

WINE TASTING ETIQUETTE

by Margaret Page
www.etiquetepage.com

What is the difference between wine tasting and wine drinking?

Wine tasting is conducted with the objective of discovering more about a particular wine, its wine maker, the area where the grapes were grown. Wine drinking is what we do when we drink wine to enhance the foods we eat.

KEEP THESE ETIQUETTE POINTS IN MIND:

- Don't wear scents or perfumes when going to a wine tasting. Perfumes can compromise what you can smell and learn about a wine.
- Ladies, remove lipstick (with a tissue, not a linen napkin) before tasting wine. The lipstick itself can affect the taste of the wine, plus removing it prevents having to scrub the edge of delicate wine glasses to clean them.
- Hold wine glasses by the stem, not the bowl. The heat from your hand changes the temperature of the wine.
- If you taste a range of wines, begin with light bodied wines and progress to full bodied wines.
- Use glasses of an adequate size to properly access the wine pourings.
- Serve wine at the temperatures recommended as industry standards for that particular type of wine.
- If you're tasting wine in a restaurant, ask the wait staff to simply pour it.
- If your guests have consumed too much wine, don't let them drive their cars.

HOW TO WINE TASTE

- Swirl the glass and then hold it at a 45-degree angle above a white table cloth or white paper to determine its color.
- Place your nose over the top of wine glass after swirling and inhale deeply to determine the nose of the wine. Take your time; there is no rush.

- Tip up the glass. Take a small mouthful of wine, breathing in through your mouth at the same time. Rotate the wine around your palate. Swallow. Stop. Wait at least 30 seconds. Take your time, then verbalize what you just experienced.
- Keep pace with the other tasters in your group. When they're looking at the color, for example, also be looking at the color. When they're exploring the nose and the aroma, also explore the nose and the aroma. When they're tasting, taste. You get the idea.
- Do not criticize, ridicule, judge, or reject how someone else interprets wine. Wine tasting is subjective; there are no "rights" or "wrongs."
- If you're providing vessels for dumping or spitting, make sure they get emptied frequently. It is unpleasant to spit into a bucket and have the spit bounce up and spatter on one's face.
- If you must have another beverage with you, bring only water. No sodas, coffee, tea, juice, and so on.
- Always take notes of what you discover on the nose and taste, and what other people discover as well. Compare notes and learn from each other.

Margaret Page, a Vancouver-based etiquette and protocol consultant, helps people adopt proper etiquette to advance their careers and improve their lives. She can be reached at www.etiquetepage.com or etiquetepage@aol.com or 604.885.0208.