



*Secrets  
of the  
Wine Whisperer*

By Jerry Greenfield

*Finding exctasy, joy, peace and happiness in  
the wine experience.*

DIRECT



CELLARS



# table of contents

<u>WHAT IS WINE</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>WHERE IN THE WORLD</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>HOW IS WINE PRODUCED</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>READ THE LABEL</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>TASTE THE FRUIT</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>HOW TO TASTE WINE</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>REGIONS OF THE WORLD</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>CORKS VS. SCREW CAPS</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>FOOD PAIRING</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>WINE TASTING EVENTS</u>	<u>30</u>

# About Direct Cellars

FOUNDED IN 2014 WITH OFFICES IN CHICAGO, FORT MYERS AND SEATTLE, DIRECT CELLARS BEGAN AS A SMALL INTERNET WINE CLUB. DUE TO OUR UNIQUE MARKETING CONCEPT, WE FOUND THAT WE WERE GROWING VERY RAPIDLY! WE DIDN'T CHOOSE THE TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING ROUTE SUCH AS, RADIO, TV, INTERNET MARKETING ETC., WE USED THE "WORD OF MOUTH" AVENUE - MARKETING TO OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY. BOTTOM LINE, DIRECT CELLARS WAS FOUNDED AND BUILT BY FRIENDS AND FAMILY!

SINCE OUR INCEPTION, DIRECT CELLARS HAS BECOME ONE OF THE PREMIER WINE CLUBS IN THE COUNTRY. OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS WE HAVE CONTINUED TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS THAT CONSIST OF THE BEST EXPERTISE WITH WINE LOVERS ALIKE. OUR IN-HOUSE TEAM OF WINE TASTERS HAS BEEN TASTING AND SELECTING WINES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD FOR THE LAST 15 YEARS. WE ONLY SELECT WINES FROM WORLD CLASS WINE PRODUCERS WHICH ARE THEN SHIPPED RIGHT TO YOUR DOOR! AS YOU BEGIN TO ENJOY THE VARIETY OF WINES, YOU WILL FIND A FAVORITE OR TWO OR THREE ... WE GIVE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO REORDER ANY BOTTLE AT OUR WHOLESALE PRICING!

AS WE CONTINUE TO FURTHER OUR SUCCESS AND LOOK TO OUR LONG-TERM GROWTH, DIRECT CELLARS HAS NOW EVOLVED INTO A FULL-BLOWN NETWORK MARKING COMPANY. NOW YOU CAN EARN A RESIDUAL INCOME WHILE SHARING AND ENJOYING OUR WINES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE! IF YOU ARE LOOKING TO MAKE SOME EXTRA PART-TIME MONEY, PAY OFF SOME DEBTS OR MAKE A FULL-TIME INCOME, DIRECT CELLARS IS FOR YOU! YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A WINE AFICIONADO TO EARN WITH DIRECT CELLARS! SIMPLY SHARE YOUR PASSION OF WINES WITH OTHERS AND WATCH WHAT HAPPENS!



### **JERRY GREENFIELD**

The Wine Whisperer, is a wine educator and consultant, and author of the recently-published memoir, *Secrets of the Wine Whisperer – Or, How I Learned to Drink Wine and Found Ecstasy, Joy, Peace, Happiness, Life, and Salvation*. It's a chronicle of how Jerry and his wife became seduced by the "wine life," and the adventures that resulted.

Jerry knows that the world of wine can be mysterious and even intimidating. But he "de-mystifies" the subject and offers useful hints, tips, and information that add elegance and fun to every lifestyle.

His articles on many topics have appeared in city magazines and national publications. His book *Maverick — The Personal War of a Vietnam Cobra Pilot*, co-authored with decorated Vietnam veteran Dennis J. Marvicsin, saw four editions by Putnam and was a Military Book Club featured selection. In Southwest Florida, he is the wine columnist for *Florida Weekly* and *Portfolio*, the luxury lifestyle magazine in Naples and Collier County.

His new book, *D.A.S.P.O – An Unhinged Novel of Vietnam*, was published in May, 2015.

Jerry is an Adjunct Professor of English at Florida SouthWestern State College. He also teaches a wine course at Florida Gulf Coast University.

Jerry and his wife Debi have traveled extensively in the wine regions of California, France, Germany, and Italy, and attend many trade and private tastings throughout the year. He has been teaching wine seminars since 2003 and is a member of the Society of Wine Educators. Jerry served for three years as Wine Director of the Southwest Florida Wine and Food Festival, which has grown to be one of the top charity wine events in America.

He has been known to drink beer at sporting events.

# 1 WHAT IS WINE

WINE HAS BEEN MADE IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES AND BY VARIOUS CIVILIZATIONS FOR OVER 6,000 YEARS.

# What Is Wine?

## Lesson 1

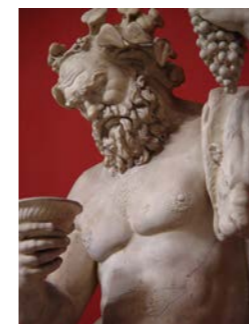
*Drinking good wine with good food in good company is one of life's most civilized pleasures.*

*-Michael Broadbent*

- It is a cultural artifact, reflecting the personality (and eating habits) of the people who produce it. For example, French wines tend to be a bit “backward,” or reserved, and it takes a bit of effort to get to know them. Australian wines, on the other hand, smack you in the face with big bold flavors and lots of fruit. That’s the Aussie personality.
- There is also a big difference in style between “New World” wines, produced in the US, South America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and “Old World” wines from Spain, France, Italy, and Germany.
- Wine is a component of life’s “finer things.” When you see a movie of a couple out for a romantic dinner, they’re not drinking beer. There’s always a bottle of wine on the table. People who learn to enjoy and appreciate wine are generally better educated, have higher incomes, and enjoy food and travel. As a Direct Cellars affiliate, you are very much a part of that group.
- In many countries, like France, Spain, and Italy, wine is not a beverage – it’s food, and as much a part of the meal as meat, pasta, and vegetables. Not every country has a “culture” of wine. This is because some countries do not have the correct climate or soil for growing wine grapes. And because their cuisine has not developed alongside wine consumption. Still, it’s possible to pair many wines with Asian and Indian food. We’ll learn about food and wine pairing in Lesson 9.
- Wine is important – because it IS such a part of so many cultures, and so much a part of the “good times” we share with our friends and loved ones. This set of lessons will inform you about every basic aspect of wine, so that you’ll be able to present it properly to your friends, speak about it confidently, and introduce people to the enjoyment and (more importantly) the appreciation of the excellent samples you’ll receive each month.



“Artists and poets still find life’s meaning in a glass of wine.”  
-Joy Sterling



**BACCHUS**  
Bacchus is also known as Dionysus. He is the Greek God of wine.

## WINE FACTS

The custom of bumping glasses with a “cheers” greeting came from old Rome where they used this method to make sure no one was trying to poison the other (bumping glasses makes the drink spill from one cup to the other). This tradition started even earlier in ancient Greece – where the host was to drink the first cup of wine to show his guests he did not intend to poison them.



Old World wines are more intricate and earthy to taste as compare to the New World which are comparatively fresher and fruitier to taste.

# 2

## WHERE IN THE WORLD

WINES ARE TRADITIONALLY DIVIDED INTO “OLD WORLD” AND “NEW WORLD” STYLES, DEPENDING ON WHERE THEY ARE MADE.

“Not every wine will improve your health.”

Red wines are known to contain many beneficial antioxidants such as polyphenol and resveratrol that have cardio-protective effects and anti-cancer properties. Grape skin is especially rich in antioxidants. Since red wine is fermented together with its skin, it has more antioxidants than white wine which is processed without its skin. White wine may even slightly increase the risk of contracting cancer, especially of the digestive tract, as some studies show. So, don't drink more than 1 or 2 glasses of wine per day.

OLD WORLD WINES are made in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and a few other European countries. They are labeled according to their geographic place of origin. For example, Sancerre, Bordeaux, Rioja, or Beaujolais. The name of the grape seldom appears on the label.

NEW WORLD WINES are made in the US, Chile, Argentina, South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia. They almost always list the name of the grape on the label (Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, etc.), as well as the place where the grapes are grown.

The DIFFERENCE is that NEW WORLD wines offer aromas and flavors of fruit right up front: cherry, blackberry, plum for the reds, and citrus, peach, pear and tropical fruits for the whites. These are called fruit-forward wines.

OLD WORLD wines, on the other hand, first give you aromas and flavors of the earth: tobacco, spice, tar, leather, wet leaves, forest floor. Sounds terrible, but it really works. These wines are often more enjoyable with food.

The places where grapes are grown are called appellations. They are legally defined geographic areas. They are divided into sub-appellations to be more specific. Example: If the label says “California,” the grapes can come from anywhere in the state. If it says “Napa,” that's a more specific designation. If it says “Rutherford,” that's an even more particular, defined area. CONCEPT – the more specific the area where the grapes are grown, the finer and more expensive the wine will likely be.



WINE NAMES

Most European wines are named after their geographical origin. One very famous example would be the Bordeaux wine which is produced in the Bordeaux region of France. Bordeaux wines are made of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and to a much lesser extent Carmenere and Malbec.

Non-European wines almost always have the name of the grape (aka the varietal) on the label – for instance Cabernet Sauvignon from California.

NEW WORLD REGIONS

- United States (80% California)
- Chile
- Argentina
- South Africa
- New Zealand
- Australia

OLD WORLD REGIONS

- France
- Germany
- Spain
- Italy
- Hungary



# 3

## HOW IS WINE PRODUCED

LET'S FACE IT...WINE IS JUST GRAPE JUICE THAT WENT  
BAD. BUT THE GROWING OF GRAPES AND TURNING  
THEM INTO GOOD WINE INVOLVES MANY STEPS,  
MANY DECISIONS...AND SOME LUCK.



### GROWING GRAPES

Only one species of grape makes the majority of wines in the world... and there are hundreds of varieties. The so-called NOBLE GRAPES are:

- >>> Cabernet Sauvignon
- >>> Syrah
- >>> Pinot Noir
- >>> Chardonnay
- >>> Sauvignon Blanc
- >>> Riesling

They're called "noble" because they're capable of being made in many styles, and they produce elegant, long-lived wines. Of course, we make wine from many grapes, including Zinfandel, Merlot, Pinot Grigio, and dozens of others.

Grapes grow best around the 45° latitude in the northern and southern hemispheres. While some varieties, like Chardonnay, will grow in a wide variety of conditions, others, such as Pinot Noir, are very fussy about where they're grown.

### DECISIONS, DECISIONS...

Grapegrowers and winemakers are faced with a seemingly endless series of choices and decisions. They have to ponder:

- >>> Which grapes grow best in various climates and soils
- >>> The traditional varieties in their country or region
- >>> How to manage the vines for best production and disease prevention
- >>> When to harvest
- >>> The challenges of weather conditions
- >>> How long to ferment...what alcohol content do they want to achieve
- >>> Ferment in stainless steel or oak barrels for different flavors
- >>> How long to age the wine before release

And that's not the half of it. There are choices to be made about the kind of oak to use, whether or not to blend several varieties together...the choices go on and on.

## FERMENTATION –

Have you ever noticed that grapes are covered by a whitish film? That's yeast, and it grows naturally on the skins of grapes. Simply stated, yeast eats sugar and turns it into alcohol, a scientific fact that has made a lot of people happy for a very long time.

It's a very complicated process, and one that's not clearly understood, even today. The chemical reactions actually rearrange the composition of the fruit sugars, which is why we smell and taste flavors of strawberry, or peach, or whatever in our wine...but not grapes.

But winemakers control and manipulate the entire process for a variety of reasons. The process goes like this...

>>> The grapes ripen to a certain level of sugar content, and are harvested.

>>> Higher end wineries sort the grapes by hand. Others use whatever is in the bin. Some wineries de-stem the bunches – others crush whole clusters.

>>> The juice and crushed skins are placed in tank or large oak barrels and left to ferment. The skins float to the top and are “punched down” into the juice to provide extraction of flavors.

>>> Fermentation continues until the winemaker decides that the juice has reached the proper balance of alcohol, sugar, and acidity.

>>> The juice is drained into smaller barrels for aging, then bottled. It's actually a lot more complicated than that. Every winery has a laboratory so that winemakers can monitor all the chemical components of their products. And further processes include filtering the wine to remove particles and impurities, extended oak aging to add certain flavors, and a whole lot more.

Any winemaker will tell you that the thing they strive for the most is “balance.” All the components of the wine should blend together for the most pleasant, harmonious drinking experience.

### WINE TALK

Wine is one of those things that people like to be able to talk about. And while some people can carry on a good wine-related conversation, most people wing it.

It's a testament to this, our most ancient alcoholic drink, that it still holds such esteem in our society. In its 10,000-year history, the people who really needed to know a lot about wine were the people who improved the inevitable process of fermentation and made a good vat of juice into great casks of the beloved beverage.

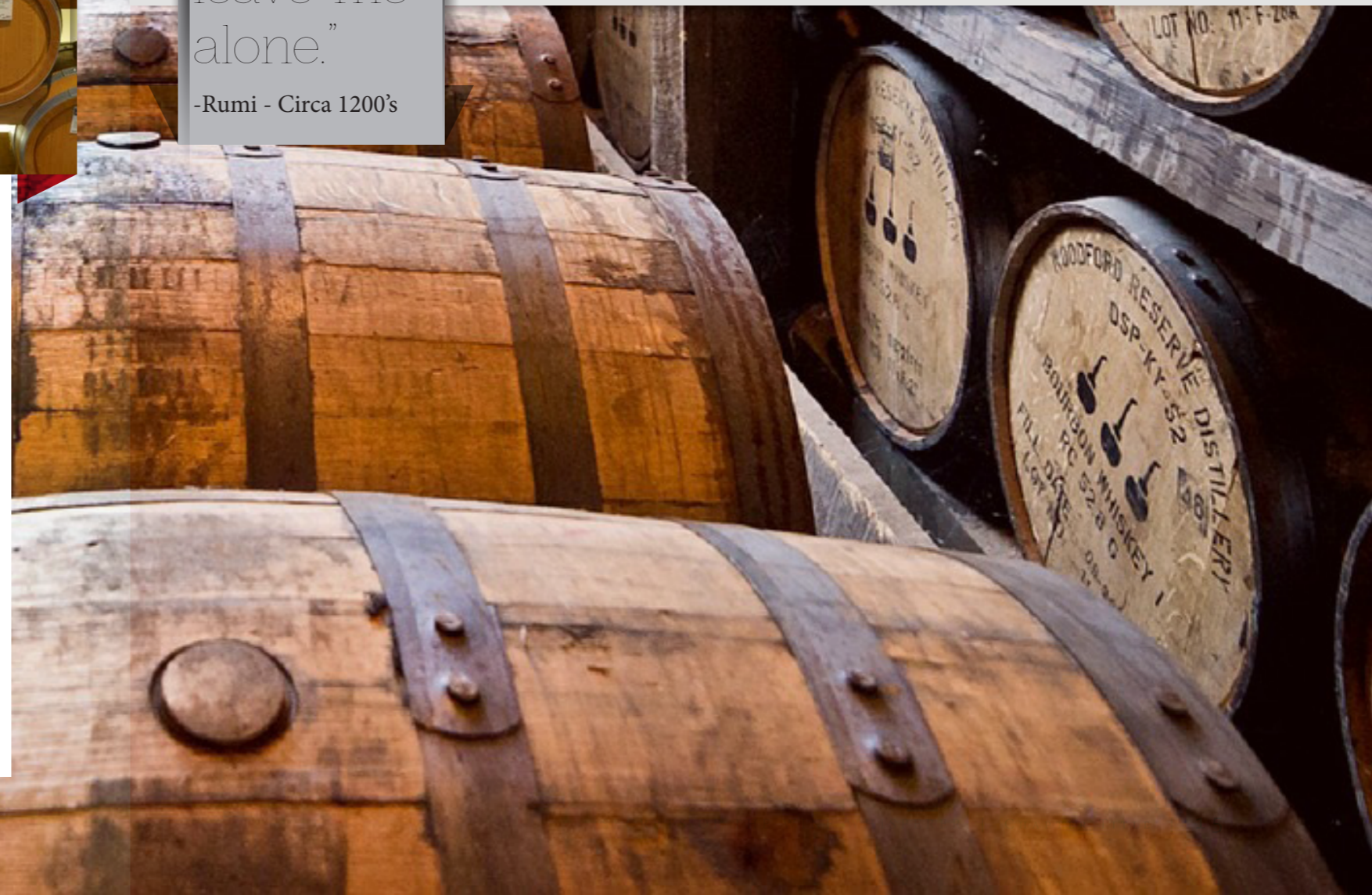


“Either give me more wine or leave me alone.”

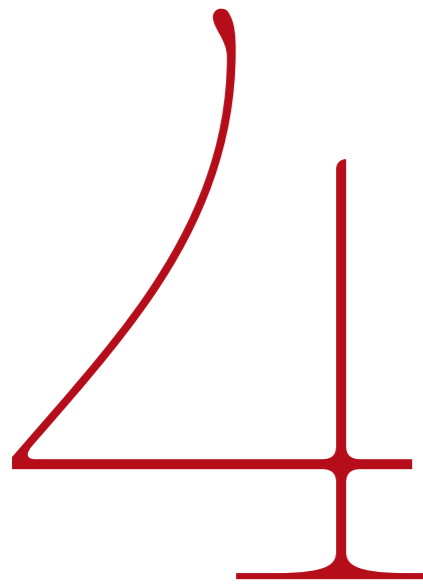
-Rumi - Circa 1200's



DIRECT  CELLARS  
GET IN. GET WINE. GET SOCIAL.







# Read The Label

THERE IS NO CONSUMER PRODUCT IN THE WORLD THAT GIVES YOU LESS INFORMATION THAN A WINE LABEL. BUT IT'S POSSIBLE TO GIVE YOUR FRIENDS THE TOOLS TO MAKE EDUCATED GUESSES ABOUT WHAT'S IN THE BOTTLE WITH JUST A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES.

“The Three G’s...”

This stands for THE GRAPE, THE GROUND, and THE GUY OR GAL.

If you know what the grape is, where it's from, and who made the wine, you're off to a good start.

GRAPES ARE LIKE APPLES – There are dozens of kinds of apples: Granny Smith, Golden Delicious, Johnathan, etc. They're all apples, but they all taste different. Same with grapes. They have different flavor profiles, which are sometimes called performance factors. We'll learn more about flavor profiles in Lesson 5, but for now just remember that a Cabernet Sauvignon grape tastes different than a Syrah grape, or a Zinfandel grape, and when we learn to identify and remember those characteristic flavors, we're well on our way to real wine appreciation.

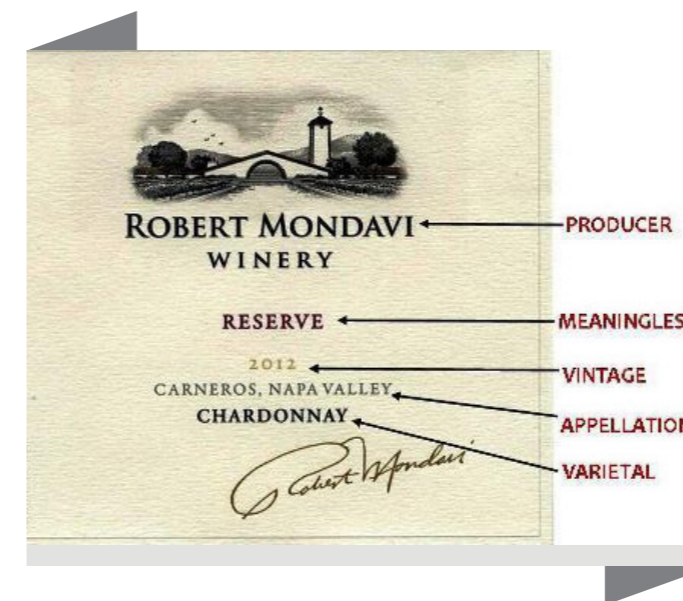
THE GROUND IS CRITICAL – Where grapes are grown influences the flavor and style of wine to an incredible degree. In Lesson 2 we learned about Old World and New World wines, and discovered that in the Old World, wines are named according to where they're from. There's a reason for that. There is a concept called terroir (terr-WAH), which basically incorporates everything about where the vines are located...the soil, elevation, amount of sun and rain, drainage... everything.

Keep in mind that red wines made in colder climates (like Washington State) will generally have flavors of dark fruits, like black cherry, blackberries, and plum. Whites will offer white fruit flavors: pear, white peach, apple. Wines from farther south (think Napa valley) will usually have more tropical flavors – strawberry, raspberry and red cherry for the reds, and mango, yellow peach, and citrus for the whites.

THE GUY OR GAL MAKES THE FINAL DIFFERENCE – If you give a piece of fish to five different chefs, you'll get five different dishes. Same with winemakers. They have their own styles, and will make very different wines from the same kind of grape.

Remember all the decisions we learned about in Lesson 3? It's a good idea to become familiar with different producers and the kinds of decisions they make about harvesting, use of oak, and other parts of the winemaking “recipe.”

Now, let's take a look at wine labels. As we discovered earlier, they're very different between the New and Old Worlds.



## NEW WORLD LABEL

Notice that the name of the grape is prominently displayed, as well as the “appellation,” or the name of the place where the vineyard is located.

In the US, the word “reserve” and similar designations have no meaning. There are no legal requirements for what constitutes a “reserve” wine, or “special selection,” or similar terms.

In the Old World, those designations are defined by law.



## OLD WORLD LABEL

This wine is labeled with the name of the place of origin, so if you don't know that the village of Chinon is in the Loire and that they grow Cabernet Franc there, you're pretty much lost.

The varietal is nowhere to be seen. Also notice the phrase “Appellation Chinon Controlee.” This is a guarantee by the government that the wine actually comes from the place designated on the label.

# 5

## WINE TASTINGS

TASTING WINE IS A  
LOT LIKE EATING A CHEESEBURGER.  
HERE'S WHY...

Bite into that burger. There are flavors of grilled meat, lettuce, tomato, pickle, onion, ketchup, cheese. Plus all the different textures of the meat and vegetables, set off with the creamy texture of the cheese. You mix them all together in your mouth and you get one overall taste. But if you pay attention to what's happening on your palate, you can pick apart the individual flavors of all the ingredients.

# Taste the Fruit

Flavors of the world

Sampling wine in a critical way is exactly the same thing...and it adds immeasurably to your enjoyment, appreciation, and understanding. As mentioned in Lesson 4, grapes, like all foods, have flavor profiles – that simply means they contain a combination of flavors that can be put into several different categories. For wine grapes, those categories are...

- **FRUIT**
- **FLORAL**
- **SPICE**
- **VEGETAL**
- **OAK & OIL**

Let's take them one at a time.

**FRUIT** - When grape juice is fermented the fruit sugars that provide flavors get all rearranged. So red wines, like Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Pinot Noir, will offer flavors of (guess what) red and black fruits. Each wine has a different combination of fruit flavors, depending on where the grapes are grown and how the wine is made. Many Pinot Noirs from California, for example, will remind you of strawberry at the very first sip. The “bold” wines have black fruit flavors, like blackberry, currant, and black plum. If the wine comes from a warmer climate, you might sense strawberry, raspberry, red cherry, and other lighter fruits.

Of course, white wines will hint of flavors of white and yellow fruit: peach, pear, apricot mango, grapefruit, pineapple, citrus, coconut, and more.

**FLORAL** – Fermentation also breaks down acids and other components to release aromas and flavors of flowers. Logically, red wines may have aromas that remind you of rose petals, lavender, or violets, and white wines often smell a bit like honeysuckle, gardenia, jasmine, and other white flowers.

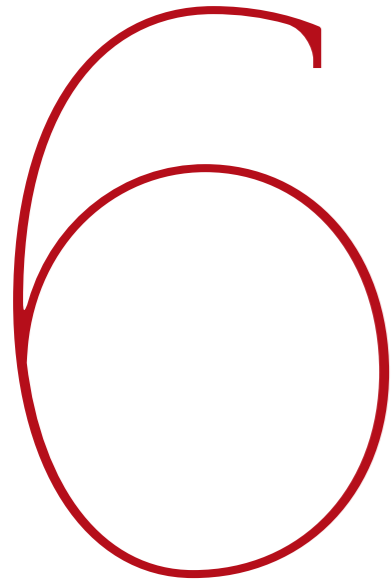
**SPICE** – These flavors are found mainly in red wines. You may be reminded of cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, baking spices, licorice, anise, or white or black pepper. There can also be hints of vanilla and similar flavors.

**VEGETAL** – Both red and white wines contain various kinds of vegetal flavors. In reds, you might encounter hints of bell pepper, sage, thyme, rosemary, and black olive, even tobacco. Many white wines also have nutty flavors, such as almond or macadamia.

**OAK & OIL** – These are probably the most difficult to identify, even though you'll taste them. When wines are fermented or aged in oak, the wood imparts a wide range of flavors. Vanilla, toffee, caramel, smoke, cigar box, coffee, chocolate, cocoa, and graphite are just some of the sensations. Of course, the darker flavors (like chocolate) will occur in red wines, while the lighter flavors (vanilla, toffee, caramel) are also found in whites.

The “oil” part sometimes occurs in white wines, like Chardonnays and Sauvignon Blancs. It's not common, and tastes better than it sounds, but you may encounter flavors of petrol or fusel oil in some Old World whites.

**OTHER FLAVORS** – The “Big Five” are listed above, but also watch for “mineral” flavors, like chalk, or wet stones. Sounds strange, but white wines (especially) can carry flavors that remind you of those things. Of course, wines can contain many other types of flavors. The trick is to be aware of them, and sensitive to them as you sip. If you really concentrate on what's happening on your palate, your skill as a taster (and your enjoyment) will increase dramatically.



## How to Taste Wine

In Lesson 5, we learned about how the individual components of wine make up your overall sense of the flavor. Now, we'll discover the process that helps us actually detect those component flavors and aromas. We know we like it, and we know why we like it. To do that, we have to learn the steps that professionals use to evaluate, understand, and appreciate wine. We call it the **"Five-S Process."**

**SEE** – Just looking at the wine can tell us a lot about the condition, and what we can expect when we taste. Look for CLARITY and COLOR. This can tell you the age. Red wines lose color as they age, and whites gain a golden or dark brown color. Look for TRANSLUCENCE. If you can see through the wine, it will be light bodied. If it's dark and opaque, you can expect bolder more concentrated flavors. Of course, the wine should be clear, with no impurities floating around.

**HINT** – When you look at wine in a glass, tilt the glass slightly sideways and hold it over a well-lit white surface. This will show the wine off to best advantage.

**SWIRL** – We swirl wine to aerate the liquid and release the aromatic and flavor components. Also, the "legs," or droplets that run down the inside of the glass, can give a general idea of alcohol content. The more legs, the higher the alcohol.

**SMELL** – The aromas are your first clue as to what you're going to taste. Sometimes the "nose" of a wine follows through on the palate. Sometimes the wine will smell one way, and taste completely different. Put your nose well down inside the glass, close your eyes, and take a few short sniffs, like a puppy. What's the very first thing that comes your mind? Are there fruit aromas, and if so, which ones? Or does the wine remind you of other things, like earth, leather, or spice? Remember that 85% of our sense of taste is actually smell.

"Give me wine to wash me clean of the weather-stains of cares"

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



"Tasting wine is a lot like listening to an orchestra. Here's why..."

*WHEN YOU GO TO A CONCERT, YOU HEAR THE OVERALL IMPACT OF THE MUSIC. BUT LOOK AT ALL THOSE PEOPLE...THEY'RE ALL PLAYING DIFFERENT NOTES ON DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS, YET SOMEHOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER INTO MELODIES AND HARMONIES...AND A GREAT DEAL OF PLEASURE.*

**SIP** – This is the good part. Take a small sip and suck some air into your mouth between your teeth. "Chew" the wine a bit to make sure the liquid contacts all areas of your tongue. Our tongues can sense four basic flavors: sweet, salt, sour, and bitter, and wines have all those flavors, except salt. Flavor receptors are at different places on the tongue, so we need to make sure the wine comes in contact with all parts of our mouth. Concentrate on the "balance" of the wine? Do you taste all the flavors equally, or does one seem to stick out? Does it feel "hot," which can indicate too much alcohol? Does it make your mouth feel dry, which means the tannins are too "tight?"

**SWALLOW...OR SPIT** – After you've given the wine a good "chewing," you'll swallow. When you do, concentrate on how the flavors linger on your palate. This is called the "finish," and the longer the finish, the finer the wine. However, if you're planning to taste a large number of wines at one sitting, you'll want to spit. After 10 or 12 samples of 2 ounces each, you've consumed an entire bottle, and you might not be able to stand up. Sample widely, but responsibly.

This is the basic approach that all professionals use in evaluating wine. As you practice these steps, you'll begin to detect more and more flavors in wines, and appreciate their complexity. Picking out the flavors can be learned, and you're well on your way to becoming more excited about wine...and communicating that excitement and sense of discovery to your friends.



# REGIONS OF THE WORLD

## NEW AND OLD

*If you know what the grape is and where it comes from, you're off to a very good start.*

**CALIFORNIA** – The Golden State produces 80%-90% of all wine made in the US, and the selection is vast. However, there are three main areas to know: Napa, Sonoma, and Santa Barbara. Of course, each of these areas is divided into what are called sub-appellations. For example, Napa Valley contains sub-districts such as Oakville, St. Helena, Rutherford, and many more. California produces all sorts of wines but the most popular are Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc.

**OREGON** – The main grape in this state is Pinot Noir. You'll discover that Pinot and Chardonnay are sort of "vineyard buddies," and people who grow Pinot also grow Chardonnay. The Willamette Valley is the major appellation.

you get some, you'll want to decant it. The vast majority of Malbec that gets imported to the US is from an area called Mendoza.

**SOUTH AFRICA** – This country is just now producing wines of international quality. Of course, their previous political policies held them back, but now there's lots of investment in new winemaking equipment and varieties. Look for Cabernet, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, and a lovely white called Chenin Blanc, which the South Africans call "Steen." The main regions are Constantia and Paarl.

**AUSTRALIA** – This vast country produces wine in the southeast region and south central area, around the city of Adelaide. They're most famous for Syrah, which they make in a huge,

### "New World"

As we mentioned in a previous lesson, traditions are different everywhere wine is made. The soil and climate are different. The culture and approach to winemaking are different. So here's a summary of the main wine regions and the kind of wines you can expect from each.



**WASHINGTON STATE** – The vineyards are in the far eastern part of the state, and include the areas of Columbia Valley, Horse Heaven Hills, and Walla Walla. Major varieties are Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Both of these reds are made in big, bold, fruit-forward styles.

**CHILE** – They've been making wine in South America for a long time, but it's improved dramatically in the last 10-15 years. Chile specializes in varieties such as Cabernet, Merlot, and Syrah. The region you're most likely to see on a label is Colchagua Valley.

**ARGENTINA** – This country is all about Malbec. The grape originally comes from southern France, but the Argentines have really made it their own. It's a big, dark wine with bold flavors and quite a bit of tannin, so if

bold, deep dark style with tons of fruit. This stuff will make your teeth purple. There's also a lot of Chardonnay, and some less well known European varieties such as Verdelho (a white summer sipper). Main areas you're likely to see on labels include Barossa, McLaren Vale, and Hunter Valley.

**NEW ZEALAND** – Think Sauvignon Blanc, which is the flagship white wine of this island nation. It's lively and acidic, with very pronounced flavors of grapefruit, pineapple, and citrus. Remember the "lemon law": if you can put lemon on it, you can drink Sauvignon Blanc with it. Perfect for shellfish, shrimp and other seafood. New Zealand also makes excellent Pinot Noir from vineyards on the south island, especially the region of Central Otago.

## The Old World

They've been making wine in Europe for around 8,000 years, and their traditions are very deep and strong...unlike the New World winemakers who will try just about anything. The permitted grapes and the winemaking processes are very strictly controlled by law in each country.

**FRANCE** – This country is known as the “Mistress of Wine.” Most of the major wines we enjoy have French names. There are several important areas – and remember that the wines are named for the place, not the grape.

**Bordeaux** – The most famous area in France, making some of the most treasured wines. The red wines are a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot. They don't make much white, but if you do find some, it will be a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon.

**The Loire Valley** – The areas you need to know are Sancerre and Pouilly (Sauvignon Blanc) and Chinon and Bourgueil (Cabernet Franc). From the regions of Anjou and Saumur comes a delicious white wine called Chenin Blanc.

**The Rhône Valley** – In the north, all red wines are made from Syrah. The most famous and expensive wine comes from the area of Hermitage. The traditional whites are Viognier (a fragrant, floral wine), Roussanne and Marsanne. In the South, the law allows winemakers to blend up to 13 (!! ) grapes including Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvedre. The most famous wine from this region is Chateaufeuf du Pape, consisting of the three reds just mentioned, and several others.

**Champagne** – Located about 90 miles northeast of Paris, this famous sparkling white wine is generally a blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and a grape called Pinot Meunier. There are many delicious Champagnes that don't cost a mortgage payment...and Champagne pairs well with almost any food.

**Burgundy** – This is an easy one. All the red wine is Pinot Noir, and all the white is Chardonnay. But that's the only easy part. The area is divided into hundreds of small villages and vineyards,

the names of which will appear on the labels. From this region come some of the most expensive wines in the world, but there are great values from the less-famous areas.

**ITALY** – This is the only country in the world where wines are made in every single region. The most famous are Piedmont, the Veneto, and Tuscany.

**Piedmont** – Located in the very northwest corner of the country, at the foot of the Alps, this area makes one of Italy's most famous red wines: Barolo. It's made from the Nebbiolo grape. Other big reds included Barbaresco (also made from Nebbiolo) and Barbera.

**The Veneto** – This area surrounds the city of Venice. Most of the well-known international varietals are grown here, along with a delicious red called Corvina.

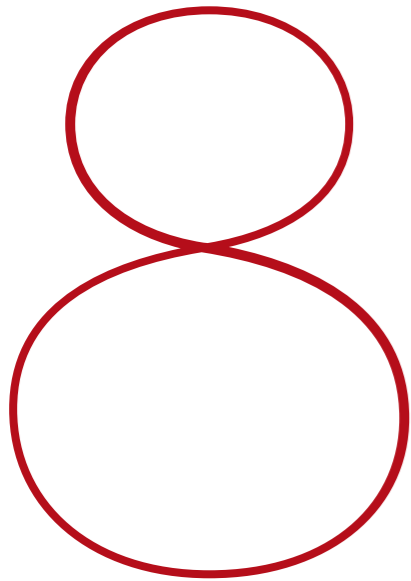
**Tuscany** – Among Americans, this is the favorite region, and the home of Chianti, which we enjoy with our pizza and pasta. It's made mainly from the Sangiovese grape, with some others blended in. Most of the wines are red, including the “Super Tuscans,” which are made mainly from Cabernet and Merlot, and are generally quite expensive. There are some whites in this area, primarily Vernaccia, which comes from the area around the landmark city of San Gimignano.

**SPAIN** – This country is known primarily for reds, the main grapes being Tempranillo and Garnacha (Grenache). Main regions you'll see named on labels include Rioja, Penedes, and Rias Baixas. There are some great whites for summer sipping, including Torrontes and Albariño. The Spaniards like to age their wine in oak for long periods, and many of the wines are not available for sale until several years after they're made.

**GERMANY** – The wines of Germany are a bit difficult to understand because they're classified completely differently. They are ranked according to level of sweetness. Because the area is so cold, there is virtually no red wine, the main grape being Riesling, followed by Gruner Veltliner and Gewürztraminer. These wines are excellent companions for Asian cuisine.



To learn more about these regions and their locations, the easiest thing to do is go to Google images and search for wine maps. This will give you an idea about the relative geography.



# Corks vs. Screw Caps

*WHICH IS BETTER? THERE IS A HUGE CONTROVERSY RAGING ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS ISSUE. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.*

Way back when, brothers Ernest and Julio Gallo made gallon jugs of really cheap and awful wine and sealed them with screw caps. Today, many very high quality wines are sealed with screw caps, but the impression among consumers that screw caps mean cheap wine won't go away. That's too bad.

In fact, Wine Spectator magazine took up this controversy a few years ago. The article in favor of screw caps was all about convenience, better preservation of the wine...a lot of practical issues. The article in favor of corks made a very big deal about the ritual and romance of popping a cork out of a wine bottle.

Several of our members have expressed the same concerns about quality and perception, so if you're going to get your friends excited about the wines you offer, and hopefully sign them up as Direct Cellars members, you need to know the facts about this important issue.

Cork is the bark of a certain type of oak tree. The bark is stripped off, sanitized and cut into shape. It grows back in nine years. Only the finest cork is used as wine stoppers. The rest becomes gaskets, flooring, and bulletin boards. Since cork is a natural, organic product, it is renewable, and has been used to close wine bottles for over 700 years. And cork is porous, allowing tiny quantities of air to enter the bottle. This helps the wine age, and causes the various flavor elements to develop and integrate. And then there's the tradition, as mentioned above.

The bad news is that cork can break down over time, and leak. In fact, collectors who own very expensive wines that they keep for 30-40 years often have their bottles re-corked every so often for this very reason.

More serious, though, is the issue of TCA, also known as "cork taint." TCA is a type of fungus that lives in wine cellars, in the wood of pallets and places like that. It's just about unkillable, and when it affects corks it ruins the wine in the bottle. Mild TCA simply robs wine of its fruit flavors and makes it taste flat and boring. More extreme infection give the wine very obvious aromas and flavors of wet cardboard and sour newspapers. Then the wine is said to be "corked." In fact, it is estimated that 5% to 7% of all wine bottled with corks gets spoiled in this way. Imagine if you had a factory and that much of your product went bad. You wouldn't stay in business very long.

Cork makers take all kinds of steps to prevent TCA. They bathe the raw cork in hydrogen peroxide and other, stronger, chemicals, but the problem persists.

To combat TCA, more and more winemakers, especially in Australia and New Zealand, have spearheaded the movement toward screw caps, or twistoffs. The advantage: an airtight seal that preserves wine perfectly in its original state, and a non-reactive closure that has no effect on or reaction to the wine. There may be some slight evidence (and I do mean slight) that screwcaps that are damaged or applied incorrectly will allow wine to spoil, but research on that issue is scarce.

About quality. While it's true that many under \$15 wines are now bottled with screw caps, that's just the tip of the iceberg. Fact is, more and more high-end winemakers are using them as well.



This is Andrew Vingiello (great guy), who makes a California Pinot Noir called AP Vin. They're delicious, but not cheap, running in the \$50-\$60 range. They're all bottled with screw caps. And he's not the only winemaker who has done this. Sparky Marquis, who makes Mollydooker wines in Australia and sells them for around \$60 a pop also uses screw caps. The list is pretty long.

The point is this. Maybe, at one time, screw caps were used only on wines that none of us would drink. But that's simply not the case anymore. Plumpjack,

a well-known California Cabernet, sells for \$135 a bottle and guess what? Screw cap.

Admittedly, we, as Direct Cellar members who spread the word about the joy and fun of wine appreciation, have some work to do. The perception persists, but it's only perception. It's up to us to share our wines with friends no matter how the bottles are sealed. DC wines are very high quality, and quality can be very convincing.

Cork is the bark of a certain type of oak tree. The bark is stripped off, sanitized and cut into shape.





There are two basic principles that we generally follow while trying to pair wine with food: the “complementary” approach and the “opposites attract” method.

But before we get into that, let’s deal with a common belief – white wines go with fish and red wines go with meat. Long ago, before the advent of more adventurous cuisines, that was generally true. Very generally. But today, chefs are a lot more adventurous, and while there are still many great restaurants that offer traditional dishes from France, Italy, etc., we now have “new” cuisine, and “fusion” dishes that mix ingredients in new and exciting ways. For example, a grilled teriyaki salmon dish goes perfectly with Pinot Noir. That makes our pairing task a bit more challenging.

First, let’s look at the complementary approach. This pairing method considers “bridge flavors,” which are flavors that occur both in the food and accompanying wine. Of course, we need to know what those wine flavors are, and we

laid the groundwork for that in Lesson 5. So, for example, tomato-based sauces from Italy go best with wines that are also acidic...like Chianti and related wines.

Also, tomatoes have a high salt content, and that helps to counteract the effect of the tannins in big wines like Chianti and Brunello.

The “opposites attract” method does what it says. If a dish has a bitter component, sometimes a sweeter wine will go well, and reduce the bitterness.

Also consider the body and weight of the wine and food. This takes into account the richness of the food and the intensity of the wine. For example, a light bodied wine like Sauvignon Blanc would be overwhelmed by a porterhouse steak with grilled mushrooms. Similarly, a heavy-bodied wine like Cabernet Sauvignon would overshadow a plate of grilled scallops in butter sauce.

### Step 1

To pair rich foods with rich wines, and lighter-bodied foods with lighter wines.

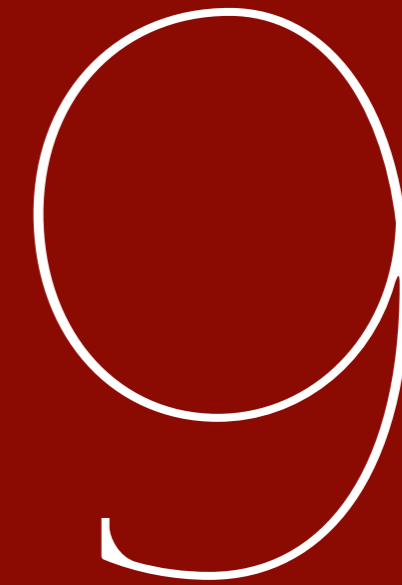
### Step 2

Next, connect the bridge flavors. If there are herbs in the dish, find a wine with herbal qualities (remember those “vegetal” flavors we learned about?). So if you’re cooking a delicate white fish with dill, lemon juice, and similar ingredients, consider a Sauvignon Blanc, which often has grassy or herbal notes. An earthy Bordeaux pairs perfectly with the gamy flavors of roast lamb chops.

### Step 3

Compare or contrast the flavor components of the wines and the food. As mentioned above, an acidic wine like Sangiovese works with acidic tomato-based dishes. That’s the comparison approach. Serving a fatty cheese, like a double-cream Brie, with unoaked Chardonnay works well because the acid in the wine cuts the richness of the cheese. That’s contrast.

The good news is that (A) if you keep these three approaches in mind, you’re well on your way to wine and food pairing expertise. And (B), you don’t really have to remember every wine and every dish. If you go to Google/images and enter “wine and food pairing,” you’ll discover hundreds of guides, tables, and charts that will help you match up just about any kind of wine with any dish. And you can always email us at Direct Cellars and “Ask the Wine Whisperer.”



## FOOD PAIRING

WINE IS FOOD.



# Wine Tasting Events

# 10

*HOW TO HOLD A WINE TASTING...  
THE SUCCESS DEPENDS ON THE WINE YOU'RE  
ENJOYING AND THE PEOPLE YOU'RE WITH.*

Wine is better when you share it. And better still when those you're sharing it with can contribute to your success...and achieve success as well. To build your business, you have to know your product. We hope the earlier lessons in this book helped you better understand and appreciate wine, and develop your confidence as you "talk the talk."

Now, it's time to understand how to present our great wines in a way that gets your friends interested...excited...and involved. Here's how.

Let's assume you've picked a date and a place. There are few items you should have on hand. The wines you're going to pour. If there are only a few, or if your group is small, you can probably get 10-12 pours out of a bottle. Fewer wines, larger pours. More wines, stick to around 2 ounces a person. Twelve pours to a bottle...and one for you.

What to pour the wines in. Appreciating wine is easier and more fun when the wine really shows you its stuff. The correct glass is very important in how much your guests will enjoy and appreciate what you're offering. Basically, you should have one set of glasses for reds, and one for whites. At the end of this lesson, there are photos of glasses that are the proper shape and size for sampling. Wine glasses don't have to be expensive—you don't need mouth-blown lead crystal. The shape is the important thing, and many good glasses are available at reasonable prices.

The table. You remember our "5-S Approach" to wine tasting. It would be good to have a white tablecloth, white placemats, or even white paper towels (if you're on a budget) so you can get your friends to look at and talk about the color and clarity of the wines.

Dump buckets. If you're tasting 5 or 6 wines, your friends might not drink everything that's in every glass. You can use an ice bucket or any similar container for them to dispose of unsampled wine.

Water. Have bottles of water available. It keeps people from getting too "happy" after many glasses of wine, and refreshes your taste buds inbetween samples.

The order of the wines – Remember to serve whites first and then reds. Also, go from lighter bodied wines to the more full-bodied. It's a good idea to open the bottles and sample the wines yourself before your guests arrive, so you serve them in the right order. (If you want to get really professional about it, give your guests paper and pen so they can take notes on the aromas and flavors of each wine.)

That's the most important thing..."Have fun – Cheers!"

## THE CORRECT GLASS FOR YOUR WINE SELECTIONS



**(1) WHITE**

**(2) RED**

**(3) SPARKLING**

**(4) PINOT NOIR**





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13451 McGregor Blvd, Ft. Myers 33919

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