

... To help you enjoy your favorite beverage. The recent issue of the *Wine Spectator* published an article on making it easier to enjoy, store, serve, and just plain relax as we throw off the shoes, sit in our living room or dining room chair and let the wine do its task. The article is presented by “Dr. Vinny,” a regular contributor the *Wine Spectator*.

I wanted to forward some of the information contained in the article to our readers in the hope that it will reduce some of the mystery and confusion about wine and maybe contribute some additional enjoyment. Credit for the article goes to Dr. Vinny and his staff.

Let's start with serving wine at the correct temperature. This is fairly simple. The average temperature of the home refrigerator is at or near 38 degrees. Lighter white wines are best served at 41 to 45 degrees. Full-bodied white wines are best enjoyed at 47 to 52 degrees. Outside of the refrigerator the red wines should be served at 60 to 67 degrees.

The bottle of wine is now ready to open. When it comes to convenience, screw caps rule the moment. If the bottle is closed off with a cork you will need a corkscrew. There are hundreds of styles on the market, mostly designed to apply permanent damage to the anatomy. All that you need is a simple style called a “waiter's corkscrew.” It is hinged with a spiral corkscrew worm on one end and a lever on the other. It extracts the cork from the bottle in a two-step process and voila . . . success every time. (Here is a challenge: The next time you are in a restaurant, and you order a bottle of wine to be served at tableside, I will wager that your waiter will have the same corkscrew that I described above.)

Moving right along, we now come to the glassware that we will use. I know that wine can be enjoyed in any container ranging from a jelly glass to a very expensive style of drinking vessel designed for the many and various varietals. (Think of eleven generations Riedel Glassware.) I am of the opinion that wine glasses designed for certain varietals will win out every time over the simple all-purpose everyday wineglass. This is an opinion developed over the years and it comes from experience with side-by-side experiments. The final word is that there absolutely IS a difference in the way specialized glassware makes wine taste. The most common shapes are glasses for Burgundy, Bordeaux, and Champagne.

Do not forget to hold the glass by the stem and not by the bowl. Doing so prevents your body temperature from affecting the temperature of the wine.

Tasting and enjoying the wine is next. Here we put our senses of sight, smell, and taste to work. With all the preparation we went through with the above steps, nothing should deter us. With the sense of sight we will evaluate the color and clarity of the wine looking for any visible defect. With the senses of smell and taste we are searching for any clue that reminds us of previous wines that we have tasted or for storing away the experience of a new wine. And this is as it should be. There is some learning involved here. Over the years of tasting and enjoying wine either with food or just alone, you will develop memories, stories, and an appreciation of what you like or dislike. Who knows? You may develop into a collector, which is a story for another day.

WINESPEAK

A few thoughts on Tasting wine. This wine hobby of mine is deep rooted in the experiences of tasting wine and making notes. The vast majority of wine tasting events that I have attended are “open” tastings, i.e. I see the labels of the product, study the label, taste the wine and formulate my own opinion. The other way of tasting wine is very much disciplined. It is called a “blind” tasting and it is carried out under controlled conditions. The wine container is completely covered. The wine is poured out and placed in front of several judges. The judges go through the evaluation steps associated with sight, smell and taste. The judges then taste the wine and render an opinion in writing. Having been served a covered wine the judges are completely ignorant of the product, the producer or the price level. Tasting wine blind eliminates bias and it is probably the most objective and credible way to evaluate wine.

If you taste wine blind, you are not influenced by its reputation or by your expectations. You will learn to trust your own palate. Blind tasting ensures that each wine has a chance to show its best on a level playing field. If you have the opportunity, attend as many blind tastings as possible. It is a tremendous learning experience.