

Title:

A Beginners' Guide To Enjoying Red Wine

Word Count:

819

Summary:

The world of red wines is a heady, rich and wonderful world filled with everything from the nuanced subtlety of a gentle South African Merlot to the peppery richness of Sangre de Toro, "Blood of the Bull" from Spain. In general, many of the "rules" of wine drinking have been cast aside in today's world, making it more accessible to every person, and with the increased demand supply has soared, allowing for inexpensive and very delicious wine available to all.

Still, there ...

Keywords:

red wine guide, red wine, red wine review

Article Body:

The world of red wines is a heady, rich and wonderful world filled with everything from the nuanced subtlety of a gentle South African Merlot to the peppery richness of Sangre de Toro, "Blood of the Bull" from Spain. In general, many of the "rules" of wine drinking have been cast aside in today's world, making it more accessible to every person, and with the increased demand supply has soared, allowing for inexpensive and very delicious wine available to all.

Still, there are many who feel that the world of wine loving is not as yet open to them. With so many wines to choose among, where do you begin? How do you properly enjoy a red or white and with what meals would they be best?

Let's look at some very basic tips to maximizing your exploration of red wines.

Don't spend a ton of money on a bottle of wine. Leave that for later, once you've begun to explore beyond the brands and varietals that you like. There are so many wonderful and delicious wines that are available for somewhere between \$5 and \$8 a bottle, that you really should not need to drop \$20 or \$30 for a bottle of wine...at least not yet.

Don't buy local, yet. Often, your local wine store is stocked with bottles from the local vineyard (if there is one). These can be wonderful, or they can be

vinegar. It really can be something of a crap shoot. So, unless you live in the Napa valley, or some other area that is renown for its wine-making efforts, stick with something that is nationally or internationally distributed.

Stick with a varietal, for now. In other words, pick a wine that is primarily made from one type of grape, i.e. a Shiraz, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, etc. Try to avoid blended reds to begin with, though they can be quite delicious. By learning the flavors of the varietal grapes, you'll better understand what it is about the blend that you like. Avoid flavored wines or coolers that you can get at your local convenience store. These are little more than non-bubbly soda pop with alcohol in them and can lead to a nasty headache as they are hastily made from the least pure ingredients.

Start with a nice Merlot from South Africa, Australia, New Zealand or Chile. These vineyards are usually able to balance cost with quality quite nicely. The reason I recommend Merlot is that of all the red varietals, it is the gentlest, and complements a broad menu of meals.

Reds like to breathe. Open the bottle and let it sit for ten minutes or so. This allows oxygen to get at the wine and mature it quickly. For that matter, pouring the wine into the glasses and allowing it to sit for ten to twenty minutes accelerates this process. You'll find the flavor is much enhanced by this approach.

Reds at Room Temperature and Whites Chilled. A simple rule that does not always apply but is a good guide, nonetheless. Chilling a red removes many of the subtleties of flavor for which you buy the wine in the first place and slows the wine's ability to mature with exposure to oxygen. Keep them room temperature.

I mentioned earlier that many of the "rules" of wine loving have been discarded, or at least loosened, such as 'red wine with red meat or pasta and white wine with fish or poultry.' While these are not bad guidelines, they really are not carved in stone and nowadays waiters and even the seasoned gourmand will not turn up his/her nose at a guest who asks for a red with fish or enjoys a nice, tart Chardonnay with a burger.

Merlot with what? While a Merlot can be a perfect complement for a spaghetti dinner (particularly if you have a nice buttery garlic bread), it can easily sit beside a pork chop or fried chicken dinner. A Merlot is a lovely, non-pretentious start to your journey and should open the door nicely to a journey of wine loving.

OK, Now What? Try a few different brands of Merlot from competing vineyards.

Note the differences in style and substance. I'd recommend sticking to those south of the equator to begin with. Once you feel like you've tasted a number of Merlots and are acquainted with the differences, then move on to a Cabernet Sauvignon and begin your journey anew. I'd hold off on Shiraz, Syrah, Petite Syrah or Beaujolais until you have a basic appreciation of Merlots and Cabernets, but once you do, then dive in to the heavy, heady, peppery joy of the stronger reds. Once you feel like you really understand and can note the differences of the red varietals, start exploring the blends or the truly excellent California varietals. Good luck and enjoy!