

Wine GUIDE



How to Toast Like a Pro

Starting off a meal, gathering or celebration can mean opening a great wine and giving a great toast.

If having all eyes on you stops your gob like nothing else, keep reading. We'll teach you how to give the perfect toast.

PREPARATION

Mark Twain once said there are two types of speakers, those who are nervous and those who are liars. Nerves get the best of all of us, and even in an intimate gathering of close friends, it's pretty common to clam up when everyone turns to you.

The best way to cut through those nerves is with thorough preparation. Even though toasts are meant to look off-the-cuff, that doesn't mean they are. Ask yourself these questions to get started:

- Who, what and why are we toasting? Know your audience to strike the perfect tone.
- What type of event? If it's close friends and family, break out the inside jokes. For work colleagues, keep language and tone more formal.

TIPS FOR TOASTING

Once you've decided on the tone of your toast and the main points you want to address, follow these tips for toasting perfection from The Art of Manliness:

- **Short and sweet:** Toasts can be just one word; in fact, The



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Art of Manliness says ancient toasts were often simply, "To health!". Aim for 30-60 seconds and get to the point with alacrity. Weddings and other big occasions can merit extra time, but even then, a minute or so, tops.

• **Sincere:** Funny may not be funny to everyone, and that gets more true the more people are gathered. It's tempting to avoid addressing big feelings with humor, but now is not the time. Choose meaningful salutations over that "hilarious"

story about the ex.

• **Inclusivity:** Involve everyone and make sure everyone has a drink even if it's just water. Don't leave anyone out, even children, and choose to begin your toast while everyone is present. Oh, and don't give a

toast before the host of the event unless you've agreed to do so beforehand.

• **Begin — and end — clearly.** Signal your intentions by loudly but coherently asking for everyone's attention and end with a clear invitation to imbibe.

Sparkling Wines that Aren't Champagne

Champagne is the grandfather of all sparkling wines, but only sparkling wines that come from that specific region of France can bear the name. There are other options to tingle your tastebuds; here are just a few.

CAVA

Cava is a Spanish sparkling wine that is made in a similar process to champagne but with usually a blend of Spanish varietals of grape, including white grapes macabeo, xarel-lo and parellada. It hails from the Penedes region of Catalonia. Cavas, like Champagne, is often crisp and dry with a sweet undertone, especially brut cavas.

CRÉMANT

When sparkling wines come from France, but not the Champagne region, and are made in the same style, they're called crémant. These wines can come from parts of Luxembourg and are often named from the specific region they're from, such as crémant de Loire. Grape choice is regional, but all crémant must meet strict criteria, such as manual grape harvesting and at least nine months of lees aging after the secondary fermentation.

FRANCIACORTA

This Italian sparkling wine comes from Lombardy and, like others in this list, is made in a similar way to champagne. It comes in types: Brut, which typical to

the name is dry; rosé, a blend of traditional Franciacorta and a still pinot noir; millesimato, dated and made from a single year's harvest; dosaggio zero, with no sugar added after the second fermentation; and satèn, which is made from white grapes and is notable for its soft, creamy texture.

PROSECCO

This is another Italian wine usually made with glera grapes for a lighter, more fruit-forward wine than champagne. Proseccos bear notes of peach, melon and citrus and have a crisp finish. Unlike champagne, these sparkling wines use the Charmat method. Instead of in the bottle, the second fermentation happens in pressurized stainless-steel tanks.

SEKT

Germany and Austria use sekt, a sparkling wine available in red, white and rosé. These wines can be made from Riesling, but Austrian vintners may choose Grüner Veltliner instead. It is produced either in the traditional champagne method or by using the Charmat method.





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How to Store Wines

As with just about anything of value, you can't go far wrong with keeping things cool, dark and dry. It's also true with wine.

"Wine is a living and breathing thing that is constantly evolving and changing," Wine Enthusiast's Chief Revenue and Education Officer Marshall Tilden III says. "This is why caring for your bottles is so important."

TEMPERATURE

Keep bottles cool and stable as changes in temperature can disrupt

the balance of flavors in the bottle. Maderisation occurs when bottles are too hot, turning wine into vinegar. Cold is a problem, too. Wines are still at least partially water, and a frozen bottle can pop the cork out. The sweet spot for keeping wines is about 55 degrees and around 50-80% humidity.

LIGHT

Keep your wines in a dark place. Ultraviolet rays can produce negative changes in the wine's structure and flavor, breaking down the tannins, which serve to protect the wine. This is why wine is usually packaged in dark bottles and why white wines tend to turn faster than reds, which have more tannins.

POSITION

Store wines as still as possible, away from vibrations, which can harm the molecular structure of the wine — and therefore, the taste.

Store corked wines on their side so the cork is moistened by the wine inside at all times, keeping harmful oxygen away from the vintage inside.

ODORS

Tilden is right, wines really do breathe through the corks. Off odors in a storage room can penetrate the cork over time and spoil the wine within.

Avoid storing wine anywhere bad odors can congregate, including aromas from cooking or smoking.

REFRIGERATION

Refrigerators can get a little too cold, so it's fine to store wines you're going to consume quickly there, but it's not for long-term storage unless it's a wine-only cooler or fridge set to a slightly higher temperature.

STORING AFTER OPENING

Oxygen is the enemy of a good bottle of wine and once it's opened, the cat's out of the bag.

Open the wine, pour it and put the cork back on as soon as you can to limit exposure. You can use a vacuum pump to remove the air so the wine stays more fresh.

Store opened bottles in the fridge to prevent oxidation.

Australian Wines to Try

Australia is one of the world's largest wine exporters, sending out \$2.48 billion worth of the stuff as of June 2025.

Every state in the country bottles wines including shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, merlot, pinot noir, Riesling and sauvignon blanc.

HISTORY

The wine industry began in 1788 when the governor of New South Wales brought over vines from the Cape of Good Hope for household use. It didn't work out, but other vineyards did, and Australian wines were sold in the country by the 1820s.

Gregory Blaxland was the first person to export Australian wines in 1822 and, by the late nineteenth century, Australian wines were winning awards.

VARIETIES

There are no native grapes in Australia, but there have been varieties bred by Australian vineyards, including the cienna and tarrango. The most widely cultivated grape in the country, though, is shiraz.

Also known as syrah, these grapes produce a red wine that's medium to full-bodied, depending on where it is grown, with high levels of tannins and notes of mint,



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blackberry and black pepper.

WINERIES

Some well-known wineries in Australia include:

- Penfolds in southern Australia, which started out in 1844 on 500 acres by Christopher and Mary Penfold. By 1907, it was Australia's largest winery. It started a tradition of bin wines, bottles named after

the bin in which they were stored. One of its most famous wines is Penfolds Grange, made with shiraz grapes and a little cabernet sauvignon. It's a wine built to age, often taking 10 or more years to reach peak flavor.

- Tyrrell's Wines started about a decade later in Hunter Valley. Edward Tyrrell harvested his first vintage in 1864.

Like Penfolds, Tyrrell's names some of their vintages out of the vats from which they came. The first were Vat 5 and Vat 9 Shirazes, Vat 8 Shiraz Cabernet and Vat 11 Dry Red. Tyrrell's also makes a renowned white, with Vat 1 Hunter Semillon becoming one of Australia's most awarded wines.

- D'Arenberg was founded in

1912 in the McLaren Vale wine region of Australia. It's owned by the Osborn family and their wines often have odd names, such as the Dead Arm Shiraz, named for a canker that slowly kills one of the branches on a vine, reducing the yield but intensifying the flavor of the grape. Other notable names include The Broken Fish Plate and The Laughing Magpie.

Wine Faults and Flaws

While wine is the perfect beverage for just about any occasion, not every wine is perfect. There are some faults and flaws to look out for as you pick your next bottle.

CORKED WINES

Corked wines bear a chemical that's frequently derived from natural cork closures. It's a musty beast that affects around 3% of bottles globally and bears an aroma of wet newspaper and damp basement.

(TOO) OLD WINES

Too much of a good thing can be bad, and that's often so for aging wines. Wines can go past the point where they're in their prime, resulting in a faded color and a loss of structure and freshness in the taste. Taste, however, is subjective, and what one oenophile may deem too mature is another oenophile's treasure.

MADERISATION

Maderisation results from prolonged exposure to heat or too many temperature spikes in the storage

room. A cork partially dislodged from the neck is a good sign the wine has been cooked. Maderised wines taste roasted or stewed, with a pruney flavor for reds or a nutty flavor for whites. But all is not lost; use these bottles for cooking instead.

BRETTANOMYCES

Wineries generally try to avoid Brettanomyces yeast in their wines, but it can offer a pleasant funk to some varieties such as Chateauneuf-du-Pape. Too much of the yeast can lend a barnyard or horsey smell to the wine and overwhelm other flavors.

REDUCTION

This is the opposite of oxidation and occurs when a wine's exposure to air in the winemaking process produces sulfur compounds. Some winemakers use sulfur to preserve fresh fruit aromas or add complexity,

but the slight struck-match smell usually blows off during aeration. Too much sulfur, however, can lead to a rubbery, rotten egg smell.

Some things that look like faults actually aren't, Wine Enthusiast says. Examples are:

WINE DIAMONDS

Crystallization in the bottom of the bottle is a tartrate deposit that forms when naturally occurring potassium and tartaric acid combine and sink to the bottom, forming crystals. They're harmless, the experts say.

Sediment may look unsightly, but it's usually a mark of quality. It can occur when producers don't filter their wines to preserve flavor and texture, leaving particles that settle with time. Aging also produces sediments as acid, tannins and color compounds bond and fall. Decant the wine before serving.

What Is a Riesling?

Riesling is a white wine from the Rhine region of Germany.

It's now grown all over the world and is known for high acidity and its dynamic range of styles, from dry to very sweet.

It ages well, developing more complex notes over time.

HISTORY

Rieslings were first bottled around the 15th century. An inventory from 1435 from Count John IV of Kazenelnbo- gen lists 22 Riesling cuttings for the vineyard. It was also mentioned in 1552's herbal by Hieronymus Bock and in Alsace in 1477.

FLAVOR

Young Rieslings have fruity notes of apple, peach, grapefruit, rose blossom or cut grass and a crisp, acidic taste. However, that acidity also lends itself to aging, especially the sweeter Rieslings. In Bremen, Germany, the town cellar has Rieslings going back to 1653.

Some aged Rieslings can have a petroleum note that can be off-putting but are desirable to experienced Riesling lovers. It comes from a compound created during the aging process, most commonly in ripe grapes with high sun exposure and some water stress. It's more likely to



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develop in top wines.

RIESLING AND TERROIR

Riesling is a variety particularly suited to showing off the characteristics of the land that grows it, known as terroir. In Germany, warmer regions produce a full-bodied wine with higher alcohol levels whereas in colder regions, where

winter often stopped fermentation, wines have more natural sugars.

Rieslings from the Alsace region of France tend to be very dry with a thick body and an acidity that cleans the palate. They age well up to 20 years, opening up the softer, fruitier flavors in an Alsace wine. In Australia and New

Zealand, the Riesling grapes grow in a well-draining soil over limestone and shale.

These grapes have a thicker skin and come with a toasty, lime and honey flavor. Citrusy flavors mellow to a fresh white wine as it ages.

Rieslings came to the United States in the nineteenth century with New York adopting

the vines early and becoming a top producer of a Riesling-base dice wine. California Rieslings trail chardonnays and tend to be softer and more full than a traditional German Riesling. Washington State produces Rieslings that range from dry to sweet with a crisp lightness and a peachy, mineral flavor.

Burgundy Wines vs. Bordeaux

Burgundy and Bordeaux are both titans of French wine regions that produce world-class wines. But there are differences between vintages from these areas.

BORDEAUX

Bordeaux is in the southwest of France surrounding the Gironde River estuary. It produces mainly red wines and sweet whites, with fewer bottles of dry whites, roses and sparkling wines. Wine-making came to Bordeaux with the Romans and has been practiced continuously ever since. It's an excellent climate for viticulture, close to the Atlantic Ocean and fed by several rivers, including the Garonne and the Dordogne. Its soil is sandy stone, gravel and clay, with some of the best estates situated along the Gironde River.

Bordeaux red grapes include cabernet sauvignon, merlot, malbec, cabernet franc, carmenere and chateau clerc milon. These are usually blended into the "Bordeaux blend," cabernet sauvignon with smaller amounts of cabernet franc and merlot. Among the whites, semillon, sauvignon blanc and muscadelle combine for a sweet Sauternes wine.

Top Bordeaux bottles: Chateau Pichon Baron, 2nd Grand Cru, Pauillac, 2016; Chateau



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Lafite-Rothschild, Pauillac, 2015; Chateau Couhins-Lurton, Graves Cru Classe, 2012; Chateau La Tour Blanche, 2013; Chateau Cheval Blanc, 2014; Chateau Trotanoy, 2015.

BURGUNDY

Land-locked Burgundy is in the east of France in and around the valleys of the

Saone, a tributary of the Rhone River. The red wines made there are commonly referred to as Burgundies, dry red wines made from pinot noir. White wines common to Burgundy are made from chardonnay grapes and include Chablis. A few roses and sparkling wines are produced there.

The Celts in the region may have been growing wine grapes but viticulture certainly came with the Romans in the second century. Much attention is paid to the terroir of Burgundy wines with classifications focused on geography. Some of the most expensive wines in the world come from Burgundy, including Domaine

Leroy and Domaine Leflaive. Top Burgundy bottles: Louis Latour Chateau Corton-Grancey Grand Cru 2022; Frédéric Esmonin Bourgogne Hautes-Côtes de Beaune Rouge 2023; Simonnet-Febvre Chablis Montée de Tonnerre Premier Cru 2022; Domaine Roux Père & Fils Rully Les Agnières 2022.