

Wine Tasting

A Guide to Learning about Wine with Friends

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Introduction – Wine Tasting with Friends

Wine tasting is considered to be a sophisticated past time for many people. Before you begin wine tasting there are many things you should know about wine. To some people wine tasting is considered to be a skill.

Learning about wine is easy. There are many types of wine and it is produced all over the world in many different regions. Wine tasting requires knowledge of the types of wine. It is important to know which types of glasses to choose for different wines and how to wash them. It is also important to know how to properly pour and serve wine. Wine tasting consists of many things. The purpose of this e-book is to introduce you to everything you need to know about wine so you can begin wine tasting with your friends.

About Wine

Wine is a beverage fermented from grape juice containing alcohol. Grapes have a natural chemical balance which allows them to ferment without the need to add any sugars, acid, enzymes, or any other types of nutrients to the ingredients.

When wine is produced, grapes are crushed using different types of yeast. The yeast consumes the natural sugars found in grapes. This consumption converts the grapes into alcohol. Depending on the types of wine produced, many different grape varieties are used to produce wine.

Evidence shows that the earliest productions of wine took place as early as 6000 BC in places like Georgia, Iran, and Israel. Some archaeologists say that as early as 7000 BC grapes were mixed with rice to produce other types of fermented beverages in China. This is considered to be the precursors of what we call today, rice wine.

In Europe, wine dates back to as early as 4500 BC in some of the archaeological sites located in Greece. These same sites contain the earliest evidence in the world of grapes being crushed. Ancient Egypt has a recorded history of wine being used ceremonially. Places like the Roman Catholic Church found wine necessary to celebrate Mass. In France, the monks made wine for years and stored it in caves underground for aging.

During the Islamic Golden Age, wine was forbidden until the pioneering of the distilling methods, which led it to be approved and legalized for medical and cosmetic uses only. There were many recipes made with wine during this time.

Grape Varieties

Wine is made from many different grape varieties. The *Vitis vinifera* is the predominant grape. This grape is defined by law as having a minimum of 75% to 85%. The result coming from these types of grapes is a varietal. This type of wine is known to people as the Chardonnay, Merlot, or the Pinot Noir. The areas of the world where these grapes are grown include regions like the Rhone Valley and Bordeaux.

Wines are not always made from the same species of grapes. They may be from the same vintage but of different species. When two species of grapes are crossed it is called a hybrid. The Concord grape is a hybrid grape coming from different species of grapes like the *Vitis labrusca*, *Vitis rupestris*, *Vitis aestivalis*, *Vitis riparia*, and the *Vitis rotundifolia*. These grapes are primarily grown in North America for general consumption. There are many foods made from these grapes which include things like jelly, jam, grape juice, and even sometimes wine.

Classifications

Wine is generally classified depending on the different parts of the world. There are regulations that govern the way wine is classified. For example, in Europe wine is classified by the region it comes from. If it comes from Bordeaux or Chianti the wine is classified as this.

Countries that are not European do not classify their wines by the different regions the wine is produced. They classify the wine according to the type of grapes used to make the wine. Wines classified by the different grape types include the Merlot and the Pinot Noir.

Some regions of the world and wine valleys have recognized the classification regulations put to standard in Europe. Wine is being recognized more often by the locale rather than by the grape. Some wines recognized by the location of the vineyard and not by the grape variety include wines like Napa Valley, Australia, Willamette Valley, Barrosa Valley, and Marlborough.

There have been attempts by wine valley regions around the world that are non-European to classify wines by the quality of the wine. However, these attempts have failed and short lived.

Vintage

The vintage wines are wines specifically grown in a certain year. These wines are labeled by the year they were grown rather than by the different region or grape used to make the wine. These grapes are usually all grown in the same year also. Every year the same wine may have a different variation in color and slightly in taste.

Many other characteristic differences noted with vintages include the nose, palate, body, and the development. They are considered to improve in flavor with age when they are stored properly. It is very common for wine collectors to hold onto a vintage bottle of wine for a special occasion to consume.

Non-Vintage

Non-vintage wines are wines produced from grapes and wines not from the same vintage. They do maintain the consistency with the taste of the wine and the other characteristics. These wines often sell better because they maintain the same flavor. Even in a bad year these wines can be blended and produced because the grapes come from different vintages.

Different Types of Wine

Fruit Wines

There are many wines considered to be 'fruit wines'. These wines are received the name as they have ingredients of different types of fruits contained in them, rather than by the use of grapes. They usually will have a name referring to the type of fruit used to make the wine. Apple wine and plum wine are good examples.

However, fruit wines will not be called 'wine' as the term wine is designated specifically as a drink made with grapes. The name of the fruit must be in front of the word wine. This is to eliminate confusion. This also includes country wine which is the Great Britain version of fruit wine and a good indication that the wine is not made from grapes.

Many people make their own fruit wine. It can be made from any type of food that is sufficiently sweet. You might have to add a little table sugar or honey for the proper amount of sucrose.

Fruit wine is not always made from fruits. It can be produced from different plant sources that are not considered to be fruits. These types of fruit wines are often made from things like rice, dandelion, flowers, and more.

Apple wine is a German fruit wine which is made from apples. This wine is called Apfelwein in Germany. This is a form of cider that has an alcoholic content of 5.5% to 7%. Some say the taste of this wine is tart and sour. Some North Americans consume a drink in the winter months called apple cider. This most often is the very same thing but does not contain the alcoholic content. Apfelwein is often sold by the jug rather than in bottles like other wines around the world.

Wine can be produced with most fruits and berries around the world in cooler climates. It depends on the types and the amount of fermentable sugars contained inside of the fruits. Some fruits that have excessive levels of citric and malic acid can be fermented also.

Fruit wines usually need to be consumed at least a year after they are produced. These are not wines that get better as they age because of the fermentation issues. Because fruits most often need added sugars to make fruit wines these are not the natural sugars grapes have. They do not ferment the same and often need things like phosphorus, nitrogen, and potassium added, which only allow the flavor to last for approximately one year.

There are many different fruits used to make fruit wines. The fruits that make the best fruit wines are elderberries, plums, peaches, blackberries, huckleberries, blackcurrants, and pomegranates. These fruit wines resemble grape wines and taste very similar. Fruit wines are made from other fruits such as apricot, bananas, cherries, pineapple guava, and blueberries. Wines can also be made from flowers such as hibiscus, elderberry, and dandelions. Vegetables such as potatoes, rhubarb, and parsnip are also used to make fruit wines.

Rice Wines – Starch

Rice wine is a wine famously known as sake. This is a Japanese alcoholic beverage. Rice wine is made by fermenting naturally sweet grapes, in addition to other fruits. Rice starch is fermented to make rice wine. The fermentation turns the rice starch into sugars. This process is very similar to the process used to make beer except a mashing process takes place.

There are many different types of rice wine. These types include Tuak from Malaysia, Raksi from Tibet, Lihing from Sabah, and much more. Korea also makes an unfiltered rice wine that is known as snake wine.

Barley Wine

Barley wine originated in the 19th century. It actually came from the 18th century ales brewed in October and November. This is a terminology used but it is actually a beer. However, this is as strong as wine but often misconstrued as a wine because of the name.

Pinot Noir

Pinot Noir comes from the variety of species of grapes known as the *Vitis vinifera*. These grapes are primarily for red wine. The name is French and means 'pine' and 'black'. This refers to the tightly clustered pine cone shaped, purple colored fruit. These grapes are most commonly known as coming from Burgundy France.

These grapes are difficult to cultivate but are known to produce the finest wines in the world. This wine is also considered to be one of the most romantic wines in the world also. Pinot wine tends to have a light to medium body with an aroma that might remind you of black cherries, raspberries, or currants. When the grapes are used young the wine is often much lighter than other red wines. Pinot Noir is also used with Chardonnay.

Many of the places around the world known for producing Pinot Noir include the United States, Italy, Australia, Austria, Moldova, new Zealand, Canada, England, Switzerland, Germany, France, and Spain. There are California wine regions in the United States

known for producing Pinot Noir which include the Sonoma Coast, Monterey County, Carneros District of Napa and Sonoma, and San Luis Obispo County / Arroyo Grande Valley.

Chardonnay

Chardonnay is a white wine made from a green skinned variety of grapes. The flavors associated with a Chardonnay is terroir and oak. It is considered to be a neutral wine, light in flavor. Many of the places around the world known for producing Chardonnay include France, Burgundy, Champagne, North America, California, Australia, Italy, and the New World Wine Regions.

There are many types of Chardonnay from dry still wines and sweet late harvest wines. If a Chardonnay has not gone through a malolactic fermentation the wine will have an apple flavor. The harder the malic acid is when it is converted through fermentation it will have a more buttery flavor.

The oak is also charred to a certain degree which introduces a toastiness flavor. Many wine tasters mistake this flavor to the grapes but it is from the charring of the oak.

Some of the flavors that Chardonnay can taste like due to the charring of the oak include coconut, cinnamon, cloves, spice, smoke, cream, caramel, and vanilla.

When Chardonnay is fermented it also affects the flavor of the wine. For instance, the colder the fermentation process is the more fruity the wine tastes. These flavors include mango and pineapple. Some wineries also use yeast that is specially cultivated which gives the wines an aromatic quality.

Chardonnay is the most difficult wine to recognize in a blind tasting because there is not a distinct universal trait or style that is directly applied to the wine. There are many

different flavors, blends, and more. Not all Chardonnays have a smoky note to them either.

Merlot

Merlot is made primarily from the *Vitis vinifera* species. The many wines associated with a merlot include the Bouchet, Bouche, Petit-Bouchet, Petit-Cabernet, Petit-Vidure, Vidure and Sauvignon Rouge. The origin of the wine is from the Bordeaux grape. It is also thought to be produced from a mutated grape from Biturica. Merlot is a red wine. The word is French and means many kinds of thrushes.

Merlot is produced in France, Italy, California, Romania, Australia, Argentina, Canada, Chile, South Africa, Croatia, Hungary, and more. The role of Merlot is to add body and softness. Some blends have a sweet taste and it is most commonly noted for the balanced acid levels.

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