



Wine Guide

Take a Wine Trip

Grab some friends or your other half and hit the road for a fun journey through your favorite vines and vintages. Keep reading for some tips on how to plan and take the perfect wine trip.

PICK YOUR POISONS

Decide what kinds of wines you like and what kinds you want to learn about to decide where you want to go. This may mean doing some sampling at home. Find a local liquor store with a knowledgeable wine staff to help point you toward some varietals that you may not have tried before.

PICK YOUR WINERIES

When you're planning your itinerary, mix up new and old wineries and include several alternates. Consider peak times (call if you need to) and leave plenty of time for travel, touring and browsing gift shops. An average day should have three to five stops, but if you're going to a large winery or one you're particularly excited about, leave more time.

HAVE A DESIGNATED DRIVER

If you're traveling to an area where wines are a big industry, there may be services to do this for you. If not, pick a



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designated driver for either the whole trip or one for each day.

BRING AN EMPTY BOX

You're sure to come across some bottles you just can't live without. Make sure to bring a box with you to carry off your new goodies and have a plan

for getting all those bottles safely home. Consider mailing them or shipping them home rather than trying to fly with them.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOTTLE

If you want to do more than just tasting, consider a trip like

a wine hike, wine cruise or another unique trip. You can also add a wine festival to your itinerary. Check local community calendars and event listings.

KEEP YOUR BUDGET IN MIND

Factor in flights, cars, win-

ery fees, shipping costs for those bottles you have to have, passports, hotels, meals and any and everything you can think of. If your dream is a trip to France but you can't afford it, ask your wine store experts to point you toward some domestic varieties you might also enjoy and enjoy visiting.

Trends in Tableware

We're all familiar with the regular, run-of-the-mill glass stemware for our wines. But today's table offers lots more options. Keep reading for the latest trends in serving your best bottles.

STEMLESS

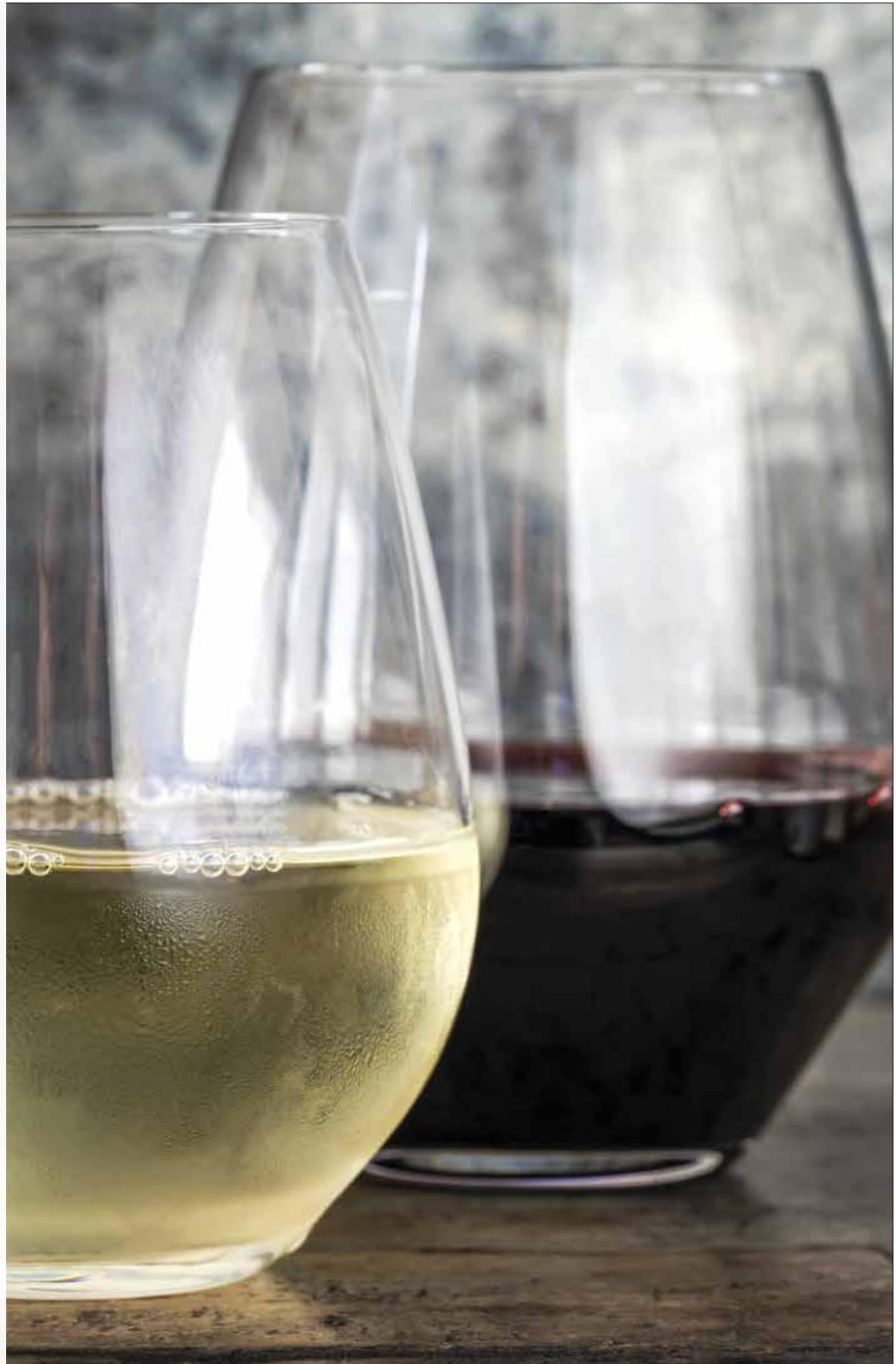
Stemless wine glasses have been around for a few years. Easy to store and dishwasher friendly, stemless glasses are a sleek, modern addition to your table. They are also called wine tumblers and are available in the usual shapes. Be aware, though, if you're planning on a fancy vintage, that stemless glasses can actually change the way wine tastes. For some pours, holding the glass by the bowl, like you must do with a stemless glass, transfers your body heat to the wine, making it warmer and changing the taste.

INSULATED

If stemless glasses are for casual wine drinking, insulated cups are for tailgates. The most popular models also are usually stemless, though some plastic stemmed versions are available. Look for a cup that's easy to pick up and hold (no slick finishes) and that has a lid that's comfortable to sip through. These tumblers also can be used for other drinks, such as cocktails or sodas, and make great gifts.

WINE DECANTERS

Decanting a wine just means taking it out of the bottle. Usually made of clear glass, but sometimes cut glass or crystal, wine decanters allow the wine to breathe and sediment to settle. Decanters come in all shapes and sizes, but the newest lines come in sexy swoops and swirls reminiscent of a snake.





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Break Out the Bubbly

Sparkling wines are infused with carbon dioxide, which makes them bubbly. Common types of sparkling wines are Champagne, which comes exclusively from the Champagne region of France; Italian asti and prosecco; and Spanish cava. They're usually white, but there are red varietals, such as Brachetto, sparkling shiraz and Lambrusco.

Here are some tips for serving and enjoying sparkling wines.

CHILL OUT

White sparkling wines should be served chilled. Put the bottle in ice water for a half hour or in the fridge for three hours. Red bottles should also be chilled but then pulled out to

warm up to 50 to 55 degrees. Never chill in the freezer. When opening the bottle, you don't want the cork to fly across the room in dramatic fashion. Instead, loosen the cork slightly and let the pressure slowly release.

THE POUR

Pour sparkling wines slowly and in

small amounts, letting the bubbles settle before adding more wine to the glass. Pouring at an angle will help preserve the wine's fizziness. It may take you two or three passes to fill a flute to just past half full. Don't go much past half; the wine will warm up too much before it can be finished.

STORAGE

Sparkling wines don't usually improve with age, so you should enjoy them as soon as you buy them. Opened bottles can be resealed with either a Champagne seal or a standard wine cork and stored at as low a temperature as possible.

What Is a Wine Blend?

We're familiar with varietals such as pinot noir and chardonnay, but you may see some labels that say red blend or white blend.

Just like the name suggests, these wines are blends of different varietals.

MORE THAN JUST A GRAPE

Legally, even varietals can be a blend. In the U.S., a varietal needs to be 75 percent of one type of grape. Wineries can add up to 25 percent of other grapes to enhance the original varietal and still be labeled as that grape. Blends contain at least 40 to 50 percent of one type and a mix of two or more others.

COMPLEXITY

Blending enhances aromas, colors, textures and body. Common varietals used in blending are malbec, merlot and cabernet sauvignon. Blends are usually mixed in a steel tank, and more expensive blends are aged in oak. Aging, bottling and fermentation methods and timelines often vary from winery to winery.

TRADITION

There are some traditionally blended wines. Rioja, for example, comes from a region of Spain that includes La Rioja, Navarre and Alava.



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Wines from this region are normally a blend of grapes and can be red, or tinto; white, or blanco; or rose, rosado. The most widely used variety of tinto grape is tempranillo,

which contributes the main flavors and aging potential. It's mixed, usually, with garnacha tinta, graciano and mazuelo, used for seasoning and aromas.

TRY SOMETHING NEW

Start with a varietal you like (though you're not likely to see pinot noir; it's too delicate) and look for blends that include that grape. You also

can look for blends from regions you like.

Find a good wine store and ask the experts there to point you to new blends and bottles for you to try.

Working with a Sommelier

A sommelier is a wine professional who's trained and knowledgeable in wine.

They normally work in fine restaurants and specialize in wine service and food pairings. A sommelier is responsible for wine lists, delivery of wine service, training staff, pairing food and alcoholic beverages, and works with restaurant patrons to pick a wine to their liking and that fits their budget.

EDUCATION

There are many certifications a sommelier can get. One is from the Court of Master Sommeliers. There are 182 master sommeliers in the Americas and 274 worldwide. A master sommelier with this certification from CMS has taken courses and passed a master sommelier diploma exam.

WHAT TO ASK A SOMMELIER

Working with a restaurant's sommelier means asking the right questions. Here are a few to get you started.

- I had a great pinot noir from (winery). Can you recommend something similar under \$30?
- I like sweet white wines and my favorite is (winery, varietal). What do you have that's similar?
- What wines would you



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recommend with the fish? We like red wines more than white.

- We're having the steak and feeling adventurous. We like Australian shiraz but want to try something different. What do you recommend?

Respect the sommelier's

expert opinion and value it more than a score. You've hopefully just had a conversation about your likes and dislikes, and the expert in front of you probably knows more than a critic's score. If your sommelier does a great job and you want to tip them,

your best bet is to pass them cash yourself.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE WINE?

Once the sommelier has opened the wine, it's yours. He or she pours you a taste not to see if you like the bot-

tle, but to make sure the bottle isn't contaminated by cork or damaged by excessive heat. If it doesn't have any faults, it's yours. If you feel like the wine tastes off, tell the sommelier, but tread lightly. Expensive bottles are tricky to return.

Talking Sake

Wine doesn't just come from grapes. Sake is a Japanese rice wine made by fermenting rice in a process that looks more like brewing beer. Undiluted sake is potent, containing 18-20 percent alcohol, which is usually lowered by diluting it with water before bottling.

It's usually served with special ceremony. In Japanese, sake refers to many kinds of alcohol; what we call sake in the west is called nihonshu.

FINDING THE RIGHT SAKE

There are two types of sake: futu-shu, or ordinary sake, and Tokutei meisho-shu, or special, premium sakes. There are eight varieties of Tokutei meisho-shu and dozens of ways to ferment and finish sake. There is not traditionally a vintage of sake; it's usually drunk the same year it's brewed. Ask the experts at your local liquor store to point you in the right direction for your tastes and occasion.

SERVING SAKE

Sake can be served chilled, at room temperature or heated depending on the sake, the drinker and the season. Hot sake is typically served in winter and is usually low-quality or old sake. It's traditional for a group of people to pour sake for each other (shaku), especially on formal occasions. Sake can also be used in cocktails. Sake should be drunk within hours or, at most, a day or so of opening.

COOKING SAKE

Cooking sake uses rice that has been polished less and has a bolder, more ricey flavor. It also has salt added and often a lower alcohol content. Just like with grape wines, choose a quality sake for cooking — not just a cheap drinking sake — for the best flavor.





Craft Wines

Craft beers, or those from small breweries, have been popular for years. Now, craft wines are on the rise. According to the Craft Wine Association, a certified craft wine is a commercially available, small-production wine made in a total run of fewer than 5,000 cases.

Authenticity and traceability are key components in certification, as well. With the growth of eating local movements, craft wines are poised for a big 2019 and massive growth.

FINDING A CRAFT WINE

In addition to networking with local wine stores, you can also consult the Craft Wine Association to find bottles and wineries to your liking. You can also spend the day exploring local wineries and tasting wines and finding new tastes. Wineries aren't just in California; most states have at least one.

IT'S ABOUT THE STORY

More so than wines made by big wineries, craft wines have a

story to tell. The story of the farmer and the winemaker, and even of the region in which they are produced. If you're going to travel, look for local craft wines to pick up. They make great souvenirs and gifts.

BEWARE

Just like with the craft beer movement, some wines may be mass produced wines masquerading as a craft bottle. Lean on the experts at your wine store. Also look for the following subtle clues outlined by wine merchant Winestyr. Look at the label for phrases like "grown, produced and bottled by." Also look for locations. The more specific the location, the more likely you're holding a craft wine.

