your cooking in order to enhance the flavor and make it a real celebration. This is the time of year when spices permeate everyone's home so adding spice or pumpkin wine can also give it more of a holiday feel. While everyone is sitting around drinking hot spice wine, you can play Christmas music and watch the Christmas tree lit in all its glory. Even if you haven't yet put up your holiday decorations you can enjoy the feel of warm spice wine on a cold winter night.

Everyone is now preparing for the holidays, so while you picking up things for your parties, be sure to include spice wine and pumpkin wine to add to the flavor of the party. Having some great holiday wine on hand can certainly help make the holidays more special and make all of your guests feel right at home. You can serve some spice wine with your dinners or just as an after dinner dessert wine while you are sitting around with friends enjoying the sights and sounds of the Christmas and New Year's season as they approach.

## **Have You Tried Local Wines?**

You may have your favourite imported French wine or that exquisite Italian red wine you love. Yet, you may find that your local area also has more than a few wine choices available to you, too. These may be a great investment for the individual who is looking for quality wines that may have a new twist in taste or be something that is excellent in flavour to match local dishes. Take some time to find out if there are local wines made within your own state that could be added to your wine collection. You may be surprised at what you do find.

Many areas of the United States do produce wines. Wine can be produced as far north as Maine and throughout the lower states as well. You will find all types of wines available, too, including reds and whites and everything in between. There are definitely going to be subtle differences in the wines flavour depending on where it comes from. You may be wondering, what difference does the location make?

There is a big difference to be noticed here. For example, the taste of the grapes produced in California's wine country are going to be much different than wines produced in the Amish country in southern Ohio. The reasons for this are extensive. The different types of dirt and the nutrients within it play a role. In addition to this, the amount and intensity of the sun also plays a role in the flavour of the wine. You may even find that the wine's colouring is different based on where it is located.

You may not like all the wines you find, but chances are good you would not like all of the imported wines you find either. To find local wines, use the web to track down sellers. Or, head out into the countryside and stop at local wineries. Most states will have a few. This is also a great place to throw a party or go on a tour with a group of friends. Most local wineries will allow you to sample their products before you purchase them. Chances are good you will like them.

Take some time today to find out where your local wineries are and find out when you can make a trip to visit them. The next time you host a dinner party, serve a local wine and share with others how you obtained it.

## **How to Choose a Red Wine with Fish**

Although customarily one would choose a white wine to go with fish, there are some people who might want to have red wine instead. A person's personal preference for red wine may lead him or her to make the wrong decision when it comes to serving wine with fish, especially some of the white varieties. It's important to know what you can and cannot serve with fish when it comes to red wine. If you do not choose properly, you may find the flavor of the fish negatively affected by your poor choice.

The most important thing to remember about serving red wine with fish is to choose a red fruity wine that does not contain tannins. If your red wine contains tannins it may cause a metallic taste with some varieties of fish. If you are serving it just to your family the problem may not be very high in priority but if you are hosting an important dinner party, it can make a big difference in the success of your party. It is important to make sure you choose the right wine to go with your seafood dinner, especially if you have made the decision to serve red wine.

No one knows everything there is to know about serving red wine with fish or even white wine as is the custom, so you want to consult with food experts if you aren't certain. Of course, with the internet today, the answers to your questions are at your fingertips. With so many different varieties of fish, it's difficult to define each and every one and attempt to provide advice on wines to serve in just a few paragraphs. Making certain you know exactly what you plan to serve will make it easier for you to find out the best wine to serve with your meal.

Never make the mistake of thinking because a particular red wine worked well with the fish you served at your last party it will work again. If you are serving a different type of fish you may have to choose a different wine for this party. Certainly if you are choosing white wine the problem is of less importance but serving red wine with fish requires some knowledge and ingenuity concerning the right variety and blend in order to provide the most complementary pairing possible. If you are in doubt about the right red wine, choose a white wine instead.

## **How to Qualify as a Wine Critic**

In addition to wine tasters, you will also find wine critics who will do reviews on different types of wine. These are not just people who drink different wines and give you their opinion on the taste, but they are professionals. They may be wine tasters or they may be freelance critics who have been hired by a specific organization to taste a particular wine and do a review. They may be hired by the manufacturer or even a wine wholesaler as part of an advertising campaign they are launching. However, the reasons may be varied and the sources versatile, there is no mistaking the fact that wine critics have a very important job to do.

In order to be a wine critic you have to be familiar with wine and not just as a drinker. You have to be able to taste wine without drinking it and know the flavor it should provide. You have to know what to detect during your tasting process and be able to portray that information to the public in a positive way. You have to know about many different kinds of wines and not just one kind. You can of course, portray yourself as an expert with just one wine, but you will not be in very much demand. Those who work as wine critics sometimes double as wine tasters, which gives them the information they need for the wine reviews.

Why would anyone need to hire a wine critic? It may be because the manufacturer wants to get an unbiased opinion on a new variety or an advertising agency wants to find out the public's reaction to a particular brand and variety, new or old. Sometimes restaurants may request a wine critic to find out what professionals think of a new wine variety they are considering offering to customers. There are many different reasons why someone might engage the services of a wine critic.

If you're looking to become a wine critic, you will first need to learn about the different wines and what is expected from them. You need the flavor, aroma and general appearance of the wine in order to be a critic for a particular wine. Once you have some experience or at least extensive knowledge, you can begin selling your services to organizations that hire wine critics or use their services in other ways.

## **How to Store Wine**

For those who do not have the luxury of having a wine cellar, it's important to make sure you know how to store any wine you have. Not all wine needs stored in the refrigerator nor does it have to be standing or lying flat. In fact some wines maintain their life better if they are in the refrigerator on their side. On the other hand other wines are better in a wine storage rack or in a wine cellar. It depends on the particular wine, so you must make sure you know the storage recommendations for each wine you buy.

Don't think you can avoid the recommendations for storing your wine because if you don't store it properly, it will lose its flavor and not last as long as it should. Any wine is very sensitive and as such requires a great deal of care. That means storing it properly and at the proper temperature. In most cases a wine cabinet is perfect because it is designed to hold wine in the proper position, but you may need to make sure you store it at the proper temperature. If you have a basement, the temperature there should remain cool enough for your wine to retain its flavor. The type of wine you are storing will determine the proper storing procedure, and it is essential you follow that process perfectly in order to keep your wine at the proper temperature for the longest life.

Wine is intended to be better with age, but it also depends on proper storage. Remember, all of these 100-200 year old wines were stored in a wine cellar for all those years—today people do not ordinarily have wine cellars so the storage is somewhat different. That doesn't mean that we can no longer keep wine for centuries as we once did, but the process is just a little more

complicated, at least for people who live in apartments or homes without basements. Many restaurants and bars still have wine cellars, but it is rare to find a homeowner who has one. If you keep a great deal of wine in your home, you may want to make the investment into a wine rack so that all of your wines will be stored together and at the proper temperature to keep them fresh. You can then bring them out as necessary for placement in the refrigerator when you are ready to open the bottles.

## **Is Wine Making Easy?**

Wine making is something that many wine drinkers like to dabble in. The process can be complex and often times overwhelming, especially when there is not enough information about the process available to the individuals. It used to be a closely guarded secret as to how wine is produced. Families would pass down this information from generation to generation, never letting others know what it was simply to protect the family business. Luckily, this is no longer the case and it has become much easier to gather information regarding the process of making wine.

The key aspect to remember about wine making is that it absolutely must be done systematically. The process of selecting the right grapes is just as important as the process of removing gas and sediment from the wine as it ferments. Plus, sterilization is a common problem first time wine makers struggle with. The problem is, just a small amount of bacteria or outside substances can and will spoil the entire batch of wine. This should have careful monitoring throughout the process.

So, what if you wish to brave the front and try your hand at making some wine? What do you do? A good place to start is to read a few books or watch a few online tutorials about the process before you purchase any of the wine making products you will need. This will help to insure that the process is something you still find interesting and that you can do. Once you have a decent understanding of the process, it is time to purchase the products you will need. The good news is that there are many great wine making kits on the market right now, many of which can provide you with the type of help you need to make fantastic tasting wine. These kits will include everything you need except for the grapes or grape juice for the process including funnels and wine bottles. In many areas, wine bottles are difficult to find.

Once you have this complete, the only other step you need to worry about is getting the wine grapes or the grape juice that is sometimes used instead. This you will need to find locally through a specialized grocer or a farmer's market. If you are lucky enough to have your own plot of land, you can grow your own grapes, though you need to be sure that wine quality grapes grow in your area.

## **Making Accommodations for Non-Drinking Guests**

What do you do for those guests who are either underage or do not drink alcohol? It's easy to say to serve them soft drinks, but what if they don't want a soft drink? They don't drink but they want to put on the premise that they are drinking, so you accommodate them by purchasing

wine coolers. Wine coolers have a very small amount of alcohol but still have the taste of wine. Although those who don't drink may not be very fussy, those who are underage will be happy to have the opportunity to "pretend" they are actually drinking. You have to look at the labels on the wine coolers because some of them have more alcohol content than others do, and if you are serving to teenagers, you want to have the lowest alcohol content possible.

Wine coolers come in a variety of flavors and are even available in a sparkling variety for those who want to pretend they are drinking champagne. If you aren't sure what your guests would prefer, have a variety available. You must still be careful with your underage guests because if they drink too many wine coolers, they will still be able to become inebriated, especially if they are not eating at the same time. The only difference in wine coolers is that they have less alcohol, but anyone can make up for that by drinking more of them in order to obtain the same effect.

You can purchase wine coolers either in large bottles as you do ordinary wine or in individual size bottles. Depending where you live you may be able to purchase them in the grocery store, but in some states you must still go to the liquor store to purchase them since they still have a certain amount of alcohol. The prices will vary also depending on the brand and where you purchase the wine coolers. Although less expensive than regular wine, they are more expensive than soft drinks or sparkling water.

Look at your guest list before you purchase wine coolers so that you know how many people will be drinking them. You should have an idea how many non-drinkers including teenagers you will have at your party and how many non-drinkers prefer soft drinks to wine coolers. The sooner you can have everything set up, the sooner you can proceed with other preparations for your party.

## **Planning a Wine Tasting Party**

If you're looking for something different, you might want to think about having a wine tasting party. Although the real tasters are professionals, you can plan something at your house with your friends and family and make it great fun. You have to remember, however, that they are not supposed to drink the wine, something that is very difficult for the average person to do. Just place a small amount of wine in a glass, sloshed around and then placed in the mouth onto the tongue where the taste swishes it around like mouthwash in order to get the full taste of the wine without swallowing it.

What some people do when they have home wine tasting parties is award prizes for those who are able to refrain from drinking the wine. They may also choose someone who holds the wine the longest without swallowing it. There are many different events you can plan to revolve around a wine tasting party. The key is that you are planning a fun event for everyone to enjoy while at the same time allowing your guests to have an opportunity to taste different wines they may not ordinarily try at any other time.

Sometimes people also stage wine tasting parties for a fund-raising event. Again, everyone can have fun while helping their favorite organization at the same time. Although wine tasting events for fund raising are usually staged by organizations, that doesn't mean an individual person cannot do it with the proper credentials and any licensing that is required. You can enjoy time with your friends and relatives while raising money for a good cause at the same time. It's probably one of the easiest parties to plan because you don't have to worry about too many games or activities. The only down side is that you probably don't want your guests to bring their children, so that may affect the number of people that show up.

If you want to plan a wine tasting party whether for a fund raiser or for fun, you may want to find someone who provides wine in small portions so that you don't have to buy large bottles of wine for a handful of guests. You may need to go directly to the manufacturer but if they are new brands or varieties, the manufacturer may be willing to provide samples at a reduced cost just for the exposure.

### **Presenting Your Host with a Bottle of Wine**

Probably one of the most difficult things to do is to present your party host with a bottle of wine. If you know before you arrive what the menu will be, it is much easier than if you have no idea of the menu. What is a safe choice? Should you bring white, red, or sparkling wine? You don't need to fret over it too much because in all likelihood your host or hostess already has purchased wine for the party, so what you bring will restock what they have used at another party if it is not suitable for the current party. The only thing you may wish to avoid is Champagne as most people only have Champagne as a toast for special occasions and not as a dinner or after dinner drink.

You are always safe with dry red, Italian red or fruity red since most hostesses tend to serve some kind of red meat such as roast or steak. Sometimes you will find chicken but that is not as big of a party food as steak or beef. This is especially true of beef that can be sliced thinly and simmered for sandwiches throughout the party. Chicken is a little more difficult to keep warm throughout a party, so it is usually only served for a sit down dinner party rather than a buffet style party. You might also choose to bring a dessert wine as your contribution to the host since it can be for most all situations.

When you bring a bottle of wine to present your host or hostess, almost make sure it is chilled when you arrive in case they want to use it for that evening's party. It is very difficult to chill wine quickly in an ice bucket if it has not already been chilled prior to serving. You want to be as accommodating as possible by bringing a bottle of wine that is already chilled—of course, if it is very cold outside, this may not be necessary depending on the temperature in your car on the drive to the party. Even if you have purchased a bottle that is wrapped in gift paper, chill it before you leave for the party—if the host does not need it that night, at least you showed the foresight by coming prepared with a cold bottle of wine.

## **Red or White: Making the Right Decision**

When it comes to wine, choosing the right one can sometimes create a challenge. Should you choose red or white? When and why? Certainly there is protocol such as red wine with red meat and white wine with white meat, but is that always necessary? Some people prefer to simply serve their wine of choice without worrying about choosing a wine to go with a particular meal and though that may be fine in most cases, there are times when it might not be acceptable. For instance, a red fruity wine with fish may cause a metallic taste if the wine includes tannin. That means if you want to serve red wine with fish you have to make sure you choose one that does not include tannin.

Keep in mind that you don't want to serve any kind of wine with your salads because the vinegar will not mix well with it. The choice is yours of course, and if your guests insist on wine with the salad course, you want to accommodate them as much as possible. In that case you may want to choose a dressing that has less vinegar such as French, Russian or Ranch instead of Italian. Though there is still a small amount of vinegar it is not as much as you will find in Italian, garlic or other oil-based salad dressings. You want to accommodate your guests but you also want to provide drinks that are going to go well with the food as well.

In cases where you are in doubt about what goes well with a particular food, you may find that a fruity white or red wine is a good choice. The sweet taste will go well with most food choices, and if you choose a red without tannin, you can serve it with any fish dishes you may be serving as well. It isn't so much etiquette or protocol that lends its hand to a particular wine being served with certain foods but rather how the combination of ingredients in the wines will combine with the ingredients in the food. You are certainly welcome to experiment with different wines, but do it on your own rather than with your guests. Do not use a party as a place to test wine and food combinations although you may ask any of the guests if they are willing to try it outside of the party.

## **Red Wine and Red Meat Pairing**

One of the easiest choices people can make in wine is when serving red meats such as beef, steak and veal. Unlike some other meat varieties, red wines are fairly standard for red meats and the varieties are limited only by the choice of the party host. The red meats fall safely into the wine protocol of serving red wine with red meat and though some people choose to serve a white wine with these meats, they still remain part of the wine protocol. If you stay with the red wine varieties you can be certain your wine will complement your food.

The choice you make is a personal one and with red meat you can choose either a dry wine, fruity wine, Italian red or another variety. If you are serving pasta or another Italian dish you may want to choose one of the Italian red wines to complement your meal. Keep in mind that if you are serving a salad you don't want to serve wine with the salad because of the vinegar content though you may serve wine with cheese and fried appetizers.

A good rule of thumb is to plan your party menu in enough time to allow for some research on the type of wine you should serve. This is especially important if you are the type of person who only buys wine for special dinner parties instead of keeping it in the house all the time. Planning ahead allows you enough time to find what you need and purchase it ahead of time instead of having to rush on the day of the party. You also need to make sure you know how to store and serve the wine. If you choose a wine served cold, you have to make sure you purchase it in enough time for it to chill thoroughly before you serve it.

The quality of the wine you choose will affect the meal you serve. If you can find the right wine at a cheaper price then you should do it but do not sacrifice flavor for price. Sometimes cheaper brands of red wine do not have the varieties you want to serve to your guests, so you want to make certain of that before you choose. If you are the type of person that serves wine with dinner on a regular basis, it probably doesn't matter greatly but when you are serving red wine to your guests you want to choose something of higher quality.

### **Serving Wine without Dinner**

It's party time but you're not serving dinner—what kind of wine do you serve? If you are not serving food, there is no protocol about what kind of wine to serve other than that of the preference of your guests. You should always have both white and red wine on hand for those who prefer wine over other drinks. Although it seems to be common for people to choose white wine as a conversational wine, that is not always the case. You do not want to stock up on just white wines only to find out that some of your wine drinking guests prefer red.

In some cases you may know what your guests prefer but don't assume they will choose the same thing every time. Your guest that always wants white wine may suddenly decide to have red wine. Maybe he or she had never tried red wine until recently, so if you do not have red on hand you may have a very disappointed guest. Never take the cheap way out and assume your guests will always drink the exact same thing. You have to allow for the possibility of a change and have several varieties of wine on hand. This is especially important during the holidays when people's tastes are more subject to change than any other time.

Another thing you want to remember is that some of your guests will only drink wine during dinner and want different drinks after dinner. When you are not serving dinner, you want to make sure you know the habits of your guests so that you can plan accordingly. During the Christmas season you may want to invest in some of the holiday wine choices such as spice and pumpkin wine. Spice wine is served warm, so it's a good choice on a cold winter's night. If you have a fireplace, it's even better with warm spice wine. Of course, any wine will warm up the room on a cold night, but spice warm will create a different atmosphere.

Another reason to make sure you have both white and red wine is because if you are serving a cheese tray as a snack for your guests some cheeses go better with white wine while others are better with red wine. You want to make sure you have both in order to accommodate all of the selections on your cheese tray.

## **The Art of Wine Tasting**

For those who don't know about wine tasting, it is indeed an art. Those who partake of this activity do so in the same way an artist may look at a painting or an author might evaluate a book. It is not just a quick tasting of the wine but rather an entire process upon which the taster embarks. In fact, one must know a great deal about wine to be a wine taster—it is not simply tasting to see if the wine is fit for consumption but rather actually becoming involved in the process and taking it all to heart.

There is not an entire glass of wine provided for wine tasting but just enough in the bottom of the glass to provide the taster with a good sample. After swirling the glass back and forth, the taster will take a small amount of the liquid in his mouth and swirl it around like mouthwash. The purpose of this is to take in all of the wine's flavor and discover the full tasting process. The wine taster does not drink any of the wine but only grasps the flavor on his tongue and in his mouth. Since your tongue is the organ that contains the taste buds, it is unnecessary for the wine taster to drink the wine in order to evaluate its flavor.

In most cases a wine taster will be tasting many different varieties of wines in the course of the day—another good reason for him to only swish it around in his mouth and not attempt to drink it. Even though the glasses only contain small amounts of wine, the taster may be asked to taste ten or more varieties in the course of a day. The purpose of wine tasting is for the taster to determine if the flavor and aroma of each wine is up to standards and not to drink the wine for recreational purposes. Some wine tasters also participate in contests that are created for the sole purpose of comparing various wine varieties, and again they do not actually drink the wine but swish it around on the tongue and the inside of their mouth to grasp the entire flavor of the wine. It is not something one chooses to do in order to feed a need for alcohol but to become a critic of good wines.

## **The Importance of Serving the Proper Wine**

Although many people don't become overly concerned about what wine they serve with dinner, the reality of it is that the proper wine choice will complement your dinner. If you have a favorite wine that you always have on hand, you are certainly free to serve it with your dinner but if you want to have a great party that is going to receive rave reviews, you want to make sure you have the right wine to go with the meal you are serving. For instance, even if you don't care for red wine, if you are having a party and are serving beef, steak or veal, you want to be sure to serve red wine and not white wine. That does not mean you cannot serve white wine to the guests who prefer it, but you want to make sure you have the right wine available to go along with your meal.

If you're just serving dinner for friends, is your choice in wine really that important? It could be if some of those friends talk to others, especially if you are in the professional field where you

dinner parties, however informal, may make a difference in your professional career. Wine can add just the right touch to your party and allow your guest to relax and enjoy the meal you, a cook or caterer has prepared. Only in an informal setting that includes only your family should you fail to adhere to the rules of protocol for serving wine. In some cases serving the wrong wine with a meal can cause a change in the flavor of the food. Although this may not make a huge difference if you are feeding only your family, it can make a big difference if you are serving guests, especially if there are some you have not met before the party.

What may not seem important to you is of great importance to other people. Look at parties you attend and see what kind of wine is served—you can be sure it is based upon the contents of the meal. Make the choice to be informed about serving wine before you have your first party and you will achieve greater success. When it comes to serving wine at parties lack of knowledge is no excuse—it is too easy to find the answers you need.

## **The Wine Making Process**

Very few people ever give a thought to the winemaking process—some don't even realize that all wines begin with grapes. The difference in wines is in the type of grapes, the fermentation process, the aging process and even the processing of the grapes. Some wines are aged as long as one hundred years and even more to give it the best flavor, and of course, the older a wine is, the more it will cost because it is a higher quality wine. Although the days of putting grapes in a vat and stomping on them, replaced by high technology modern equipment, the result remains the same.

It's easy enough to figure out some of the process—white grapes make white wine, red grapes for red wine, and of course the addition of other fruits to make different flavors such as blackberry wine, strawberry wine, and others. It's probably not very important for the average person to understand the winemaking process, but it is a rather interesting process to learn. By learning the way wine is processed it's easier to understand why certain wines have certain qualities that others don't. It is also easier to understand why some wines have different flavors even though they all of them initially come from grapes.

Another difference that may occur in wine is the difference in the vine from which the grapes are harvested. The harvesting process itself may have an effect on the quality and flavor of the wine thus creating a great many varieties. The way it is fermented and aged will also have an effect on its flavor. There are many factors that come into play during the wine making process to create the many different varieties of wines that are available. Different winemakers may tend to their vineyards differently thus creating a different taste in the same type of wine. For instance, two dry red wines will taste differently because of the fermentation, aging and cultivation process that a particular winemaker uses.

Research different winemakers and you will discover at least slight differences in the way they cultivate their vineyards and the way they ferment, age and process their grapes. All of these

things have an effect on the taste and quality of the wine that is produced. That is also, why you can have two wines similar in nature from two different winemakers taste differently.

## **The Importance of Quality Wine in Cooking**

Do you use wine in your cooking? Many people head to the grocery store and to the spice aisle or other cooking related aisle to find a wine to use in their dishes. These wines are made specifically for cooking, but you have to wonder what the difference in them is. Chances are good there is a great deal of difference. Often, these are less quality wines. They are wines with poor quality taste and often add very little to a dish besides a harsh aftertaste. These wines you really do not want to have in your dishes.

Rather than using these wines, there are better options available. A good place to start is with a wine that you love to drink. For example, perhaps a recipe calls for a white wine. Ask yourself, which is my favourite white wine? Then, use this in your dish specifically. The benefit is twofold. Not only do you have a great wine taste in the dish, one that you already appreciate, but you also have a fantastic wine to serve as an accompaniment to the meal. It is often important to do this so that the level of flavour passes through to your guests.

When choosing the right wine for any cooking menu, it is not nearly as important to choose a wine that is top quality. You do want to avoid using any wine that you do not like the taste of. The rule is, if you would not drink the wine, you should not be using it in your dishes. This is because the flavour of the wine is just magnified in the dish. Therefore, if you really do not like it, chances are it will spoil the dish for you later on. Therefore, instead, use a wine that you enjoy, but do not over spend to purchase it, either.

Finding this balance can be tricky at first. Do not over think it. Simply purchase a wine that you do like, even if it is not an expensive, top shelf choice. As long as the flavour meshes with the dish, you will find these wines to be a great choice. Do try to stick with what the recipe calls for. For example, if the dish calls for a red wine, only use a red wine in the dish even of a different brand or style. By doing this it can help you perfect the meals you serve.

## **Your Initial Wine Purchase**

If you've never purchased wine in the past except for maybe a bottle or two for special occasions, you want to learn some of the high points about purchasing wine for your home or office bar. One of the most important things is to look at the purpose for the wine. If you have frequent dinner parties, you need to evaluate the type of food you normally serve so that you know what to buy and how much. If your menus consist mainly of red meat and pasta dishes, you probably want to invest mostly in red wines. It is a good idea to purchase some white wine in case you should make a change to the menu.

Another thing you may want to keep on hand is a variety of dessert wines. These always come in handy and you never know when you may want to serve them. Some people like to serve dessert wines with dessert while others choose to serve them as dessert, so your preference will tell you what kind to buy and how much. Choose your dessert wines based upon the types of desserts you usually serve. Keep in mind these wines are very sweet, so you want to choose

desserts that are not overly sweet or the two of them together will be overbearing. Dessert wines are best served with desserts that are fruity and creamy and fruity. You will find a couple of varieties that go well with desserts that have nuts and Carmel. How many dessert wines you need depends on how often you serve wine with dessert. If you tend to serve coffee more often than wine with dessert, you will not need as much on hand as you would if you served dessert wine with every dessert.

In both your red and white wines you want to make sure you have both dry and fruity varieties since some meals go better with each one. Don't attempt to second guess what you might need but have several bottles of each type of wine so that you don't have to buy more because your party menu is different than what you usually prepare. Allow for changes in the menu when you first invest in wine inventory and always replace what you use so that you have a consistent flow of fresh wine in case something comes up at the last minute.