

Hosting a Tasting Party

What better way to learn about wine than with your friends in your own home? The most important element to a successful tasting is to keep the mood light and fun. Remember that one of the main goals of wine tasting is to find a wine you enjoy drinking, and not necessarily to dissect it to its minutest parts.

Here are a few necessary ingredients:

Glasses

Note sheets / journal and pens for taking notes

Crackers, cheese, and fruit

Drinking water and water to rinse glasses

Spit buckets (your choice)

White tablecloth or background for observing wine color

There are a number of themes for your tasting party, here are a few of our favorites:

A horizontal tasting is where different wines of the same vintage (year) are tasted. This is a good way of determining which producer or vineyard you prefer. A vertical tasting is the same wine from different vintages. This is where vintage variations and the effects of bottle aging are clearly seen. An example would be to compare a '94 pinot noir against a '97 pinot noir from the same winery. A fun way to test your knowledge of varieties (cabernet, pinot noir, zinfandel, etc.) is to disguise the bottles and have the tasters guess the variety based on the aroma, color, and taste of the wine. Another fun tasting is a "stand off" where wines of one variety and region are paired against wines of the same variety but from a different region. (For example: Bordeaux from France vs. the Cabernets of California or Shiraz from Australia vs. Syrahs from Rhone.)

A good way to test whether a wine is appropriately priced is to purchase wines of the same variety but with widely varying prices, cover the labels, have the tasting, and then see if the reviews reflect the cost of the wine.

Tasting techniques:

* First, notice the color of the wine as you tilt your glass to see the wine from its very thinnest and lightest to its deepest color.

* Second, gently swirl the wine inside the bowl of the glass to coat the sides. Notice how quickly or slowly the wine filters down after you stop swirling. (These rivulets are called "legs.") Then lift the glass to your nose to inhale the aroma and take note of what scent first makes itself known to you.

* Third, take a drink and slosh the wine throughout your mouth. This method helps to bring the wine to all parts of the mouth and tongue, allowing each taste sensation to be detected. You may have seen tasters take air in through the mouth; this further intensifies the flavors and enhances the interpretation.

* Lastly, take note of how long the flavor of the wine stays in your mouth. This is referred to as the "finish," and will leave the last impression of the wine with you.

Helpful tips:

It might be easier for beginners to describe wines in terms of personality (e.g. bold, complex, reserved, subtle, etc.) instead of by flavor.

White wines demonstrate their full flavor at temperatures between 50-60 degrees Farenheit. (That's about 45 minutes in the fridge prior to serving.)



1099 San Marcos Blvd. (across from restaurant row) San Marcos, Ca 92078

760-744-2119

www.NorthCountyWineCompany.com