



HOW TO HOST A

# WINE TASTING

A GUIDE BY:  
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# I. INTRODUCTION

Get ready to be named The Host With The Most. Hosting wine tasting parties, wine clubs and themed wine dinners is so much fun! You're literally pairing wine with food and there's nothing better.

The only downside is the prep. Creating and organizing a party takes a lot of planning and prep work depending on the style and format of your party. There are hundreds of options. Red wine vs white wine or both. Casual vs formal. Special occasion vs weekend neighborhood event. Hor d'oeuvres vs dinner. Indoor vs outdoor. Kids present vs no kids. Theme vs no theme.

Then there's hosting a professional event. There's a completely different set of rules versus just having your friends or neighbors over.

In this step-by-step guide to Hosting A Wine Tasting Party, our team will let you in on all of our juicy little secrets, tips, shortcuts and tricks to hosting.

The Armchair Sommelier party planning team is made up of Certified Specialists of Wine, writers and professional party planners.

We've planned corporate events and dinners, booked trips and hosted wine tastings both for friends and professionally. All of us have a background in partying (ahem, some more than others and some details are too much to share).

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***Tip #1: if you're hosting a professional event, you must stay sober. You must not partake in the tasting events. Take it from us. You're welcome.***

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The Golden Rule of wine-tasting parties is this: IT MUST BE FUN, IT MUST BE SET UP TO BE ENJOYED - YOU'RE JUDGING WINES, NOT EACH OTHER.

## **How To Make The Most Of This Guide And Host The Best Wine-Tasting Party Ever**

Use the table of contents and bounce around or for quick reference.

There will be moments of overwhelm because if you've never hosted an organized party before it will initially seem like a lot.

Fret not! In this ebook we're breaking down the types of wine tastings, equipment needed based on the type of party you're hosting, 20 different theme options (plus invitations!), how to shop, how to store, how to serve and how to have the most fun (games and prizes of course!!).

You'll be given a checklist that doubles as a shopping list to ensure you don't miss a thing. We're here to make you as successful as possible with as little effort as possible.

You're the star here. We want to make you shine bright!

Know this: this party is going to be so incredible that your friends, clients and even you are going to have the best time.

Your clients will be talking about it all year (yes, they will) and your friends are going to beg you to host again and again.

Obviously the most important part of a fun wine tasting at home is bringing some real gems to the party.

## **For A Professional Wine Tasting**

The results you'll get from your wine tasting will shock you. If you follow this guide, you will make a lasting impression on your clients. They'll bring it up every time they see you. At conferences and conventions and in one-on-one meetings.

You'll instantly establish rapport and if you already have a relationship, these relationships will only strengthen. You will establish trust and you'll be the one they go to for their buying needs. No matter what industry you're in. Insurance, Medical Sales, Real Estate, Investment Clients (refer back to tip #1), Cosmetic Sales, fill in the blank industry.

In fact, you'll get so good at this you may just find another career in the process.

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***Tip #2: if you're in cosmetic sales do not break out the wine until AFTER the event. Wine will make the skin look flush and it will be impossible for your client to get the desired results.***

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## 2. WINE EQUIPMENT

Regardless of the theme and style of the wine tasting you go with, here's a basic list of things you'll need:

### Glassware

For a professional tasting, good wine glasses are important. Wines are made to delight with inviting aromas, textures, and flavors. Good wine glasses are designed to showcase all of these elements. You'll need a good-sized stash of glasses. We prefer Riedel because they're gorgeous, they 100% bring out the best of their contents, and are nearly indestructible. You'll need two to three white wine glasses and two to four red wine glasses per person.

If you're hosting at your home for friends, good glasses are a nice-to-have but it's honestly more about the experience of enjoying new wines and each other's company (and the food). It's not completely out of the question to use one glass for all wines.

This can be controversial but I never recommend rinsing with water or even swishing my mouth with water. If I'm using one glass I will do a tiny rinse with the following wine and dump it. To cleanse my palate I will take a bite of bread and nothing else (no strong flavors).



### Wine Opener

Next, you'll need a few very good corkscrews. It's all about preference here but I prefer to use a waiter's tool. Some prefer a winged corkscrew or even an electric opener. It's best to choose one you are comfortable using as you'll be opening numerous bottles. If you're hosting a professional tasting, opt for a waiter's tool. Practice at home.

### Which Wines Should I Aerate And For How Long?

Depending on the wines you select, you may need a decanter. Nearly all wines benefit from being aerated. The amount of time is relative and is by no means a science.

To let wine breathe means to allow the wine to be exposed to oxygen as it is being poured out of the bottle. This process will "open up" a wine, releasing flavors and aromas that sometimes get locked into a wine that's been in its bottle for a long time.



Now, almost every style of wine can benefit from being aerated, with some needing it more than others. Most notably, young tannic reds will soften if aerated, while old tannic reds will open up and unlock sleepy flavors.

The process of aerating won't work by simply uncorking the wine and letting it sit out.

**Young Bold Tannic Reds** (ex. Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Merlot, Malbec)- Should be aerated to soften harsh tannins for 15-30 minutes.

**Old Reds with High Tannins** (ex. Cabernet Sauvignon, Nebbiolo)- Should be tasted first and possibly aerated if the wine seems "tight" or inexpressive like something is missing. If the wine seems tight, aerate it for around 10 minutes.

**Old Reds with Low Tannins** (ex. Pinot Noir, Red Burgundy, Chianti Classico)- Should not be aerated at all, as they will immediately lose their delicate flavor.

**Sparkling Wines** (ex. Champagne, Cava, Prosecco)- Should not be aerated, as this will destroy delicate bubbles.

**Young White Wines** (ex. Sauvignon Blanc, Chablis)- Can benefit from 10-20 minutes of aeration, especially if the wine tastes reductive (think sulfur, rotten eggs or matchstick aroma.)

**Older White Wines** (ex. White Burgundy, Older White Bordeaux)- Similar rules to older red wines, avoid aerating lighter aromatic whites for long, as that could ruin delicate flavors.

**White Wines That Have A Bigger Backbone** such as Chardonnay can benefit from 10 minutes or so of aeration.

## Decanter

These are great because they create a wide surface area and their shape exposes the wine to oxygen as it's being poured. They also look cool on the table.

## Aerator

These are pourers that you attach to the bottle that swirl the wine around before it makes its way into your glass. These are helpful, but they won't do the entire job in the few seconds it takes to pour wine through them.

## Other Accessories

You'll want to also set everyone up with a water glass, personal spit cup, napkin, tasting guide and pen. Make sure there are multiple carafes of water on the table alongside a dump bucket, for people to pour out their spit cups.



For white wines most people chill them in ice buckets, but chill them too much and you'll end up not being able to taste all the flavors present. Go for a small amount of ice with water.

### **Glass Identifiers**

If it's a light hearted wine tasting party, such as a bridal shower or bachelorette party, there are lots of different novelty wine charms you can attach to the wine. Alternatively, if you prefer something more simple, use wine glass tags or non-permanent wine glass markers like a white out pen.



# 3. TYPES OF TASTINGS

You can either run the show entirely, selecting all the wines, or invite everyone to bring a bottle.

If you're like, hell-to-the-no when it comes to selecting all wines- for budgetary reasons (been there!)- offer to select all the wines but dish out instructions on the food, if your tasting includes food.

You could, start by learning the wines in your region, and slowly open up geographically to other areas as you feel more confident in deciphering a terroir's influence on wine.

Don't be easily influenced by trends - wine is a subjective joy, as it should be!

Wine trends are often constructed and inflated by some in the industry to push a specific product that they benefit from - so don't feel trapped by other people's aggressive marketing.

## **Choose 4 - 8 different wines to taste.**

The recommended amount of each wine for a tasting is 2 ounces per person. So, 1 bottle of each wine will serve up to 12 people. I think 6 wines is best (perhaps 3 white and 3 red) as that's about enough to keep everyone's attention—any more and it can become hard to distinguish them all from one another.



## **Tasting Format**

First, you need to think about what format your party will take. You can apply most of the wine tasting party ideas below to gatherings of all sizes but you do need to decide how best to structure the evening.

## **Small Groups**

If you have a small group, 6 -12 people, it's preferable to seat everyone around a table and structure it like a dinner party. This way, not only is there plenty of space for glasses and bottles, but it creates an intimate vibe for everyone to discuss and share.

Plus, you can control the pace of the wine tasting more easily, moving onto the next one when everybody is ready. So let the size of your table dictate the best number of guests.



Alternatively, for a more relaxed vibe you could arrange everyone on chairs or seating around a coffee table in the middle of your sitting room. You can use our wine tasting party ideas with either set up.

## Large Groups

For larger groups, think of it as a 'cocktail party' but set up a number of small tables around the perimeter of the room (kitchen or any room where everyone will gather) to act as 'wine stations'.

Number each wine station so they flow around the room in chronological order (so that guests taste each wine in the correct order—more on this in the 'Things To Remember' section wine tasting party ideas). This way people can work their way around the room in smaller groups at their own pace.

## Tasting Menus

For non-blind tastings it's quite nice to provide a simple tasting menu which introduces each wine with some background information such as the country of origin, the flavor profile, and perhaps some background on the winemaker.

## Flavor Profiles

For blind tastings provide some notes explaining the flavor profile for different grapes to help steer guests in the right direction (see Blind Tastings in the themes section for more info).

## Bottle Bags

Finally, for blind tastings don't forget to provide some bags to wrap each bottle in to hide the label. Or simply use foil.

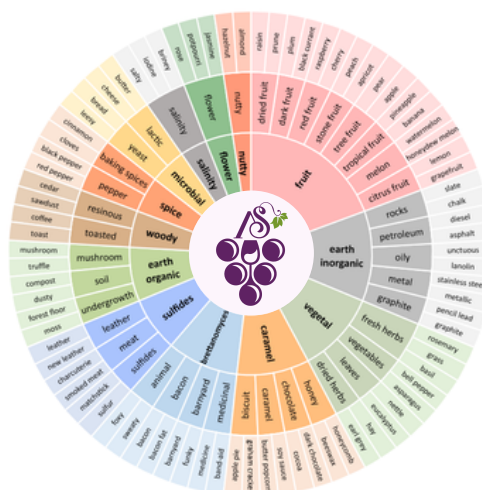
Remove the foil capsule from the top of each bottle, then roll the bottle in foil, crushing the bottom flat. Number each with a marking pen to ensure that the right wines are poured into the right glasses. (It is easier to uncork the bottles after they are wrapped.) You'll be referring to wine No. 2 or wine No. 3 and revealing the labels only at the end.

## Tasting Guide and Aroma Wheel

Should you take notes? How? Tastings are a great opportunity to learn more about wine and your wine preferences, so you should definitely feel comfortable taking notes. This will help you guests stay organized and to get the most out of the notes, categories are listed on the Armchair Sommelier Tasting Guide to consider for each sample: sight, smell, taste and finish.

Use your [tasting guide](#) to rate and make notes on each wine.

In order to help you learn how to better describe wines as you continue to develop your palate and improve your tasting skills, consider encouraging your guests to purchase a tasting notebook. But also consider everyone's budget when organizing your party.



# 4. HOW TO TASTE WINE

## How do you properly taste wine?

Your party is already shaping up to be a blast! But let's be real, everyone will be worried about their tasting technique. Do you dive right in and start sipping? When are you supposed to swirl? Do you sip, swish and nod thoughtfully?

Remember, we're judging wines and not each other. However, here's the scoop on how you should approach each pour, this is commonly referred to as "the five S's."

### See

Start by holding the glass (preferably over a white table cloth) tilted away from you to check out the color. What sort of hue does it have? Try to identify the shade of white or red, for example is the white wine a straw yellow, yellow-green, or gold color? Or is the red wine a ruby red, red-brown, or purple-ish color?

Is it clear or opaque? Does it have any sediment? All of these things can tell you more about the wine.

### Swirl

Then swirl your glass gently for a good 5-10 seconds. This will help awaken and release the aromas of the wine.

### Sniff

Put your nose to the glass and inhale deeply to see what the smells remind you of? Can you identify any fruits, flowers,



herbs, spices, or even more unusual flavors such as chocolate or oak? Those wines can have vanilla, toast, baking spice, nut or coconut notes.

Keep it light hearted. If no one grew up smelling petroleum, they likely won't pick up this note and it doesn't mean their sniffer is broken.

### Sip

Time for the best part—sipping. (To be honest, my favorite part is actually the sniffing. I love the smell of dirt and brine and that's nearly what I smell most of the time). Take a sip but don't swallow the wine. Instead let it swirl around gently in your mouth, gently. It's not mouthwash. Think about things like whether it's dry or sweet? Light or heavy? Thick or thin? Creamy or crisp?

### Savor

When you've got a good taste, savor the wine. You can either swallow or spit. Swallow the wine and think about what sort of after-taste (or 'finish') it has. How long the wine lingers on your palate is called the finish. Do the flavors linger or disappear quickly? Would you describe it as light-bodied (watery), medium (milky), or full bodied (creamy)?



## 5. WINE TASTING PARTY IDEAS

Firstly, you don't have to be a wine expert to host a wine tasting party.

These wine tasting party ideas have been designed to make wine tasting accessible and enjoyable for everyone, regardless of how much you or your guests know about wine.

So whether the wine tasting is the entire theme of your party or just a small part added on to enhance a birthday / dinner party the main thing to remember is: make it fun.

You want your guests to enjoy some great tasting wines and maybe learn something new along the way. The last thing you want is for people to feel intimidated or that they can't contribute.

The wine tasting party ideas below are designed with this in mind. Don't take it too seriously and do everything you can to put your guests at ease. Encourage people to express what they like or don't like about each wine, because there isn't a right or wrong when it comes to taste.

Yes, there are tasting note cards but if your guests were not exposed to chocolate (I know but...) they will not detect chocolate notes.

### **What To Eat & When**

Next, decide the emphasis you want to place on the wine tasting part of the party. This will affect what choices you make for themes and when to serve the food. Decide which of the following wine tasting party ideas is the best choice for your group:

## The Wine's The Star

If the wine tasting is the main focus of your party and you genuinely want guests to discover and discuss different flavors of wine (and perhaps try to identify them blind) then don't serve any alcohol or soft drinks before the tasting begins.

Everyone will need to start with a clean palate so as not to affect the taste of the wines. Invite everyone to come at a certain time and ask them to be prompt. Then just serve sparkling water (and appetizers if you really feel you need to) for the first half hour as guests arrive then go straight into the wine tasting.

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***Tip #3: Don't include any strong flavors such as olives, pickles or cheese in your appetizers, as this will also affect the taste of the wine. Despite the common pairing of wine and cheese, this is best avoided before and during a wine tasting. After the wine tasting you can then move onto more appetizers, dinner, or dessert.***

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## The Wine Plays A Supporting Role

For more informal wine tasting party ideas, where your objective is for guests to sample some great wines without trying to identify flavors or the type of grape then you can pair each wine with a different complimentary appetizer.

Alternatively, for a seated dinner you could integrate some of these wine tasting party ideas with the meal by tasting a different wine with each course. This is quite a nice way to really savor each wine and you can have a lot of fun designing a menu where each dish compliments a different wine. It's just like ordering a prix fixe meal with wine pairing at a restaurant. (Always fun!)

## Music & Atmosphere

Spend time compiling a great playlist that fits the theme of your party and that underscores — not overpowers — conversation. For a professional tasting or a special occasion, you could hire a DJ. Talk about WOW factor.



# 6. THEMES

Let the salivating begin.

Some of the most successful and fun wine tastings we've been to and organized have been the ones where there was a theme. Your group will be crazy with anticipation leading up to your event. I guarantee it.

A wine tasting is such a broad concept and could be interpreted as slightly stuffy, even pretentious, and we absolutely do not want that! So having a themed wine tasting party can help communicate more clearly to your guests the type of party you have in mind.

For example, just saying the party is a wine tasting might make it sound a bit pinky-up. But instead, say it is 'a quest to discover the wines and foods of Tuscany'. Phrasing it like this will add excitement and get everyone thinking creatively.

Here are a few easy themes you could try to give you wine tasting party event more original:

## Blind Tastings

A blind tasting is fun when you want to compare different varietals like Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Shiraz, and Pinot Noir. It can add a bit of fun to these wine tasting party ideas because it gets your guests more involved. And these four varietals have very distinct profiles, unlike comparing all Pinot Noir wines from different regions.



The wine labels are hidden and your guests will try to identify the grape, and perhaps the price point from the appearance, aroma, and taste of the wine. Guessing the price point can be fun or can be intimidating. I say, go for it!

Note: keep in mind if your guests aren't already familiar with different wines, a blind tasting can be a bit intimidating. So, it's a good idea to print off some very short descriptions explaining the qualities and maybe the flavors associated with the different wines.

For example, if you're tasting three white wines, provide short notes about four of five different white wines (always provide more descriptions than the number of available wines so some act as obvious NO's and they can just work out which is which by process of elimination).

As they taste and discuss each wine, have your guests make a note of which they think it is, the country of origin possibly, the price point, and which is their favorite. At the end reveal all the answers and see who has correctly identified the most wines. It's often interesting to see whether people preferred the old world wines or the new world ones, or the cheaper ones to the more expensive.



Sometimes it turns out to be the opposite of what's expected—that's the beauty of a blind tasting.

You can make these wine tasting party ideas as difficult or easy as you like, for instance, you might want to tell everyone the country of origin of each wine as a starting clue, or you could make things more competitive by splitting people into teams (men v women usually brings out everyone's competitive streak!).

Try this out as an icebreaker or for parties with large numbers.

### **Non-Blind Tastings**

Non-blind wine tastings work well for more relaxed, informal tastings where the objective is just to taste and enjoy the wines, or for when combining with dinner.

As with a blind tasting you could explore different varietals, or you could compare the same type of grape from different countries or vintages to see how different they can be.

The advantage of a non-blind tasting is that knowing more about the wine, such as the country, flavor profile, and a little history about the winery, can really move the needle on the fun-o-meter and add to your guests' enjoyment of the wine.

For example, being told that a Brunello di Montalcino from Tuscany has a taste of blackberries, currant and spice with hints of plum and raspberry really gives you the opportunity to picture a Tuscan vineyard in your mind. With those queues everyone can then focus their taste buds on those particular flavors.

### **Special Bottle Sunday (or Any Day Really...)**

Inspired by the national phenomenon that grew out of longtime, Wall Street Journal wine column Open That Special Bottle Night, "Special Bottle Sunday" is just what it sounds like: an evening to invite over your friends to share special wines you've all been saving. The theme makes for a wonderful tasting that focuses on great friends and great wine – and reminds you that you don't have to have a reason to enjoy the better things in life

### **Brunch**

Hosting a brunch wine tasting is easy and who doesn't love a boozy brunch with girlfriends? It's easy because there are small bites to share alongside your favorite sips. Think fruit kebabs with sweet wine and mini chicken-and-waffles paired with a light Pinot Noir.



And let's not forget the OG brunch bev - mimosas! You can start there and work your way into bolder red wines that pair with savory meats like breakfast sausage and bacon. Celebrate Mother's Day or Bridal Shower.

### **Que Syrah, Shiraz**

Whether it's Syrah or something else (you might also try Perfect Pinots, Killer Cabs or Strictly Sangiovese), a varietal tasting offers a selection of wines made from the same grape - and leaves you all with a better understanding of its perks and pairings. Be sure to try wines made from this grape in different regions, and it's also a good idea to serve a few finger foods known to partner well with the variety.

### **The Price Is Right**

One of my favorite wine tasting party ideas is a spin-off of a blind tasting. Half the wines are affordable everyday wines and the other half more expensive fine wines.

Have everyone taste the wines blind and rank them in order of price from low to high, along with their reasons and which they preferred. There's always a surprise.

### **Best Wines Under \$25**

Remember to keep your guests' budgets in mind. So if your guests aren't the type to spend large amounts when buying a bottle of wine you could make that the theme of your tasting. For example, 'The best wines under \$10 / \$20' (or whatever price point is appropriate). You could always throw in one more expensive wine without telling them, taste them all blind, and see if it stands out.

## Wine & Chocolate

You can't simply pair any wine with chocolate, as most chocolate will ruin the flavor of some wine. You have to match intense, fruity wines with high cocoa content quality chocolate.

As a general rule of thumb, pair white wines with a lighter chocolate, such as white or milk chocolate, creating complimentary flavor profiles. Red wine pairs best with dark chocolate.

The geniuses at Lindt have done all the hard work for us by teaming up with J.Lohr Vineyards to find the perfect wine pairings for their Lindt Excellence range of chocolate. You'll find flavors such as 'Intense Orange', 'A Touch of Sea Salt', 'Chili', 'Pineapple', and '70% Cocoa'.

## Keep It Local

Make local wines the theme of your wine tasting party ideas. This is usually a great opportunity to sample smaller wine producers from local winemakers. Complement the wines with local food from the farmers markets.

Yes, every state in the US produces wine and nearly every country in the world produces wine.

## Holiday Tasting Party

Holiday season gives us the perfect opportunity to gather friends and family—and sip wine together. Choose a Christmas cookie swap theme, White Elephant/Yankee Swap gift party, or a more elegant appetizers and wine night.

Going for laughs? An “ugly sweater” party is one of the most-requested themes during the season. The photos are priceless.

Don't forget a door prize for the ugliest sweater!







## Old World vs. New World

Compare Old World wines (European, lighter-bodied, exhibiting more herb, earth, mineral and floral components) to New World wines (non-European, riper, more alcoholic, full-bodied and fruit-centered). Find out who is a classic wine lover and who is a more modern wine lover. Everyone enjoys this theme.

## Country Themes

Showcasing a country or region is a great wine tasting party idea. For example, you might want to choose each wine from a different country then you could serve a themed appetizer (or dish, if it's a seated dinner) to match each wine. Or, it could become the theme of your entire wine tasting party.

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***Tip #4: There's also no reason why you can't incorporate your wine tasting party ideas into another party theme altogether. You don't necessarily have to make the wine tasting the actual theme of the night.***

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## Potato Chips & Sparkling Wine

Hosting a potato chips and wine tasting might seem a bit dull, but it's always a hit. Not only is it easy to find a variety of flavors, but it's budget friendly. If you want to add some flair, pair potato chips with crème fraîche, caviar and bubbles.

## South African Wines

South African wines have big, bold, fruity flavors and exploring these wines would give you a great excuse to serve your guests some exotic meats and fish like antelope, venison, ostrich, tilapia, Nile perch, marlin, kingklip, even crocodile!

Some of these might sound a little extra if you're not used to them but they're actually quite delicious and parties are all about trying something new and different so why not experiment? It'll certainly give your guests something to talk about.

## Australian Wines

Aussie wines are so hot right now. Seriously, I'd be willing to bet that if you walked into your local wine shop and asked about Australian wines the shop owner would be giddy. If you explore Aussie wines you could also work some exotic meats into these wine tasting party ideas. How about kangaroo or alligator burgers? If you're not feeling that adventurous, you could always play it safe with a traditional BBQ.



## Spanish Wines

Tapas is the perfect accompaniment to Spanish wines and lends itself well to a party format as everything is pretty much bite sized so can be eaten standing up. Common Spanish tapas are olives, anchovies, baby squid, chorizo, empanadas, scallops, and tortilla (which is actually a type of omelet).

A word of warning though, if you're taking the wine tasting seriously you're best avoiding any cheese at least until after you've tried each of the wines. This is because the cheese affects how you taste the wine. Scroll down these wine tasting party ideas to the section called 'Things to Remember' for further more information on this.

## Italian Wines

Antipasti is great to serve with Italian wines and, like tapas, works great for the larger parties. Traditional antipasto includes meats such as ham or salami, olives, artichoke hearts, and cheeses such as mozzarella or provolone.

## French Wines

If you are going old world all the way with the French wines then you might want to accompany them with some great French cheeses. Trader Joe's is a great spot to grab cheese.

If you have a fromagerie close by, all the better. Cheeses are similar to wines in that you're generally best off seeking out smaller, specialist manufacturers—the difference in taste between these and supermarket brands is worlds apart. There's really no point going to all the bother of choosing great French wines if you're not going to get some high quality cheeses to go with them.

A word of warning though, if you're taking the wine tasting seriously you're best avoiding any cheese at least until after you've tried each of the wines. This is because the cheese affects how you taste the wine. Scroll down these wine tasting party ideas to the section called 'Things to Remember' for further more information on this.



### **Latin American Wines**

There are some great wines from countries such as Mexico, Chile and Argentina which would give you an opportunity to add some Central and South American flavor to your party food.

For inspiration, you can serve jerk beef or chicken and plantain chips.



### **Californian Wines**

Obviously you could also explore Californian wines, or west coast wines. Plan to have a good mix of both.

### **Judgment of Paris**

Host your own "Judgment of Paris" blind wine tasting party by pairing up California wines with French wines for your own round two of the famous event - will California beat France, again? (Added treat...watch "Bottleshock" the movie based on the 1976 wine competition termed the "Judgment of Paris").

# 7. THINGS TO REMEMBER

## In what order should you sample wine?

The order in which you taste the wines is important. Always go lightest to most full-bodied, lower alcohol to higher alcohol, younger to older, white to red, driest to sweetest. If your theme is a blind tasting be sure to number each bottle so guests know to taste them in chronological order.

## How To Hold A Wine Glass

Remind your guests to hold their glass by the stem as cupping the bowl in their hands will change the temperature. And always rinse the glass out before moving onto the next wine.

## Palate Cleansers

Remind your guests to drink water and taste some bread or plain crackers in between each wine to cleanse the palate.



## Avoid Cheese

Despite wine and cheese being a common pairing, cheese is actually a terrible thing to eat when trying to taste wine.

If you think about it, it's actually common sense. To taste all the delicate flavors in a wine you use your taste buds. But eating cheese coats the taste buds in a layer of fat (which has a habit of staying on the tongue for some time). So how are your taste buds going to experience the wine? Therefore, if you're serving cheeses, leave them until after you've tasted all the wines.

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***Tip #5: If you have eaten some cheese before your wine, have a slice of apple which will help to open up the taste buds again.***

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## 8. HOW TO STORE WINE FOR YOUR PARTY

**Temperature:** Generally most people serve their white wines too cold and their red wines too warm. This really affects the taste of the wine. Too cold and you won't be able to appreciate the subtleties of flavor, too warm and all you'll just taste the alcohol.

The temperature of most refrigerators is too cold for most white wines, so remember to take them out of the fridge about 20 minutes before you want to serve them. The exception is sparkling wines which are best served really cold so can be chilled overnight and served straight from the fridge.

Similarly, red wines are commonly served at 'room temperature' but this phrase was coined in Victorian times when rooms were a fair bit colder. So you really want to serve red wines below modern 'room temperature'.

As a very general rule of thumb, when you're taking the white wines out of the fridge, pop the red ones in for about 15-20 mins.

The biggest problem is keeping the wines at the right temperature during your wine tasting. You should use ice buckets for the whites but don't add too much ice or you'll end up over-chilling your white wines. Temperature fluctuations are wine's greatest nemesis.

# 9. BUYING WINE

First, decide what theme you're going to apply to these wine tasting party ideas. For example, are you going Aussie or going for a mix of different countries?

I would then recommend you get your wines from your local wine shop (as opposed to a supermarket chain), for a number of reasons:

- Most grocery store brands are mass-produced, commercial wines which are usually chosen because they are 'safe' enough to appeal to the mass market (notice the abundance of Chardonnay and Merlot?). While they will taste fine, they're usually not special. If you're having a wine tasting you really want some interesting wines, not a run-of-the-mill wine that you could have any night of the week.
- If your guests are all local and you select everyday wines from the supermarket, there's a chance you might choose wines that they are already familiar with. Which takes some of the fun and mystery out of a wine tasting.
- Often grocery store wines aren't stored in the best conditions.
- Wine shop owners love to talk price. They want to help you find the right bottle at the right price point SO YOU KEEP COMING BACK. What a brilliant idea.

If you don't have a good wine merchant near you (or even if you do) there are some great on-line wine suppliers who always run different promotions, clearance sales, and reduced-price deals on mixed cases. Often they offer better deals than you could get by going into a local wine merchant.

Vivino and Wine.com in particular have great promotional offers. Here you go:



## 20% Off For First Time Buyers From Vivino.com

Vivino has become one of the internet's greatest wine discovery tools. Search by style or region and read plenty of user reviews for all the most popular wines.

Vivino gives 20% off to all first-time buyers when they use the promo code **WINELOVERSCU20**. Try it out by visiting [vivino.com](http://vivino.com).



### **20\$ Off Your First Purchase over \$100 From Wine.com**

Wine.com bills itself as the largest wine retailer anywhere with the broadest selection of wines from niche to mega producers.

Take advantage of their introductory offer and get \$20 off your first purchase over \$100 by visiting [wine.com](http://wine.com).

If you've purchased from wine.com before, you can still grab a deal by shopping their most popular reds. Use [this link to get 40% off this collection](#).

### **Selecting Wines**

Some people, especially when it comes to blind wine tastings, ask their guests to bring a bottle of their favorite wine to the tasting. If you do this you should have a group signup sheet because you don't want everyone bringing a Chardonnay. Unless it's a Chardonnay tasting of course.

For what it's worth, here are a few less everyday wines that we recommend to go with these wine tasting party ideas:

**Viognier** is a great white wine. It's fast growing in popularity and makes a great alternative to Chardonnay. The South African and Australian varieties in particular have a big bold flavor and a distinct taste of apricot, peach and spice.

**Pouilly Fumé** from the Loire Valley, France and is made from Sauvignon Blanc. It has an unusual flavor for a dry white, with a strong smokey musk flavor.

**Montepulciano d'abruzzo** an Italian red wine made from the Montepulciano grape in the Abruzzo region and tastes of cherry, blackberry, flowers, and herbs. This is a very affordable wine and so makes a perfect option for your wine tasting.

**Pinotage** South Africa's signature red variety, which was bred as a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsaut.

**Sauternes** is a sweet French wine from Bordeaux, France made from Sémillon, Sauvignon and Muscadelle grapes. It tastes of apricot, honey, and peach and makes a great dessert wine.

# 10. FOOD

It's worth doing some research to see what dishes will work best with your chosen wines. If you're planning a seated dinner to go with these wine tasting themes you can follow this guide.

## **Pair By Intensity Of The Flavor**

Don't get too bogged down in the old fashioned notion of red wine has to go with meat and white wine has to go with fish. Generally, it's better to think about matching wines and food based on the intensity of flavor.

For example, bold full bodied wines such as Shiraz are good with similarly bold foods such as barbecue or Mexican. Similarly, delicate flavors such as Chardonnay go well with subtle foods such as Chicken or Pork.

## **Pair Creamy With Creamy**

Creamy tasting wines such as Viognier or Chardonnay go well with creamy foods such as pasta sauces or cheese.

## **Pair Creamy Or Fried With Acid**

Alternatively, acidic wines such as Sauvignon Blanc also go well with rich, creamy or fried foods as the acid cuts through the fat. We've found this to be a very popular style of pairing.

## **Pair Acid and Salt With Acid**

If your food has any type of citrus flavors, such as lemon, or is salty then match it with acidic wines such as Sauvignon Blanc or an unoaked Chardonnay.



## **Pair Spicy With Sweet**

Spicy foods can overpower most wines and prevent you from really tasting them. So pair with slightly sweet wines such as Gewurztraminer or Riesling (technically off-dry). The spiciness of the food cancels out the sweetness of the wine, making it dryer so you taste its fruity flavors instead.

## **Pair Sweet With Sweet**

Match desserts with a dessert wine or Port. Think about these in terms of color, for example a light, fruit dessert goes well with a Sauternes or Muscat, whereas chocolate is better with Port.





## II. SIX WINE TASTING PARTY GAMES

### Draw the Wine Label

You can see who's the most artistic in the group by playing an easy drawing game at your party—no skills necessary. Hide the labels. After each tasting, have everyone draw what they think would be an appropriate label. The wilder, the better!

### Wine Bingo

Discover who has the most discerning taste buds with a little game of wine Bingo—or Wine-o, if you will. Create a bingo card by putting one type of wine—Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Riesling, etc.—in each square. To play, conduct a blind tasting and place a token on the square that you think matches each sample of wine. When someone gets bingo, check to see if their tastes were right-on.

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### Follow House Rules

The great thing about hosting any party at your home is you get to create the house rules. Spice up your gathering by implementing a silly mandate for everyone to follow. For instance, your rule might be, "if you sip your wine using your right hand, you're out" or "if you say the word 'fruity,' you're out." Keep track of who is still in the game throughout the party.

### The Price Is Right!

Remember your Price Is Right theme? Use this theme and play this game. Have them guess the price of each bottle, and see who comes the closest.

### How Many Corks?

Have you ever had to guess how many jelly beans are in a jar? You can do the same thing with wine corks! Save up corks for a month or so before the party, then put them all in a jar and have your guests guess how many there are.





# CONCLUSION

You don't need to be a wine connoisseur to host a wine tasting party. With a little planning and following our guide on how to host a wine tasting party, you can be sure your guests will enjoy the experience. Whether you're hosting a wine-tasting party for a special occasion or just for fun, you'll find that it's a great way to learn more about wine and to enjoy spending time with your friends.

Cheers!



# RESOURCES

We've put together a few additional printable resources to make planning and hosting a wine tasting party a bit easier.

Our planning checklist and shopping list as well as the wine selection and price point list can be printed directly from this PDF.

You'll also find a few invitation templates. These templates are made using Canva. This is a free tool and you will not need to pay to create an account. Simply click the link provided and you'll be able to customize these templates in Canva to make them perfect for your party.

**[Checklist & Shopping List](#)**

**[Wine Selection & Price List](#)**

**[Food Planner](#)**

**[Invitation Templates](#)**

# CHECKLIST & SHOPPING LIST

Tasting Theme \_\_\_\_\_

- White Wine Glasses (number of guests X 3)
- Red Wine Glasses (number of guests X 4)
- Plates
- Napkins
- Invitations
- Wine Tool Of Choice
- Ice Bucket
- Ice
- Dump Buckets
- Personal Spit Cups
- Table Cloth
- Tasting Guides
- Pens
- Wine Glass Marking Pen or Tag
- Water Pitcher
- Water Glasses
- Gift or Prize
- Bread or Plain Crackers

# WINE SELECTION & PRICE LIST

List your region and theme, then use this table to list the wines / varietals you've chosen to taste and their price point.

**Region / Theme** \_\_\_\_\_

**Wine Name**

**Price**

---

White Wine #1 (dry, acidic,  
oaked, unoaked, sweet)

White Wine #2 (dry,  
acidic, oaked, unoaked,  
sweet)

White Wine #3 (dry,  
acidic, oaked, unoaked,  
sweet)

Rosé Wine #4(dry, sweet)

Red Wine #5 (dry, acidic,  
non-tannic, tannic, sweet)

Red Wine #6 (dry, acidic,  
non-tannic, tannic, sweet)

Red Wine #7 (dry, acidic,  
non-tannic, tannic, sweet)

Dessert Wine #5 (sweet)

# FOOD

**Cuisine** \_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_

## Hor d'oeuvres

---

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Pairing Wine #1 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #2 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #3 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #4 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #5 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #6 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #7 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #8 | Food |

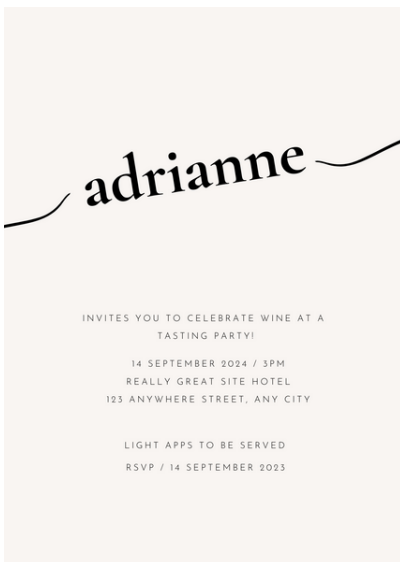
## Main Course

---

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Pairing Wine #1 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #2 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #3 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #4 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #5 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #6 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #7 | Food |
| Pairing Wine #8 | Food |

# INVITATION TEMPLATES

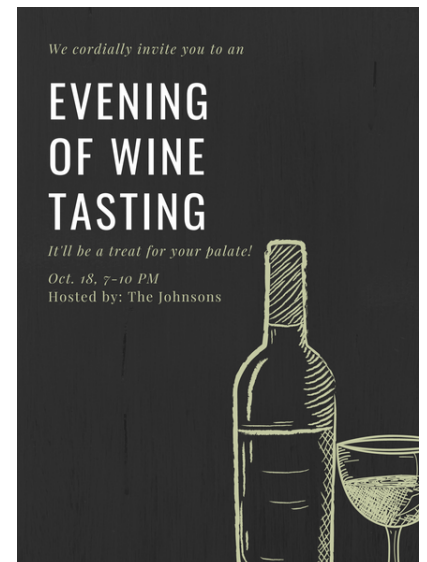
## Simple Template



## Elegant Template



## Dark Template



Click on the link or image to customize your template in Canva