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Category: Buying Wine

Subcategory: Buying Wine

Tip: Bulk can be better

Ever been short-handed on gifts when that unexpected occasion comes up? Next time you purchase wine, do it by the case. Buying in bulk will save you money (retail stores usually offer discounts on a case or more) and will save you time in the future when looking for a gift to give.

Tip: Deciphering Italian Wine Labels

When you buy wine, you must understand the language on the label. Never is this more true than when choosing an Italian wine, which some say are the most difficult of all wine labels to understand. Italy's official wine names are called DOC or DOCG names. An Italian wine labeled with one of these acronyms means the wine has a pedigree of sorts. DOC stands for Denominazione di Origine Controllata, which means "controlled (or protected) place name." DOCG stands for Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita, which translates as "controlled and guaranteed place name." As a general rule of thumb, Italian wines labeled DOC or DOCG are classic wines from the most important and prestigious wine zones. Not all Italian wines will have these labels and the ones that do not are not necessarily bad. Look for IGT labeled wines, which means Indicazione Geografica Tipica. Translated, that means "typical place name." These have less of a pedigree but are usually innovative. The IGT designation gives producers more freedom of individual expression than a DOC or DOCG wine does. These are great for the adventurous wine enthusiast. Wines labeled Vino da Tavola are simply "table wine." Producers of these wines cannot put a vintage year on the wine and cannot name the grape variety that made the wine.

Tip: More People Are Buying Wine Online

According to a recent study, more people are buying wine online. Net direct sales of wine are up 40 percent to \$135 million. Furthermore, consumer direct sales by U.S. wineries went up 26 percent to \$2.3 billion in 2005, according to the study, VinQuest 2006, provided by VinterActive LLC in California. More than 300 wineries in 33 U.S. states provided information for the study. Fifty-nine percent reported that the fastest growing sales channel was direct sales. During the year, winery tasting room sales grew 33 percent to \$1.5 billion; event-driven sales at wineries amounted to \$143 million, up 46 percent. And the projected direct sales of wine in 2011 is a whopping \$5.4 billion. To what do we owe all this consumer fascination with wine? Experts say the touted health benefits of drinking wine in moderation and great press such as the 2004 Hollywood movie "Sideways" has something to do with it.

Tip: Web Offers Wealth of Wine Ordering Help

When you want to buy wine online, there are plenty of Web sites out there to help. Shop wines with ease using your mouse. Here are some of the tools offered to you through the many wine Web sites: 1) Maps detailing all the wineries in a particular region. 2) Information about a winery or wine merchant so you can call and order directly. 3) The ability to search for a wine by price range, region, vintage year or type. 4) Help finding the perfect wine for a special occasion or friend. 5) Up-to-date information on new releases of your favorite wines. 6) Wine discussion forums and ask-the-expert boards.

Category: Wine Accessories

Subcategory: Wine Accessories

Tip: Buying Wine Glasses: Stemware Matters

Believe it or not, the wine glass you use has an impact on how much you enjoy your wine. Even average wines taste more elegant and refined when served in suitable stemware. And the finest wines seem to be missing something if served in a cup. The International Organization for Standardization (IOS) has recognized a particular shape that is the accepted benchmark for wine glasses at all wine judging and competitions. It is also suitable for the average wine drinker as an all around, every day glass. Wine glasses should be made of: - transparent, colorless glass - a lead content of up to 9 percent - it should be just under 6 inches (155 mm) tall - have a 2-inch (5 cm) tall stem and a 4-inch (100 mm) tall bowl - it should be about 2.5 inches (65 mm) at its widest diameter - it should be 2 inches (46 mm) across the rim Experts consider a great wine glass to be plain, colorless, tulip-shaped, with a stem, very thin lip, and made of crystal. Of the two most common wine glass shapes, experts say the "tulip" does a better job than the "balloon." A glass designed for drinking wine has specific properties designed to enhance the sensory experience. That's right, as you sip your glass, something you've done a million times in your life, you may have no idea about the inner workings of your stemware as you taste your beverage. Here is how your wine glass is interacting with your wine, perhaps unbeknownst to you: The shape of the bowl is the most important feature of any wine glass. It should be curved and smooth on the inside so it does not inhibit swirling. It should also taper inward slightly towards the rim. This keeps the wine's smells focused towards the nose and somewhat prevents them from escaping into the atmosphere. The tulip shape to your glass allows for the concentration and collection of a wine's aroma. If you chose a crystal glass, its rougher surface helps wine release its aromas as you drink. The stem allows you to hold the glass without warming the wine with your body heat. A thin, properly shaped lip directs the flow of the wine into your mouth in such a way that the smooth stream touches the most sensitive areas of the tongue. You do not want thick-rimmed wine glasses because they accentuate a wine's flaws, particularly any harsh acidity and bitterness. A respectable

arsenal of stemware includes four glasses: a general-purpose white wine glass, two types of red wine glasses (commonly called Bordeaux and Burgundy) and a champagne flute.

Tip: Decanting Wines

Decanting old wines, just prior to serving, helps to ensure that the clarity and brilliance are not obscured by any deposit that may have developed over time. It's best to pour slowly and avoid decanting the last ounce. Decant young wines as much as several hours before they are served to give the wine a chance to breath, simulating a stage of development that might normally be acquired after years of aging. It's best to pour quickly, even up-ending the bottle – the idea is to expose the wine to air. No matter what wine you are decanting, be mindful that wine kept in the decanter for a longer time than necessary to develop its optimum bouquet detracts from the wine. Ask a wine expert how long the bottle you bought should be decanted before you serve it. You can stop the decanting process by closing the decanter with a decanter stopper.

Tip: Decantor Designs

Wine decanter designs vary from purely functional to very extravagant. Some sit in a stand that, with a gentle orbital movement, increases the breathing of your wine with minimal disturbance. Reminiscent of decanters seen in Europe, the unique "doughnut" design aerates the wine more efficiently since it pours through both sides, allowing flavors to develop more fully. Whatever decanter you buy, just remember to choose one with the broadest surface. This allows controlled exposure to air, affecting all the little flavor nuances that make wine so enjoyable. The sloped spout makes pouring easy and the construction material - looks like glass, sounds like glass, but is as lightweight as plastic - makes it easy to handle.

Tip: How to Care for Your Wine Glasses

Once you've stocked your cabinet with fancy stemware, take care of it properly so it lasts. Keep these things in mind and your stemware collection should continue to please and impress for years to come. - Crystal's porous surface absorbs kitchen smells, musty cupboard aromas and dish soap. - Never just take a glass from the cabinet and pour wine into it. Just before serving, always rewash your stemware in very hot, sudsy water and rinse it over and over again. - Polish with a lint-free cloth laundered without fabric softener (which leaves an invisible film). - Stick your nose in the glass and inhale - you should smell nothing. If you smell an odor, wash it again. - Always make sure the wine glasses are scrupulously clean as even the slightest traces of dirt and grime can alter the behavior of fine wines and champagne. - Always store the glasses standing upright in a dry cupboard, or covered shelf. - If washing glasses by hand, use the hottest water possible and very little detergent. - There are sponges available that are specifically designed for cleaning the inside of wine glasses. - If you use a dishwasher do not use

detergent. Wash the glasses with hot water only. Depending on the type of glass, a dishwasher can easily break the stem during the wash cycle. How to test if a wine glass is clean: - Dip a glass into water and see if droplets form on the surface. Or sprinkle salt inside a clean, wet glass. It should adhere evenly.

Tip: Screw Top vs. Natural Cork

There is a big debate in the wine industry and over restaurant tables right now about what it means to choose a wine with a screw top. Some restaurant customers will send a wine back if they realize it has a screw top. Wine bottles with screw tops face a stigma. These bottles are considered lowly and people are afraid to drink them for fear of appearing to lack class. These are all misconceptions, however, and the wine industry is slowly battling the stigma by ordering more fantastic wines with screw tops. In recent years, more screw tops have made their way onto wine bottles. This is for practical reasons. Natural corks have been used to close wine bottles and jugs for centuries. But years of studies have shown that naturally corked bottles do not preserve the wine inside the bottle as well as synthetic corks or screw tops. Studies show that 2 to 5 percent of wines suffer from cork taint - a fungal contamination of the cork that gives a moldy or wet cardboard flavor to even the finest vintage. Not everyone in the wine industry is sold on screw tops. Some of their reasons are emotional and some are practical. There are those that complain that in making wine bottles so easy to open, screw tops diminish the romance and theatricality of opening and drinking a bottle of wine. The industry debate continues. But in the meantime, many restaurant owners admit to buying more screw top wines and schooling their waitstaff on how to delicately open them and educate the customer about any misconceptions.

Tip: Swirling in your glass

Hey, nice legs! You'll hear that next time you swirl your wine glass at a party. Legs refer to the wine that trickles down the inside of the glass after it has been swirled. In addition to getting that compliment, you will also be helping your wine to breathe, which in turn gives you a better glass of wine. Swirling the wine in your glass allows oxygen to get into the wine. This changes the taste slightly and balances it out. It can even soften a wine which may have been opened too soon.

Tip: What to look for when purchasing stemware

Look for the thinnest rim you can find. Wine always seems to taste better when you drink it from a thin-rimmed glass. If you are a wine lover who is shopping for stemware (or registering for your upcoming wedding), keep in mind that many sets of "good crystal" have really, really thick rims. And some crystal glasses are too small to really appreciate the wine inside. Also, look for wine glasses that have large bowls. This allows you to swirl the wine and release its aromas. Large wine glasses also look really attractive setting on the dining room table. If you can only afford one set of wine glasses

and plan to use them for both reds and whites, select a medium-sized bowl.

Tip: Which Corkscrew Is Right For You?

Perhaps the most important wine accessory is the corkscrew. Here is a breakdown of the kinds of corkscrews out there so you have the proper knowledge before making your choice. Lever style: you clamp the opener on the bottle and let the levers do all the work. This one is quick and easy to use, but expensive and bulky. You can generally buy one of these for between \$30 and \$150. It works on all sizes and types of wine bottles. Waiter: Use the serrated knife blade to remove the foil on top, insert the screw and pull the cork out. Many upscale restaurants prefer their waitstaff use the double hinged system that catches the lip of the bottle twice as the cork is pulled out. This is slim and efficient, but takes some practice to use correctly. They range from \$5 to \$30. Watch out for inexpensive ones, which can have dull knives and worms that bend inside the cork. Twisting pull: A circular rim is placed over the lip of the bottle that centers the worm (screw) over the cork. As you twist the handle on the corkscrew, the corkscrew is braced against the bottle and the cork begins to emerge from the bottle as you twist. These are generally less than \$50 and reliable. Cheaper ones have higher rates of destroying the cork. Winged: As you turn the corkscrew the wings lift higher and higher. When you think you have drilled the worm into the corkscrew far enough, you grasp the wings and slowly bring them toward the bottle. This action causes the cork to pull out of the bottle. This reasonably priced corkscrew (you can get one for less than \$10) is usually reliable unless the worm isn't far enough into the cork. However, if the worm goes past the bottom of the cork, cork fragments can get into the wine. Cheap models with weak worms will not lift the cork out of the bottle. Two-pronged: There are two slim metal prongs you enter into opposite sides of the cork in the bottle. Enter the longer prong first, then rock the device back and forth slightly until the prongs are fully entered. Gently pull up with a little twist, or rocking motion. You can buy one of these for \$10. The slim tool puts no hole into the cork, so there is little chance of broken cork getting into your wine. It works especially well with an aged bottle of wine whose cork has deteriorated. However, it can be hard to use and the prongs can be bent out of shape. Pump: These insert a long needle through the cork into the air space above the wine. It works by forcing air between the space in the bottle of wine between the cork and the wine. As you pump the device, air pressure forces the cork out of the bottle. There are good ones on the market for in the \$20 range. Some experts caution that forcing air into the wine bottle is not good for the wine. Stationary: This one uncorks with just a pull of the handle and mounts elegantly to your bar or table stand. It opens all sizes and types of wine bottles including flange tops. It can also come with a stand. These can cost \$25 to \$100. If you have a wine cellar, perhaps you want to go a step further than the corkscrew and buy an uncorking machine. Uncorking machines: with the simple pull of a lever in one direction, you will be able to twist the corkscrew in, and then pull it out of the bottle. Reverse direction and the cork will spit out and you are ready to do it again. The entire process takes less than 10 seconds. The design of these machines makes opening wine not only efficient, but also impressive. This is an easy - but not cheap -

solution to opening your bottles. Expect to pay more than \$100 for the most basic model that clamps to a tabletop. And for advanced models the price can exceed \$500.

Category: Wine and Food

Subcategory: Wine and Food

Tip: Beware of High Alcohol Levels in Wine

When you settle down to a great meal and a great glass of wine, you might not think about the alcohol level inside the wine you are drinking. But you should. Too high of an alcohol level can leave you sour on both your beverage and your meal. Wine Enthusiast Magazine, an expert in the food wine world, reports that winemakers are dealing with the alcohol "problem," as it has become known, by looking for ways to retain the ripe fruit and smooth tannins that consumers love, while reducing the alcohol to a more food-friendly level of 14 percent (or lower). Experts say the increase in alcohol levels is due to consumer demand for more intense flavors. It's important to remember that it's the balance of the fruit flavors, acid and the pH that makes a wine taste good, not the alcohol level, says Rob Newsom of Boudreaux Cellars, a 2,000-case boutique winery in Washington State. Today, more and more of the wines we drink are hot with palate-fatiguing levels of alcohol that regularly top 15, sometimes 16 and occasionally 17 percent. These high-octane ripe wines are powerful and appealing but are expensive to produce, and are getting more so. which means prices for consumers goes up. If you get a bottle of this potent wine, it's best to drink it right away. That's because once the fruit ages (usually very quickly since it's so ripe to begin with) and the tannins soften, what's left is a lot of alcohol flavor.

Tip: Calories in White Zinfandel

There are about 80 calories in a 4 oz. glass of white zinfandel, so your nightly consumption is about 160 calories. Although it's been shown that red wine contains more antioxidants and other health benefits, they are actually found in ALL wines, so you are doing something good for your body by indulging in moderate wine consumption.

Tip: How to Cook With Wine

Famous chefs like Dom DeLuise and Rachel Ray toss wine into their recipes with careless ease. But there are some rules of thumb you should know if you intend to mix food and wine on the stove. The first and most important rule of thumb is: cook only with a wine you would drink. Avoid so-called "cooking wine" located in the supermarket near the vinegar. Wine labeled "cooking wine" is a poor quality wine to which salt is added, either to prevent you from drinking it straight or to "help" in seasoning. Chefs say to

avoid this wine, even if it means not cooking with wine at all. Here are some wines that are great to cook with: - If a recipe calls for dry white wine, the best all-around choice is a quality American Sauvignon Blanc. This wine will be very dry and offer a fresh light herbal tilt that will enhance nearly any dish. - Zinfandels have a berry or cherry character, which would be a nice background to a fruit sauce for duck. - A buttery Chardonnay is the perfect base for a beurre blanc. - A sweet Vermouth would be a great addition to a fruit dessert that has a hint of herbs in it. - Gewurztraminer, Riesling, and Viognier all have dynamic fruity flavors and exotic floral aromas that counterbalance heavily spiced dishes. - If a recipe calls for a dry red wine, consider the heartiness of the dish. A long-simmered leg of lamb or beef roast calls for a correspondingly hearty wine, such as a Petite Syrah or a Zinfandel. A lighter dish might call for a less powerful red -- think Pinot Noir or Chianti. - Get to know Port, Sherry, Madeira, and Marsala. These are among the best wines good cooks can have on hand. They pack the most intense flavors and -- because they're fortified with a little more alcohol than table wine -- have the longest life on the pantry shelf. The more you learn about the characteristics of your favorite wines, the more creative you can be with how you cook with them.

Tip: Organic Wines

Food and wine go hand in hand. Then it should be no surprise that wine has gone organic like many foods. For a finished wine to be organic, it must have been produced from organically grown grapes and have been made without additions of yeasts, fining agents, and the sulfites that protect against spoilage. Since most commercial wineries won't take the risk of putting potentially spoiled wines on the market, there are very few purely organic wines. However, there are many producers worldwide who grow grapes with chemical-free, organic methods, including: -M. Chapoutier and Chateau de Beaucastel from the Rhone, Bonterra and Fetzer Vineyards, -Wellington Vineyards, Robert Sinskey, Marimar Torres, and Frog's Leap wineries in California, -Sokol Blosser from Oregon and, -New Zealand's Seresin Estate. So check out these producers if you are seeking organic wines.

Tip: Remember a few classic food and wine pairings

Pinot noir is just made for salmon. Chianti and pinot grigio go perfectly with anything tomato-based (it's no coincidence why Italians drink them with their cuisine), Red Côtes du Rhône pairs beautifully with lamb, stew and other hearty dishes. Off-dry rieslings and gewurztraminers work well with Thai, Indian and Vietnamese foods (the residual sugar in the wine can counter the spices and seasonings in the food.)

Tip: The Benefits of Red Wine

There are health benefits to drinking wine. Research indicates that moderate red wine consumption may help protect against certain cancers and heart disease and can have a positive effect on cholesterol levels and blood pressure. There is now perhaps a new

benefit to drinking red wine, according to a Spanish study released this year that says red wine gives you fiber. According the study, published in the March issue of the American Journal of Enology and Viticulture, red wine may contribute to our recommended daily intake of fiber. So drink your glass a day and feel good about it!

Category: Wine Gifts

Subcategory: Wine Gifts

Tip: Beware of Chocolate Shipping Rules

Wine and chocolate are decadent together. And there are many gifts that include both. If you plan to ship wine and chocolate to a loved one, beware that many companies refuse to ship chocolate from May to October because of the heat. Talk to the company before you order to make sure they'll ship it for you in the summer months. Wine from the top companies is shipped with weather considerations as well. With wine the most important consideration is to avoid extreme temperature changes.

Tip: Know How Your Wine Gifts Have Been Stored

When picking out a wine gift in a bricks-and-mortar store, you are able to take in your surroundings and get a feel for how the wine is being treated. Extreme heat or cold, direct sunlight, and dramatic temperature fluctuations are all enemies of wine. If you notice any of these conditions in a store, it's probably best not to shop there. However, if you're shopping online, check the frequently asked questions area to find information on how the online company stores their wine for future purchase.

Tip: Taking the Guess Work Out of Wine Gifts

Some wine Web sites take the guess work out of purchasing a wine gift for a specific occasion by carefully choosing event-appropriate wines for your loved ones. For example, Web sites such as mywinesdirect.com, offer a "cellar starter pack" for newlyweds, a gift pack that includes Champagnes for celebrations such as anniversaries or new babies, an "Estate" gift pack (wines labeled "Estate" are of high quality) for Housewarming gifts, etc.

Tip: the ultimate package

Friends don't let friends taste and drive. To give the ultimate gift in wine tasting, get your family or friends a guided tour to different wineries while be chauffeured in a limosine. Check out beauwinetours.com, fingerlakeswine.com, ctwine.com and californiawinetours.com for information and pricing. You'll not only be giving a gift to

remember, you'll be giving piece of mind!

Category: Wine Guides

Subcategory: Wine Guides

Tip: Find Great Wine at Wine Bars, The New Coffee Shops

Wine bars are being called the coffee shops of the 21st century. More and more of them are cropping up across America. And they are proving to be a great place to relax, taste great wine and enjoy great company. Newspapers across the nation are reporting that 20- and 30-somethings are flocking to these bars to meet friends and casually share a bottle of wine after work, after the gym, or after a round of golf. Wine is a more casual drink today and 20-somethings are not afraid of it the way 30-somethings admit they were a decade ago. Some wine bars even open at noon and offer classes during the day. Go to www.localwineevents.com or check your local listings to find a wine bar near you.

Tip: Find Great Wine the 21st Century Way, With a Wine Search Engine

Professional sommeliers admit they find great wine online by using a search engine called www.wine-searcher.com. At the end of May 2006, the engine listed 7,323 wine stores. Experts say it's a powerful search engine. Simply enter in the producer, wine-type and vintage. A list of proprietors along with prices will soon be staring back at you. Also, choose from these four options on the site: recommended wines with sample searches; locating wines by region/appellation; a guide of the top searches; and wine investment advice.

Tip: Stock your library with a few great wine books.

My favorites? The Windows on the World Complete Wine Course by Kevin Zraly is a great basic wine book updated yearly that follows the course syllabus week by week. The Oxford Companion to Wine by Jancis Robinson is more of a tome than a book to sit down and read, per se, but it's an excellent reference about all wine-related terms -- everything's in there. Andrea Immer's Great Tastes Made Simple is an approachable and fun read about food and wine pairings, both classic and non-traditional. Finally, The World Atlas of Wine by Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson is perfect when you want to locate the exact vineyard where the grapes in the wine you are drinking were grown.

Tip: What a Wine Guide Can Provide

Wine guides can bring expert opinion and detailed information on wines and give wine ratings on various regions and wines available. Here are two examples of what an

excellent wine guide can do: American Gold Medal Wines is a guide to the gold medal winning wines from the 20 top regional, national and international wine competitions. The average competition has 2,150 wines in it and less than 10 percent win gold. The wines have been judged by panels of experts (wine writers, sommeliers, masters of wine, wine critics, etc.), in blind tastings. At a glance, you'll be able to see which wines impressed diverse groups of experts. The 552-page 2006 Australian & New Zealand Wine Industry Directory brings you comprehensive listings of every possible link to the wine industry. The exhaustive list includes 6,688 industry personnel, 2,469 wine producers, 1,135 suppliers, 200 distributors, 156 writers and wine publications, 261 organizations, 4,227 email addresses, 3,481 Web sites and 426 calendar listings. This guide also contains a comprehensive overview of the industry which includes statistics and descriptions of the main industry regulating bodies and a calendar of events including details for wine shows. The 2002 and 2003 editions won the prestigious Australian Business Publishers Association Bell Award for Best Printed Directory.

Tip: Wine Blogs Can Be Wonderful Guides

Sure, there are plenty of published wine guides in the book stores and online. But in the 21st century, wine blogs have become an increasingly important tool for wine tasting information. Blogging has become an important source of information and many wine blogs are written by professionals who enjoy dropping the formal tone to share knowledge in a casual way. Food & Wine Magazine have named these seven blogs worthy of watching: 1. joedressner.com: a wise and outspoken wine importer tells it like it is. 2. vinography.com: a self-professed wine geek gives restaurant reviews, wine information and links to articles and other blogs. 3. wineanorak.com: a British wine writer is refreshingly candid about his daily life as a wine writer. 4. drvino.blogspot.com: a real doctor who intelligently explores the mixing of wine, politics and business. 5. alicefeiring.com: she is the wine and travel columnist for Time Magazine who says she wants wine to tell a story and speak the truth. 6. vinocibo.typepad.com: the most in-depth and knowledgeable blog on Italian wine from a former Italian wine importer. 7. wineterroirs.com: a French photographer roams his country and talks about the wines he encounters along the way, coupled with photos of his journeys. These blogs are individual, and therefore represent the individual blogger's likes and dislikes. You can also find blogs at some of the different wine sites.

Category: Wine Harvesting

Subcategory: Wine Harvesting

Tip: A Harvest Worth Waiting For – The Sweet Wine

After a fine four-course meal, what better way to cap off the evening than with a sweet wine. One method of making a sweet wine is by picking the grape during a late harvest.

The late harvest allows grapes to shrivel on the vine and creates a concentration of grape sugars due to dehydration. The method of utilizing a late harvest is common to South Africa, Australia, and Alsace, an eastern region of France. The Alsace winemakers have a coveted category of sweet wines called, vendange tardive, which must meet five criteria: 1. A declaration of intent must be made the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (INAO), the governing organization which recognizes the geographic origin of an agricultural product. 2. The grape used to make vendange tardive must be from a single variety and not a blend. 3. The wine must be examined for sugar content by the INAO. 4. The must weight, or sugar concentration, needs to meet exact standards. 5. In order to bear the label vendange tardive, the wine must have a certificate of conformity.

Tip: The Process of Making Wine

The process of making wine involves six-steps: growing grapes, harvesting, crushing and pressing, fermentation, clarification, and bottling. From the time you pluck the first grape from the harvest to the time a bottle gets its label, this is how the process of making wine takes place. 1. Growing grapes is the first step in the making of this intoxicating drink that in 2002 alone, sold 595 million gallons in the United States. In general, the type of grape you use will determine the type of wine, whether it be a Chardonnay or Merlot. Grape growing is dependant upon conditions of soil, topography, and climate to be just right. 2. At precisely the right time, you will need to harvest the grapes to prepare them for the process of winemaking. The harvesting season varies based on the type of wine and the locale of the vineyard. In the northern hemisphere, winemakers will harvest the grapes between late September and early October. There are two methods of picking grapes – either by the preferred method of hand picking or by a mechanical picker. 3. Mechanical crushing and pressing occurs as the next step to making wine. This process extracts the must or juices, which will soon become wine. In order to make white wine, after crushing, you have to separate the must from the skin and seeds. The process of making red wine involves leaving the skin intact for coloring and flavor during fermentation. 4. Wine fermentation involves storing the must in fermentation tanks, cooled to a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Add yeast and sugar to start the process of wine fermentation. The must might be stored in fermentation tanks for as little as less than two weeks to over four weeks time. 5. The next step is clarification. Winemakers will typically store the must in barrels to allow the solids to settle or apply filtration methods to separate out the unwanted particles out of the wine. 6. The final step is the bottling process. One method of getting the wine into the bottle is by using a pump to suction the liquid from storage and into a bottle machine which measures out a predetermined amount into each wine bottle. The machine will seal the wine bottle with a cork. Finally, a labeling machine places the final touch on the product, and it's ready for consumption.

Tip: Welcome to the machine -- the wine machine

Remember the classic episode of "I Love Lucy" where Lucy is in Italy crushing grapes in a vat with her feet? How would you like to drink some of that wine? Well, no need to worry about that happening to the wine you're drinking these days. The days of picking grapes with your hands and crushing the grapes with your feet are fleeting. More and more wineries are investing their money in equipment which mechanically harvests and crushes the grapes. With the growing demand for wine, wineries are expanding and are finding it difficult to manage the crop by hand. During the two month period of the crush - from September to November - you'll find harvesting machines doing all the work that human hands used to do. Almost 50 percent of wineries have reported that in 2006, they increased their equipment budget. Not only does this help the winery combat the growing harvest, but it also gives them a greater ability to fine tune their wine to their own specifications.

Category: Wine Making

Subcategory: Wine Making

Tip: Essential Wine Making Equipment

According to Wine Spectator Magazine, more and more Americans are making wine. If you dream of joining the legions of Americans doing this, first make a list of this basic equipment to get you started. To make a 1 gallon batch of wine, you'll need to purchase the following from any homebrewing or home winemaking supply shop. 1. Large nylon straining bag 2. Food-grade pail with lid (2 to 4 gallons) 3. Cheesecloth 4. Hydrometer 5. Thermometer 6. Acid titration kit 7. Clear, flexible half-inch diameter plastic tubing 8. Two one-gallon glass jugs 9. Fermentation lock and bung 10. Five 750 milliliter wine bottles 11. Corks 12. Hand corker It is essential that the equipment is sanitary. Wash all of your equipment thoroughly with hot water, boiling what you can. It's a good idea to arm yourself with a strong sulfite solution to rinse any equipment that comes into contact with your wine. To make it, add 3 tablespoons of sulfite powder (potassium metabisulfite) to a gallon of water and mix well.

Tip: Kits Don't Always Have The Answers

There are kits on the market designed to help wine making at home go smoothly. They help you mix, ferment, package and enjoy your wine. Plenty of these kits are helpful and work well. However, the kits don't always answer all of your wine making questions. So be sure to do some reading on the topic of wine making before using them. For example, users claim that some kit makers don't emphasize what to do during the stabilization process. This leaves some home wine makers scratching their heads during the second fermentation step - wondering whether they should mix all the sediment back into the batch before stabilizing it. The expert consensus is, when making your own wine, resist the urge to rack the wine before stabilizing it. During

secondary fermentation, the sediment at the bottom of the batch must once again be mixed into the wine and allowed to settle again. Some home wine makers are tempted to stop the process right there, since the rest of the liquid looks clear. According to experts and those who have experimented with both ways of doing it, this would be a bad idea because the clarifying or fining agent acts much more efficiently when it works in combination with the contaminants that are mixed back into the wine. So if your kit doesn't specify what to do during certain steps, have a wine making guide or other literature handy as back up.

Tip: Making Your Own Wine Labels

Now that you've made your own wine, you'll want to make wine labels to finish the job. Here's what you'll need: Assuming you'll want to create several labels at once instead of making them one at a time by hand (each 6-gallon batch of wine produces around 30 bottles), here are the items that you'll need to make your own wine labels: 1. Computer 2. Printer (do you want color or black and white labels?) 3. Plain/gummed paper or label stock 4. Software that supports graphics and labels (Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, Print Shop, FileMaker Pro, Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel) 5. Scissors or paper cutter 6. Scanner (to add chosen art or photos onto your label) 7. Digital camera Don't forget to prevent your ink from running. After you print your wine labels and allow the ink to dry, spray a waterproof coating on the labels before cutting or separating the labels, then apply the labels to the bottle.

Tip: Racking and Bottling Your Wine

"Racking" means transferring the fermenting wine away from sediment. You insert a clear, half-inch diameter plastic hose into the fermenter and siphon the clear wine into another sanitized jug. Then top it off and fit it with a sanitized bung and fermentation lock. This can be a delicate operation when wine making at home and it's important to go slowly. You don't want to stir up the sediment, but you don't want to lose your siphon suction. Bottling the Batch: To bottle your wine, you simply siphon your finished product into the bottles (leaving about 2 inches of headspace below the rim), insert a cork into the hand corker, position the bottle under the corker and pull the lever. It's always wise to buy some extra corks and practice with an empty bottle before you do it for real. Also, keep in mind, when finally enjoying your wine, remember this tip on recorking it: use the opposite end of the cork that was closest to the wine. Because of the spongy nature, the cork has absorbed some liquid, and thus the dry end of the cork will fit more easily into the mouth of the bottle.

Tip: The "other" wine

You may be one of those people who like to do things for themselves. Then, making wine at home is for you. But what if you don't like the taste or are tired of using grapes. How about strawberries, blueberries, chickory or even dandelions! Wine is not limited to

just using grapes. Just about any fruit can be turned into wine. Your own taste will dictate the need for additional sugar and acidity. Also, you may have to add yeast if there is not enough naturally on the fruit in order to get the fermentation process started. Oh, the possibilities!

Tip: Think of Angle, Light and Movement When Storing Wine

Wine making at home requires attention to every little detail. Many guidelines tell you at what temperature to keep your wine stored. However, don't overlook other elements in the room that could detract from your wine once its made and waiting for use. Think about the angle you store your bottles, the light in the room and minimizing movement of bottles once they are stored. Table wine is stored horizontally so that the wine stays in contact with the cork. This keeps the cork moist which prevents air from entering the wine. Fortified wines other than port are stored standing. If bottles are stored with the labels up, it will be easier to see the deposit of sediment that forms on the opposite side of the bottle when it comes time to open it. Wines should be stored in such a way that you don't have to move them around to get at a particular bottle. Once a wine is laid down, it should stay there until it is opened. Light will prematurely age a bottle of wine. Incandescent or sodium vapor lights are better for a cellar than fluorescent lighting. While clear bottles are most susceptible to light, ultraviolet light will penetrate even dark colored glass. Ultraviolet light may give a wine unpleasant aromas and ruin it. Extra care should be given to sparkling wines as they are more sensitive to light than other wines.

Tip: What to do if Your Grapes are Too Cold

When wine making at home, if your grapes have been refrigerated or are too cold, use this unorthodox but quick trick, courtesy of Wine Maker Magazine: Heat up a small portion of the juice in the microwave, mix it back into the fermentation pail and retest the temperature. An electric blanket wrapped around the fermentation pail also works, but takes longer. For cooling, add a reusable ice pack and stir for a few minutes. Pitch the yeast when the temperature reaches 70 F to 75 F for reds and 55 F to 65 F for whites.

Category: Wine Shipping

Subcategory: Wine Shipping

Tip: Tracking Your Wine Delivery

Some companies make it easy to track your wine delivery through emails and tracking systems set up on their Web sites. Check to see if this service is offered by the company you are dealing with. Some companies will email you every step of the way. Companies can provide you a tracking number that you can plug into the Web site so

you can check the status of your wine delivery. Some companies warn that it can take 24 hours after shipping before tracking information appears on the site.

Category: Wine Tasting

Subcategory: Wine Tasting

Tip: Host a Wine Tasting Party

Itching to try new wines with a bunch of friends? Want to host a unique party that will have your friends talking for weeks? Then think about hosting a wine tasting party. There are several ways to do this. You can either hire professionals to come into your home to run the whole event or you can do everything yourself. Here are some helpful hints for either way. Hiring professionals: There are companies that send wine consultants into your home to school your friends about tasting wine, wine terminology and wine accessories. They bring the wine, pass out score cards, talk about each bottle and answer questions. After that, they take wine orders for those who'd like to buy. Often, hosts get special rewards for throwing the party. For example, free shipping, a free wine accessory or a percentage off their order. Do it yourself: Send out invitations to your wine tasting party and ask guests to bring a bottle of wine. It's best to stay in one theme. For example, stick to Cabernets or Chardonnays or Italian wines. When the guests arrive, bag the wines so they can't be seen and number them. As your guests go about the room tasting, they have a score sheet where they mark down what they think. The person who brought the wine most people enjoy wins a prize (perhaps a bottle of wine). As with the first option, supply light appetizers such as cheese and crackers so guests can clean their palates.

Tip: The Three Essentials of Wine Tasting: Look, Smell, Taste

When tasting wine, there are three things you should keep in mind: the look, taste and smell. The look: you can tell a lot about a wine from its appearance. White wines range in color from green to yellow to brown. More color in a white wine usually indicates more flavor and age. Red wines can range from a pale red to a deep brown red, usually becoming lighter in color as they age. Swirling: Swirling the wine serves many purposes, but visually it allows you to observe the body of the wine. Notice its "legs" - the streaks or tears of wine that cling to a glass as the wine settles back to the bottom. Good legs may indicate a thicker body and a higher alcohol content or sweetness level. Rim color: you can guess the age of a red wine by observing its "rim." Tilt the glass slightly and look at the edge of the wine. A purple tint may indicate youth while orange to brown indicates maturity. The smell: the aroma in wine is called the bouquet or nose. Take a quick sniff and think about your first impression of its scent. Then take a second deeper sniff. Try to concentrate on smell separate from taste. Do one at a time. Common aromas are wood, spices, flowers and fruit. The taste: there are different

levels of taste. There's the initial taste (or first impression), which is where the wine awakens your senses by triggering your taste buds to respond to sensations. Then there is the main taste, which is where you slosh the wine around a bit to draw in some air. Examine the body and texture of the wine. Is it light or rich? Smooth or harsh? Then there is the aftertaste, the taste that remains in your mouth after you have swallowed the wine. How long did the taste last? Was it pleasant?

Tip: To Spit or Not to Spit?

If you're wondering whether you should spit at your next wine tasting event, the answer is yes. While spitting is considered a rude behavior in most situations, it is proper and quite necessary at wine tasting events. Without spitting, your body will likely get intoxicated from the taste and smell of several wines in a row and you'll never last the day. However, there are spitting rules you should follow to ensure that even in a place where spitting is allowed, you aren't being rude. 1. Never try and spit across another person. 2. Stop conversation with a person who has a mouthful of wine. Let them analyze and focus on the wine, which is why they are there. 3. When you finish tasting the wine, spit in a single jet stream line in the spittoon through pursed lips. 4. When you're finished spitting, there should be no drips on the floor or countertop.

Category: Wine Varietals

Subcategory: Wine Varietals

Tip: Finding Specialty Wines

"Specialty wine" is used to describe special types of wine such as port, sherry, ice wine, or sake. However, it is also used on wine bottles to label a particular wine a "specialty" wine. The label of "specialty wine" is very often a limited edition wine or a premium wine. For example, if you check out Chateau Julien Winery online you will find wines such as 2004 Gewurztraminer and 2004 Sangiovese Rosato under the specialty wine category. Consider the source of the term. Is it from a winery or a retailer? Retailers may use the term to categorize expensive wines. And this isn't always on par with what the vintner is trying to say. So when you see the term, be sure to dig deeper and investigate. Another aspect of specialty wines refers to a wine companies seasonal, promotional or hard-to-find wines. Specialty wines also refer to boutique wines, small producers, hard to find wines and classic wines from wine producers. Wines from specific regions or seasonal regions can also be considered "specialty wines."

Tip: How Champagne is Bottled and Named

We've all heard the pop of a Champagne bottle and most likely were laughing and celebrating at the time. But have you ever stopped to think about how Champagne is

bottled? There are plenty of choices when choosing a size of Champagne. That's because Champagne, along with many other wines, is bottled in 10 different sizes: - Quarter bottle, which has 6.3 fluid ounces - Half bottle, which has 12.7 fluid ounces - Bottle, which has 25.4 fluid ounces - Magnum (two bottles), which has 50.8 fluid ounces - Jeroboam (four bottles), which has 101.6 fluid ounces - Rehoboam (six bottles), which has 147 fluid ounces - Methuselah (eight bottles), which has 196 fluid ounces - Salmanazar (12 bottles), which is 9 liters or 304.8 fluid ounces - Balthazar (16 bottles), which is 12 liters or 406.4 fluid ounces - Nebuchadnezzar (20 bottles), which is 15 liters or 508 fluid ounces Only the half-bottle, bottle and magnum are always released in the bottle in which they underwent the second fermentation. For this reason and because it is the largest of the three, the magnum is the preferred size. The three largest sizes are rarely made today. And remember: if a bubbly wine isn't made in Champagne, it technically should be called sparkling wine instead. Sparkling wine is an umbrella category for wine with bubbles.

Category: Wines of the World

Subcategory: Wines of the World

Tip: A White Burgundy That is Not a Chardonnay

When you see the French growing region of Burgundy, or Bourgogne, on a bottle of white wine, it likely means the wine is made from Chardonnay grapes. But beware that this isn't always so. If you see a bottle of white Burgundy with the word Aligote written on it, the wine is from the less common Aligote grape.

Tip: Access to Australian Wine Has Never Been Easier

For those who enjoy Australian wines and the way Australian wine makers can blend wines of different grape varieties across different regions, you'll be glad to hear that the 24th Annual Australian & New Zealand Wine Industry Directory reports that the number of Australian wine producers continues to grow - and online access has never been higher. There are now more than 2,000 wine producing companies in Australia, the directory states. And the wine companies are using the Internet to a greater extent - a whopping 75 percent of companies now have a Web site, up from just 37 percent five years ago. Also, 93 percent of Australian wine companies now list an email address. Therefore, it's easier than ever to enjoy Australia's famous "Big Reds" such as Shiraz and Pinot Noir as well as its Chardonnay, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc. Australia's wine industry has the highest percentage of premium grape varieties (70 percent) of any wine industry in the world. Australian wines come out of all sections of Australia, including: - Pinot Noir and sparklings from Tasmania and the Yarra Valley - Riesling in Margaret River and the Clare Valley - Sauvignon Blanc from Adelaide Hills - Semillon from the Hunter Valley - Grenache from the Barossa Valley - Aussie winemakers also

have success with Italian varietals, such as Barbera, and traditional French grapes, like Viognier and Marsanne

Tip: Don't Miss Out On Outstanding Italian White Wines

When discussing the wines of the world, you may hear the common misconception that Italy's best wines are all red. This is not always true. While Italy does make twice as many red wines as white (and some of the famous names such as Chianti, Barolo and Brunello di Montalcino are red), don't discount Italian white wines because they can be superb. The region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia makes excellent white wines and so does Alto Adige. Check out Campania's Fiano di Avellino and Greco di Tufo. Piedmont and Tuscany - the red wine capitals of Italy - also make fine whites such as Gavi, Arneis and Vernaccia di San Gimignano.

Tip: Great Buys: Chardonnay

Some top sellers and good buys on Chardonnays, from various experts: - 2004 Sharpshooter Chardonnay Sonoma, cost around \$16. Bright, aromatic, rich and lively. Ripe pear and apple flavors with a hint of nutmeg and vanilla. - San Felipe Chardonnay, cost around \$7. Aromas of rich tropical fruit, flavors of citrus, pineapple and vanilla. - Grand Cru Chardonnay, cost around \$6. Light and buttery with hints of pear, peach and green apple. - 2004 Falling Star Chardonnay, Argentina, cost is \$5. Smells and tastes a bit like Sauvignon Blanc. Its aromas and flavors are grassy and pungent, with pineapple, lime and chalk. - 2003 Turner Road Vineyards Central Coast Chardonnay, cost is \$10. Light, simple and pleasant, with aromas of lemon, olive oil, honey and talcum powder and appealing flavors of pineapple, lemon and some honey. - 2003 Tin Roof California Chardonnay, cost is \$8. It has more of a lime taste, with notes of pine forest, and aromas of butter, olive oil, lime, nail polish and pine tree.

Tip: Spanish Wine Regions

With the increasing world-wide popularity of Spanish wines, the newest darlings of importers are the wines of Rioja, Penedes and other wine-growing regions of Spain. For those of you smitten with Spanish wine and spirits, here is a snapshot of the Spanish wine regions. Ribero del Duero: This region now rivals Rioja as the most exciting wine region of Spain. Its wines are big and bold with lots of chunky fruits. It is the home of the Vega Sicilia - Spain's most famous wine with yields as low as 18 hectolitres per hectare and made entirely from french grapes with a tiny addition of Tempranillo. Rioja: If anything, Spain's Rioja was too successful and the Spanish people are now trying to convince the world that they have other wine regions. The region takes its name from the Rio Oja which is one of the tributaries of the river Ebro. The region of Rioja actually evolved out of its trade with Bordeaux during the time of Phylloxera the disease which destroys the roots of the vines before one realises it has attacked. Jerez: The unique wine that is Sherry comes from an area of Spain called Jerez in the hot dry Southwest

of the country. Sherry is a very underrated quality wine and comes in a variety of styles from very dry - 'Fino' and 'Manzanilla', through to the medium styles of 'Amontillado' and dry 'Oloroso' to the ultra rich sweet cream Sherries. Valdepeñas: The name means 'The Valley of Stones'. Again this region has very hot humid summers and cold winters. Some excellent Reserva and Gran Reserva wines using 100% Tempranillo and extremely good value for money. Navarra: Navarra is situated next door to Rioja, and produces 2 different styles of wine: traditional styles using indigenous grapes; and modern styles like Palacio de La Vega and Ochoa using French grapes along with the Spanish varieties. The quality of wine produced in this region has increased immensely. Lots of ripe approachable fruit with intense flavours and firm structure. The best are capable of ageing. Tempranillo has become the preferred variety for red wine production. Penedes: Situated south of Barcelona this region produces elegant light wines, mainly white but the reds are fast gaining popularity. Rueda: Mainly a white wine producing area made from 100% Verdejo grape. Good Sauvignon Blanc made in this area. Costers del Segres: Another newly created wine area situated around the town of Lerida. Alongside the Spanish grapes you will find Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay growing. These grapes have adapted well to the area and are producing some extraordinary good wines, eg Raimat Estate. La Mancha: Situated almost in the centre of Spain with extremes of temperatures - hot summers and very cold winters. Ten years ago La Mancha was producing large quantities of cheap table wine but lately we have seen a cut back in production and an increase in quality. Rias Baxas: Mainly a white wine area produced from the Albarino Grape. Some fantastic wines which taste like some of the good barrel fermented Chardonnay's Priorato: Producing unique and truly Spanish wine, Priorato is one of the great red wines of Spain. Rich, robust wine full of ripe fruit with great body and structure. Delicious. Somontano: Another up and coming wine region situated at the foothills of the Pyrenees supporting lots of young dedicated winemakers. This is an area to watch for the future. Ribeiro: Located in the north-west corner of Spain on the Portuguese border, this region produces fine quality white wines and some very pleasant light reds. Valencia: Large scale production of table reds, whites and rosés plus Moscatel dessert white wines.

Tip: Wine Labels From Different Wine Regions

When perusing different wines of the world and wine regions of the world, learning how to read a wine label will help you greatly. You can always trust the wine label to provide you with facts about the wine. Don't forget to turn the bottle to review the second (back) label. You may be surprised at the further information hidden there. Grape Variety: The grape variety is the best indication of taste. Region: Where the wine comes from is the next best indicator. As European wines don't always state grape varieties, some information about regions will help. Terroir: Terroir is a fancy description for soil, climate and exposure. These factors can influence the grape style and flavor of the wine. Vintage: The word "vintage" simply refers to wine from a particular year, and not all "vintage" years are good. Classification: While classification systems can serve as a guide, they are not foolproof ways to choose great wines. There are plenty of great

wines that do not have pedigrees. The USA classification system, American Viticultural Areas (AVA), guarantees geographical origins of wine, not quality.

Tip: Wine Lingo Lesson

When discussing the wines of the world, it's a good idea to know wine lingo. The last thing you want to do is call a sweet wine dry. Or call a white wine with low alcohol content full-bodied. Here are some pointers, courtesy of wine expert and author Leslie Sbrocco: Dry: a wine that is not overly sweet but will have an appealing, succulent quality. Medium- to full-bodied: these are some of the highest alcohol reds around. Most are 13.5 to 14 or more percent alcohol, which puts them in the "big boy" wine category. Medium to strong tannins: thick, dark grape skins result in very strong tannins. And here are some Champagne terms you may wish to remember for the next time you're buying a bottle of bubbly for an event: Natural: very dry Brut: dry Extra-dry: extra-dry bubbly is slightly sweeter than brut Demi-sec: means "half-dry," which means it's on the sweeter side. If you want Champagne to serve with dessert, look for a demi-sec.