

Understanding Italian Wine



*Italian Trade Commission
New York*

Understanding Italian Wine

How it is made,



evaluated,



served,



and consumed.



Table of Contents

I / TRANSFORMING GRAPES INTO WINE

Vitis vinifera	I
The grape and its components	I
Vinification	1
Alcohol fermentation	2
Drawing the wine off the lees	2
Malolactic fermentation	2
Stabilizing and aging	3
Fining in bottle	3
The composition of wine	3
Making sparkling wines	5
Bottle fermentation: Metodo Classico or Tradizionale	5
Tank fermentation: Metodo Charmat	6

2 / EVALUATING WINE

Wine as an element of culture	8
The sensory evaluation of wine	8
Sight: the visual examination	8
Smell: the olfactory examination	9
Taste and touch: the gustatory examination	10
Aromatic taste sensations	12
Finish and aftertaste	12
Evaluating appearance	13
Evaluating aroma	15
Evaluating basic flavors and tactile sensations	16
Examining aromatic sensations: finish and aftertaste	17
Judging balance and harmony	18
Recognizing disturbances and defects in wine	10
Evolution in color, odor and flavor of certain wines	10

3 / WINE AND FOOD

Wine's role in diet and health	10
Matching wine and food by analogy and contrast	10
By analogy	10
By contrast	10

Suggested matches of foods and wines	23
Antipasti.	23
Soups	23
Pasta and risottos.	24
Fish	24
Meat dishes	25
Poultry.	26
Other meat and poultry dishes.	26
Mushrooms and truffles.	27
Cheeses.	27
Desserts.	27
Fruits.	27
The Sequence of wines at a meal	28

4 / BUYING, STORING AND SERVING

Consumer preferences in wine	30
The sommelier's role	30
Stocking a cellar for a restaurant or shop	31
Storing wine	31
Creating a wine list	32
The sommelier's tools of the trade	33
Wine glasses	34
The procedures in serving wine	36
Decanting wine	37
Serving sparkling wines	30

5 / CLASSIFICATION OF ITALIAN WINES

Vini da Tavola	41
Vini Da Tavola Con Indicazione Geografica	42
(wines with geographical designations)	
D.O.C.	42
D.O.C.G.	43

I/ Transforming Grapes Into Wine

VITIS VINIFERA

This is the ancient Latin term for vines whose grapes produce juice that ferments into wine. *Vitis vinifera* originated in the Near East when man domesticated wild vines, but its numerous varieties and clones are most widely diffused in Europe where four-fifths of the world's wine is made.

Such vines are grown in the temperate climate zones, generally between the 30th and 50th parallels in the northern hemisphere and the 30th and 40th parallels in the southern hemisphere. Altitude is a key factor. In most countries, vines thrive at 800 to 1,600 feet above sea level. Vineyards are rarely planted higher than 2,000 feet, but there are exceptions, such as Italy's alpine Valle d'Aosta and parts of Chile where vines are regularly cultivated at 4,000 feet.

Soil composition and texture influence the character and quality of wines. Grapes from vineyards in sandy or siliceous terrains often produce wines of fresh flavors and aromas to be drunk young, while those from calcareous clay soils make wines that are richer in body and better suited to aging.

Vineyard positions are important. For most Italian wines of quality, hillsides are better than plains, since day-night temperature variations essential to developing aromas are greater at the heights. In cool zones, vines on south-facing slopes benefit from full exposure to the sun, so grapes ripen earlier. They also need to be well ventilated to prevent mold.

THE GRAPE AND ITS COMPONENTS

The fruit of the vine is the grape, which grows in bunches of varying size, consistency and color. Each bunch has a stalk that makes up 3 to 5 percent of the weight. The grape has three essential parts:

The skins (6 to 10 percent). The skins or peels of grapes contain coloring substances, as well as tannins and yeasts, which enable the juice to ferment. Red wines are made from dark-skinned grapes. White wines usually derive from light-skinned grapes, but they can also be made from dark varieties if the skins are separated immediately from the pulp after pressing.

The pulp (82 to 90 percent). The pulpy interior of the grape, source of its juice, consists of water, sugars, acids, mineral substances and vitamins.

The seeds of pits (2 to 4 percent). These are rich in tannins and oils.

VINIFICATION

The conversion of grapes to wine can be achieved in various ways. In general, the first step in the modern vinification process is the separation of the stems

from the grapes, which are then crushed or, more often, rotated in cylinders under pressure which breaks their skins and releases the juice. The three basic types of vinification are:

White wines. The juice or free-run must extracted from the pulp is separated from the skins (whether light or dark) before fermentation begins so that they will give the wine little or no color.

Rosé wines. The juice is left on the skins of dark grapes briefly before or during the first part of the fermentation to extract a bit of color.

Red wines. The juice is left on the skins of dark grapes during the fermentation to extract colors, tannins and other substances - a process known as maceration. The liquid is sometimes separated from the pomace (skins, seed and pulp) before fermentation is complete.

ALCOHOLIC FERMENTATION

Grape musts consist of two main components, water and sugar, in solution with yeasts which multiply as they consume the sugars and convert them to alcohol while freeing carbon dioxide.

This complex biochemical phenomenon is characterized by violent bubbling that creates considerable heat. Fermentation was often known as bollitura, or boiling, when it took place in open wooden vats in Italy. Today, it is often conducted in closed stainless-steel or cement tanks at controlled temperatures. Modern white wines are usually fermented cool to retain fresh flavors and the so-called primary aromas from the grapes.

DRAWING THE WINE OFF THE LEES

When the alcoholic fermentation has converted the must to wine, it is allowed to settle so that the solid matter known as the lees collects at the bottom of the tank. Then the wine is pumped off the lees to other containers to begin the next step.

MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION

Most red wines, as well as some whites, undergo a gentle secondary fermentation induced by bacteria rather than yeasts. This malolactic fermentation transforms sharp-flavored malic acid into softer lactic acid, a process that lowers total acidity and makes wines seem rounder and fuller in flavor.

STABILIZING AND AGING

Each type of quality wine requires special treatments to stabilize and mature it before it goes into the bottle.

Many white wines and some reds to be sold young are settled and clarified in large containers of cement or fiberglass or, prevalently, in stainless-steel tanks. The process usually takes about six months.

For wines of depth and complexity, whether red or white, the best containers for aging are usually wooden casks or barrels. Italian winemakers increasingly prefer oak barrels of limited size. Wines are clarified naturally by "racking," periodic pumping into clean barrels, which leaves behind the solid particles that settle to the bottom.

The aging process stabilizes and harmonizes wines which extract from oak "noble tannins" that enhance flavor. The wood's permeability permits minuscule amounts of oxygen to enter the wine, favoring development of secondary aromas which are more refined and elaborate than primary aromas. Wood aging may last from four months to a year for white wines in small barrels and up to three years, sometimes more, for reserve wines in cask.

FINING IN BOTTLE

Young wines are usually stabilized by refrigeration and filtering and are then bottled and stored for one to three months to balance their components before they go on sale.

Wood-aged wines are often fined using egg whites or protein compounds and sometimes lightly filtered before bottling to remove any suspended particles. Bottled wines are usually stored horizontally for six months to a year before being sold to acquire harmony and to begin development of the tertiary aromas known as the bouquet. Some wines can improve for a decade or more in bottle, gaining unique depth and complexity in flavor and bouquet.

THE COMPOSITION OF WINE

Wine has been defined as the product obtained from total or partial fermentation of fresh grapes, crushed or not, or of grape must. There are various methods of transforming grapes into wine and an infinity of end results to consider. The basic ingredients of a completed wine are water and alcohol, though other components present in minuscule quantities account for quality and character. In basic terms, these are the principal components of wine:

Water (80 to 85 percent). The hydrogen dioxide in wine derives entirely from grape juice so it is biologically pure. It is the base for all of the complex biochemical phenomena that occur as the wine is made and aged.

Alcohols (10 to 17 percent). Alcohol in wine is attained by yeast-converting sugars. Besides adding their own characteristic flavors and odors, alcohols are the main carriers of aroma or bouquet. The most important alcohol in quantity is ethyl, a monoalcohol. Then comes glycerol, a polyalcohol that adds a degree of sweetness. Butylene glycol is among other polyalcohols and cyclic alcohols present. In some fortified wines, alcohol attained by distillation may be added.

Acids (0.4 to 1 percent). Acids give wine the sour or sharp aspect that enhances flavor when in balance with other components. Of the three organic acids that originate in grapes, tartaric is prevalent as the base measure of total acidity in wine, followed by malic and citric. Three others - succinic, lactic and acetic (source of volatile acidity) - are produced by fermentation.

Sugars. Grapes contain 15 to 25 percent glucose and fructose, sugars that are mainly converted to alcohol through fermentation. In dry wines, a trace of residual sugar (0.1 percent) is normal; sweet wines may contain them at up to 10 percent. A wine's sweetness is derived not only from sugars, but also from alcohol and other substances.

Mineral salts (0.2 to 0.4 percent). Salts derived from mineral acids or organic acids lend freshness to the flavor of wine. Among them are potassium, sodium, magnesium, calcium and iron.

Flavoring and coloring substances (0.01 to 0.5 percent). Phenolic compounds give wines color and account for differences in flavor between reds and whites. Grape skins contain polyphenols in the form of anthocyanins and tannins whose pigments give red wine its color. White wines derive a little color from grape skins, as well as from wood and aging.

Odorous substances. Traces of diverse chemical compounds of a volatile nature account for certain odors in wine. These include alcohols, aldehydes, esters, acids and ketones.

Sulfites. Sulfur derivatives are used to safeguard grapes and sterilize and preserve wines. The presence of sulfites at 10 to 200 parts per million (the upper limit for Italian wines) is measured both in fixed sulfur dioxide, combined with other substances, and free SO₂ in the form of gas.

MAKING SPARKLING WINES

There are two main methods of making sparkling wine, the *methode champenoise* of bottle fermentation, known as the *metodo classico or tradizionale* in Italian, and the sealed tank fermentation method, often referred to as *metodo charmat*.

Bottle fermentation: metodo classico or tradizionale

This method of refermentation in bottle follows these phases:

Assembling the base wine. White Chardonnay and dark Pinot Nero grapes (as well as Pinot Meunier and sometimes other varieties) are picked before they are fully ripe to retain high acidity. After alcoholic fermentation, the wines are blended by each producer into an individual cuvee, which may include different vintages.

The tirage. The base wine is then put into the same bottle in which it will eventually be sold and the *liqueur de tirage* - a syrupy solution that includes cane sugar and special strains of yeast - is added.

The refermentation. After being sealed with metal caps, bottles are shaken and stacked horizontally in a cool cellar where the wines undergo a second fermentation. The yeasts gradually transform the sugar into another 1 or 2 degrees of alcohol as carbon dioxide builds up to a pressure of 5-6 atmospheres. This process, known as the *presa di spuma* in Italian, forms the fine bubbles known as *perlage*.

Aging on the lees. The wine is now sparkling but is by no means ready for sale. It must now age on the lees for about two years as the yeast cells break down in a process known as autolysis. Bottles are periodically restacked to control breakage and shaken violently to keep the yeasts suspended. The wine develops a faint yeasty flavor, though freshness and fruitiness are maintained by the formation of esters that also enhance aromas. The absence of oxygen consumed in the refermentation allows the wine to develop natural stability.

Riddling. Once aging is complete, the spent yeasts must be removed from the bottle to leave the wine bright and clear. The first step is riddling, or *remuage*, in which bottles are placed top down at 45-degree angles in the slots of hinged A-frame racks known as *pupitres*. Over the next few weeks, riddlers deftly agitate and twist each bottle an eighth of a turn a day to work the sediment down to the neck. The bottles are gradually declined in the *pupitres* until they are directly upended and the deposit rests against the cap. (Some houses have automatic riddling machines).

Removing the sediment. The next step is to remove the sediment from the bottle. This degorgement or *sboccatura* in Italian, was difficult when done by hand, but it is now accomplished quickly and cleanly by machine. The neck of the inverted bottle is inserted into a chilled saline solution, freezing the deposit. Then the bottle is placed upright and the cap removed as the wine's pressure expels the plug of ice.

Topping up. After removal of the sediment the bottle must be topped up immediately and sealed with a cork. Most types of *spumante classico* receive a dosage, or *rabboccatura* in Italian, of the so-called *liqueur d'expédition*, a solution of aged wine and cane sugar. But the driest type, sometimes known as nature or *pas dosé*, is topped up with the same wine.

The dose of *liqueur* varies according to types, which are classified as follows, according to degrees of residual sugar:

Brut. No more than 15 grams per liter of residual sugar. (This includes *nature* or *pas dosé*.)

Extra dry. From 12 to 20 grams per liter.

Secco. From 17 to 35 grams per liter.

Semisecco. From 33 to 50 grams per liter.

Dolce. More than 50 grams per liter.

Bottles are then sealed with corks, which acquire the familiar mushroom shape with time. Corks are anchored with wire baling to insure that the pressure within the bottle won't force them out.

Bottles are stored for a time so that the liqueur becomes amalgamated with the wine. On average, a fine, bottle-fermented *spumante* requires about three years of processing before it is sold.

Tank fermentation: metodo charmat

The process of making sparkling wine in sealed tanks in Italy is generally known as *metodo charmat*. Normally, refermentation on the lees lasts from two to four weeks.

In recent times, a method known as *charmat lungo* has been devised, mainly for sparkling wines from Chardonnay and Pinot. This "long" process leaves the wine in contact with the lees in the tank for three months to a year to duplicate some of the effects of the classic method.

Both methods are based on the following procedures.

Refermentation. The base wines blended with selected yeasts and sugar are placed in large, stainless-steel tanks known as *autoclavi*, where refermentation takes place at cool temperatures under pressure of about 7 to 8 atmospheres.

Isobaric filtration. When refermentation is complete, the wine is separated from the lees by passing through a filter into another tank under equal (isobaric) pressure.

Stabilization. The wine is stabilized by being chilled to below freezing to precipitate tartaric acid crystals, which are removed.

Isobaric bottling. The isobaric principle is used to maintain steady pressure in the wine as it is bottled and sealed with a cork.

Wines made by the tank-fermentation method are usually sold soon after bottling, though some *charmat lungo* wines seem to gain harmony after a few months of storage.

Most of Italy's dry or semisweet sparkling wines are made this way. *Asti Spumante* is an exception, since it undergoes a single fermentation in tanks under a process that maintains its delicate sweetness and the unique fragrance of Moscato grapes.

2/ Evaluating Wine

8

WINE AS AN ELEMENT OF CULTURE

Wine is usually drunk during meals because it complements the taste of what we eat. It is an essential of the Mediterranean diet, but to Italians wine has always been more than a mere beverage or nutrient. Good wine satisfies the senses with its color and texture, its aromas and flavors, those unique features sometimes referred to as aesthetic or artistic qualities.

Wine also plays a role in social life, since it is habitually consumed in the company of others. When shared around a table, it relaxes us and creates a sense of well-being while inspiring thought and conversation. Its appeal to the senses combined with the way it inspires the human spirit have elevated it to noble status.

Wine has been an element of civilization for ages in Italy and other European countries. In recent times, this culture has spread to places where wine drinking was not traditional - to North America, for instance. The increased interest has led to a wealth of literature on the subject. Experts have tended to define characteristics of color, aroma and taste and to codify the terminology in what might be described as a universal language of wine.

Yet wine appreciation remains a subjective field. The chemical components of wine can be analyzed in minute detail, but judgments of quality and character still rely on sensory evaluation. Each person perceives wine in his own way. As you acquire experience, you will no doubt be influenced by expert opinions, but it is wise to remember that you are your own best judge of wine.

THE SENSORY EVALUATION OF WINE

Evaluating wine involves the senses of sight, smell, taste and touch. Detecting and remembering colors, aromas and flavors is an essential skill in wine tasting. By now some of the terminology has been standardized, but there will always be variations in the way people perceive and describe wine. Beyond the standard vocabulary, there are imaginative ways of alluding to wine. Associations with the colors, odors and flavors of other objects enrich the language of wine, although some tasters' terms may seem more arbitrary than empirical.

Sight: the visual examination

The first impression of a wine is its appearance: color, clarity, fluidity and, for sparkling wines, effervescence. It is sometimes said that the eyes are not as important for judging a wine's quality as are the nose or the mouth. But an expert can tell by looking at a wine if it is basically sound - that is, clear, bright and free of sediment - or if it has defects that will be confirmed by smelling and tasting.

Color. After noting the primary color - red, white, or rosé - points to be considered are tone, intensity and the hues within each color category. This is done by filling a tulip shaped tasting glass about a third full and holding it by the stem against a white background - a tablecloth or piece of paper. Then tilt it so that the wine is extended from the depth of the bowl to a thin rim near the top. This brings various shadings of color into evidence.

Clarity. Hold the glass so that you see through the wine first against a white background and then against a subdued source of light, such as a window not directly in the sun's rays or a candle or lampshade. This reveals if it is clear or, better yet, brilliantly transparent or if it has such defects as a dull, hazy or murky appearance or particles suspended in the liquid.

Fluidity. To judge basic texture and viscosity, rotate the glass so that the wine swirls around it. As the liquid settles along the sides, it will leave what are known as "legs" or "tears" - arches that will be more numerous and remain longer in a heavy wine than a thin one. But a wine's weight and texture are best confirmed in the mouth.

Effervescence. The first test of finesse in sparkling wines is the size and intensity of the carbon-dioxide bubbles that rise from the base of the glass. As a rule, a wine made by the classical method of fermentation in bottle will have small, persistent bubbles that when rising, form what is known as the "bead" or "perlage." Wines made by tank methods usually have larger bubbles, but there are exceptions. Wines in the Italian category of *frizzante* will often foam when poured, but the bubbles then subside and effervescence may be perceptible only by a prickle on the tongue.

Smell: the olfactory examination

The sense of smell is the key to enjoying wine, because it enables us to perceive both aromas and the subtleties of flavors. Wine's molecules of smell consist of odorous vapors mainly in the form of volatile esters and aldehydes. When we sniff a wine, the aroma is passed up through the olfactory cells and the lining in the upper part of the nasal cavity to the olfactory bulb located at the base of the skull. This organ enables the brain to perceive not only odors inhaled through the nostrils but also the aromatic qualities of a wine conveyed to it from the palate by way of the nasal passage at the back of the mouth.

The olfactory examination allows us to sense the intensity and persistence of a wine's aroma while gaining a general impression of quality. Experienced tasters learn to pick out the nuances of aroma and bouquet and associate them with certain types of wine.

The intensity of aroma is of relative importance since it is basically a measure of quantity. In a fine wine, a rich bouquet is an attribute; but in a bad wine, a strong odor is a negative factor. Persistence of aroma is an indication of quality, particularly in the lingering bouquet of a mature wine. But in a young, fruity wine it is not always an essential factor.

The real test of quality is if the aroma of the wine being considered is expressed true to type. Such aromas depend on the grape variety and origins of the wine, on its age and how it has been aged or stored. There are three general categories of aromas to consider

Primary aromas. These are odors intrinsic to the grape, usually sensed in young wines, often white, fermented at cool temperatures. Primary aromas are the source of so-called varietal character of certain wines, though the intensity and finesse of these grapey aromas vary from one variety to another.

Secondary aromas. These are the odors that derive from the alcoholic fermentation and, to some extent, from maturing in wood. They are sensed in young wines whose still aggressive fermentation odors are sometimes described as vinous or those that retain a certain freshness in fruit flavors over time.

Tertiary aromas. These are the distinctive odors, usually known as bouquet, that develop after alcoholic and malolactic fermentations are complete. They often derive in part from maturing in wood, though bouquets gain depth and complexity through aging in bottle.

Tasters have somewhat different ways of detecting aromas. Some rely on a series of quick sniffs, others on long, gentle inhalations. Light swirling in the glass is enough to release the aromas of most wines. But some wines as they evolve arrive at inexpressive phases, described as "closed" or "dumb." Tasters may attempt to free the odors of such wines by rapid rotating of the glass or even by holding one's hand over the rim and shaking it up and down.

The olfactory examination must be limited to be effective. Prolonged smelling of the same odor reduces sensitivity to it, to the point that the olfactory system becomes saturated and can't detect it at all. That is why tasters often smell a wine only briefly before tasting it and then later smell it again. The bouquets of certain aged wines may continue to evolve for hours or even days.

Taste and touch: the gustatory examination

The taste phase in evaluating wine is performed on the palate. This gustatory examination involves not only the sense of taste but also of touch, confirming the balance of basic flavors, as well as texture and body. Testing the flavors and

feel of wine on the palate are the first phases in a series that evolves the aromatic taste sensations, finish and aftertaste.

Tastes are simpler than smells. They are sensed on the tongue, which, through the taste buds, detects four basic flavors: sweet, acidic, salty and bitter. Each flavor is sensed most strongly by certain parts of the tongue. But in each case there is a time lag from the moment when the wine arrives and the point when the taste is registered. Also each flavor remains evident for a length of time that determines its persistence.

Sweetness. This is detected mainly at the tip of the tongue by so-called fungiform papillae sensitive to sugars, alcohol and glycerine. The sensation of sweetness is first in the taste sequence with a time lag of about a second and persistence of up to 10 seconds.

Acidity. This is detected mainly along the sides of the tongue by foliate papillae sensitive to the different types of acids in wine. The six main types and their taste effects are: tartaric (hardness); malic (sour apples); citric (sharp, lemony); succinic (a salty bitterness that causes salivation); lactic (milky tartness); acetic (acrid, vinegary). The sensation of acidity is second in the taste sequence with a time lag of about 2 seconds and persistence of up to 12 seconds.

Saltiness. This is detected mainly at the upper front part of the tongue by foliate papillae sensitive to salts, which in wine derive from mineral or organic acids. The sensation of saltiness has a time lag of about 2 seconds, but persistence is of little relevance since the traces of salt in wine serve mainly to highlight sweet and acidic flavors.

Bitterness. This is detected mainly at the back of the tongue by circumvallate papillae sensitive to certain phenolic substances, tannins and esters. The bitter sensation is the last to be perceived with a time lag of about 3 seconds and persistence of up to 15 seconds. This lingering effect accounts for the bitter aftertaste described in certain wines.

Practically all of the oral cavity has some sense of touch, but the parts most sensitive to the "tactile impressions" of wine are the upper, center part of the tongue and the soft areas of the palate, the pharynx, the larynx and the gums. The center of the tongue contains filiform papillae that feel rather than taste. Experts often seem to chew on a mouthful of wine while analyzing the sensations of texture, temperature, astringency, body and, in sparkling wines, the prickle from carbon dioxide.

Texture. This refers to the fabric of a wine, the way it feels in the mouth, often described by general impressions of touch. Fine wines may be called smooth,

velvety, round, well-knit, glossy or polished and lesser ones as flabby, looseknit, granular, stringy or coarse.

Astringency. This refers to the drying or puckering sensation caused mainly by the tannins present in red wines but also, to some extent, by high acidity in whites. A degree of astringency is desirable in a balanced wine.

Temperature. This refers, in part, to the degree of heat or cold of a wine, a key factor in how it tastes and feels when it enters the mouth. But it has mainly to do with the sensation of warmth created by ethyl alcohol, which increases with the wine's strength.

Body. This expresses the sense of weight and structure of a wine, closely related to the alcoholic strength, intensity of flavor and texture. The term is often used to describe robust red wines, though rich sweet wines may also be said to have good body.

Prickle. This refers to the effect of carbon dioxide in wines, whether sparkling or *frizzante*, though a prickly sensation may also be noted in still young wines with sharp acidity.

Aromatic taste sensations

The basic tastes of wine in the mouth are complemented by the aromatic qualities sensed by the olfactory system by way of the nasal passage at the back of the mouth. These aromas are conveyed to the olfactory bulb as the taster inhales through the mouth and exhales through the nose.

There are several factors behind this effect. One is the light evaporation that takes place as the wine is warmed by the mouth. Another is that the chewing motion used by tasters compresses and agitates the wine, liberating odorous particles. Also saliva, which is secreted liberally during tasting, chemically modifies certain substances in wine and makes them odorous.

Finish and Aftertaste

The terms finish and aftertaste are sometimes used synonymously by wine tasters. But for the sake of clarity finish here refers to the final sensations of wine on the palate and aftertaste to the flavor impressions that remain after it is swallowed or spit out. A good wine is described as having "length" when the clean, balanced, complete flavors of the finish linger in the aftertaste.

Persistence in aftertaste may be considered both in terms of how long the flavor lingers and how long the aromatic or olfactory sensations remain. Some tasters actually time the "length" of wines as a measure of class.

But persistence of certain flavors and aromas also reveals flaws that might not have been previously apparent. The most common complaint is a bitter or

astringent aftertaste, heightened by the fact that bitterness, sensed mainly at the back of the tongue, also has the longest flavor persistence.

Unpleasant aftertastes may be created by the presence of spent yeasts or lactic acid in wines that haven't been properly fermented or stabilized. Metallic tastes may be caused by traces of mineral residue setting off electrostatic impulses through contact with dental fixtures.

Aftertaste is the final indicator of a wine's overall quality, confirming not only if it is balanced and complete but also whether it rates such adjectives as elegance, breed, finesse.

Evaluating appearance

The visual examination considers the wine's color, clarity, fluidity and, in sparkling wines, effervescence. Color is noted in the approximative terms used to describe the hues in white, rose and red wines. Color quality is revealed also in depth and intensity and in overall tone.

Color in white wines. Young modern wines are often pale with hints of yellow (which may be likened to straw, lemon or sunshine) and sometimes green highlights. Color deepens with age, tending toward full straw yellow or pale gold.

More mature dry wines, particularly if aged in wood, take on rich golden tones, sometimes with hints of copper or brass. Any hints of red in a white wine are usually signs of defects.

Wines long aged in wood or made from semi-dried grapes tend to take on amber shadings, described as tawny, old gold, rust, chestnut. Some turn almost brown from oxidation, favorable when controlled in certain dessert or fortified types such as Marsala, but unfavorable in normal whites.

Color in rosé wines. Young wines from dark grapes vinified with little skin contact show pale hues of pink or roseate or, sometimes, hints of orange, coral or salmon. *Rosato*, the Italian term for *rosé*, applies to wine with no more than 50 milligrams per liter of the coloring substances anthocyanins. "Blush wines," as they are sometimes described, would fit this category.

Wines made with brief skin contact show deeper hues, sometimes associated with raspberries or plum blossoms. *Chiaretto*, Italian for *claret*, applies to wine with 50 to 100 milligrams per liter of anthocyanins.

Some wines made with longer skin contact seem more red than pink. *Cerasuolo*, Italian for cherry red, applies to wine with more than 100 milligrams per liter of anthocyanins. Some rose takes on tawny shades with age, though usually signs of browning mean the wine is going off.

Color in red wines. Young wines often show a deep purple or mulberry color before they begin to mature.

Ruby is the term used most often to describe a healthy wine in the early stages of maturity, though other hues of red are also noted.

With age, many red wines take on hues that are often referred to as garnet. Other descriptions are brick red or mahogany (or references to other woods) for wines that show a warm orange color at the rim.

Pronounced yellow or brown colors at the rim indicate that the wine is past its prime, though a few types of aged red that show tawny or amber tones are still quite drinkable.

Clarity. Wines reveal degrees of clarity, ranging from bright to normally limpid to dull or murky. Clarity is mainly an indication of quality if the wine is at its prime, meaning that it has been in bottle for a reasonable time after any wood aging, filtering or stabilization processes.

Commercial wine, whatever its category, should be clear, perfectly transparent and free of deposits or suspended particles. Any sign of cloudiness indicates defects. If it is so murky or dense that you can't see through it, it is definitely not drinkable.

A fine wine of any color at its prime should be not only clear but bright with a luminous quality, a special luster. Some very old wines, if still clear, will have sediment in the bottle and need to be treated with care to avoid stirring the deposit.

Fluidity. Swirling the wine in the glass reveals whether it has normal viscosity or is unusually heavy or thin. A dense wine - one that has a high alcohol or sugar content - will form more of the "legs" or "tears" or "arches" on the side of the glass than will a light wine. But the palate is the best place to confirm a wine's weight and texture.

Effervescence. The test of effervescence applies only to bubbly wines, of which there are two general categories in Italy. Light to moderate effervescence (from 1.5 to 2 grams per liter of carbon dioxide) is known as *frizzante* - or *vivace* or *brioso*. A fully sparkling wine with 3.5 to 6 atmospheres of pressure is defined as *spumante* (from *spuma* or foam).

Bubbles in *frizzante* wines are evident on pouring but often disappear or collect along the sides of the glass. In a good wine with carbon dioxide formed by natural fermentation, they create a pleasant, prickly sensation in the mouth.

Bubbles in *spumante* are judged by their size and persistence. In the best quality wines made by the classical bottle fermentation method, bubbles are fine and continue to rise in a steady flow known as bead or perlage. Good tank-fermented *spumante* should also have relatively small, persistent bubbles. If the

bubbles vanish or if they are large, disjointed or seem to hang in suspension, there is probably something wrong with the wine or the glass it is served in.

Evaluating aroma

The olfactory examination considers the wine's odors as sensed through the nose. The first step is assessing the intensity, persistence and general quality of aromas. The second is identifying nuances of aroma and associating them with the odors of other things, such as fruit, flowers, herbs and spices.

The intensity of aromas may vary from powerful or penetrating to light or scarcely perceptible. Persistence refers to the length of time the aroma remains in the nasal cavity. Some odors linger and others are fleeting, sensed only for an instant. Intensity and persistence are key factors in judging the quality of aromas, which can be considered in both generic and specific terms.

Generic terms often applied to wine odors:

Rich or ample, when they are full and pronounced.

Distinct, when a single odor is clearly defined.

Clean, when free of extraneous or defective odors.

Fine, when marked by pleasing balance and elegant tone.

Coarse, when an odor has nothing pleasant about it.

Defective, when marked by extraneous or unidentifiable odors.

Specific terms often applied to wine odors:

Aromatic, when the primary or varietal aroma is ample and distinct.

Vinous, when aggressive fermentation odors prevail.

Fruity, when scents reminiscent of fresh fruit prevail in young wines.

Floral, when scents reminiscent of flowers or blossoms prevail.

Bouquet, when the tertiary aromas of well-aged wines gain depth and complexity.

Terms of association are applied to the nuances of wine odors sensed in the nose and often verified in the aromatic qualities on the palate.

For young white wines, such references are often to scents of fresh fruit (apple, pear, peach, apricot, citrus) and flowers or blossoms (acacia, mimosa, elder, lilacs, broom, hawthorn, jasmine).

For aromatic white wines - Moscato, Sauvignon Blanc, Gewurztraminer, Malvasia, Riesling, Sylvaner, Muller Thurgau - references are often to scents of fresh fruit, herbs or vegetal odors (mint, sage, laurel, lavender, thyme, damp hay, cut grass).

For more mature white wines, references are often to scents of tropical fruits (banana, pineapple, mango); dried fruits or nuts (figs, raisins, hazelnuts, pine nuts, toasted almonds) or to odors of vanilla, caramel, honey, resin or tea.

For young and aromatic red wines, references are often to red fruit and berries (cherries, currants, raspberries, strawberries) and flowers (violets, roses, iris, jasmine).

For more mature red wines, references are often to dark fruit and berries (blackcurrants, blackberries, plums, mulberries) and spices (cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, anise, pepper, licorice).

For well-aged red wines, references are often to animal scents (leather, fur, game) or to such varied odors as chocolate, vanilla, toasted coffee, tar, resin, underbrush, sandalwood or truffles.

Evaluating basic flavors and tactile sensations

The gustatory examination considers the wine's flavors and textures on the palate. The basic flavors sensed in wine are sweetness and acidity. Saltiness is barely perceptible and serves mainly to heighten sweet and acidic flavors. A hint of bitter adds interest to certain wines but pronounced bitterness is a negative factor.

The degree of sweetness (or dryness) in Italian wines is measured on a scale of grams of sugar per liter in four basic categories.

Secco (less than 6 grams) is distinctly dry.

Abbccato (6 to 20 grams) is lightly sweet or "mouth filling".

Amabile (20 to 45 grams) is medium sweet.

Dolce (more than 45 grams) is fully sweet.

When a wine seems too sweet, it may be referred to as sticky or cloying. *Liquoroso* applies to wines of varying degrees of sweetness that, in some cases, are naturally strong and, in others, are fortified with alcohol.

The degree of acidity is a key factor in taste.

- A mature wine of balanced flavor will usually have 0.5 grams per liter of total or fixed acids.
- A young white wine may have 0.6 to 0.7 grams or, if it's especially tart or zesty, up to 0.8 grams.

- A wine with more than 0.8 grams is usually too acidic to be enjoyable. Over 0.9 grams is sour.
- A wine with less than 0.5 grams will taste flat or flabby since it lacks the bracing effect of acidity.

The sense of touch comes into play in evaluating the wine's tactile sensations: texture, astringency, temperature, body and, for sparkling wines, prickle.

Texture refers to how wine feels in the mouth. If it has good balance between alcohol, acidity and other elements, it should feel smooth and wellrounded. But if the balance is off in one direction, it might feel soft, flabby, even oily. And if it is off in another, it might feel grating, stringy or coarse.

Astringency is a measure of the sense of dryness created mainly by tannins in red wines. A degree of tannic tautness is desirable as part of the complex balance in wines for aging. But in some young reds, excessive tannins interrupt the lubricating flow of saliva and create an unpleasant puckering sensation. High acidity in white wines can create a similar effect.

Temperature is sensed in two different ways on the palate. First, it registers how warm or cool the wine is and signals to the experienced taster if it is at its best level of expression. The other criterion is the sensation of warmth created by alcohol. This is scarcely noticeable at less than 11 degrees, though if there is too little alcohol the wine will seem weak and unbalanced. In the normal range of 11 to 13 degrees, the alcohol should be in harmony with other components. Above 13 degrees, there is a distinct sense of warmth or richness, though if alcohol dominates other components it can create an unpleasant, hot sensation.

Body is the feel of weight and size due mainly to the degree of extract or nonsoluble substances in a wine. A wine of good body gives a sense of solid structure in balance with alcohol, acid and other elements. Balance is also the key to finesse of a light-bodied white wine or the elegance of a big or robust red. Wines lacking body are often described as thin, lean or watery. Those with too much body are ponderously heavy and tedious to drink.

Prickle in a lightly bubbly or *frizzante* wine should be refreshingly vivacious. In a fully sparkling wine, the slow but steady flow of carbon dioxide should please the palate with a sensation of foamy or creamy smoothness. Excessive carbon dioxide creates a sharp, biting effect that distracts from the basic flavors. Too little makes the wine taste flat.

Examining aromatic sensations: finish and aftertaste

After the basic flavors and feel of a wine are registered, the palate records the finish and the olfactory system picks up the aromatic sensations that linger in the aftertaste.

A wine's finish varies according to type. In white wines, it depends on the balance between acidity, alcohol and a sense of fruitiness, softness or sweetness. In red wines, the balance also includes tannins. If acids and tannins are excessive, they create an astringent bite on the finish. If insufficient, they create a flat or flabby effect.

A major indicator of quality is the length of aftertaste, which can be measured in terms of seconds. In a good young wine, aromas and flavors usually last from 3 to 7 seconds. In a fine, mature wine, they should last from 7 to 10 seconds and, in exceptional cases, they may linger up to 15 seconds or more. If the aftertaste lasts less than the normal time, the wine is described as short.

Judging balance and harmony

Balanced flavor in wine depends on how the basic elements of taste and touch interrelate on the palate. Some elements heighten other flavor sensations, while others attenuate or mask them. For example:

Acids and tannins reinforce each other. Carbon dioxide heightens sensations of acidity and tannicity. Saltiness augments the sense of sweetness and acidity.

Acidity attenuates the caloric effect of alcohol. Alcohol lessens the sense of bitterness. Carbon dioxide partly covers the sense of sweetness. Alcohol masks salty flavors.

Wine is harmonious when the various elements of appearance, aroma, taste and touch are balanced and complete. Harmony denotes quality, but ultimately a wine's class is judged not only by how well the parts go together but also on how complete a range of elements make up the whole. The harmony of a good wine might be likened to that of a string quartet or a brass band whose tones are flawless but limited in scope. The harmony of a great wine might be likened to the consonance of a symphony orchestra in its depth and complexity of tones.

Recognizing disturbances and defects in wine

Some disturbances in wine are of a mild nature in that they detract from appearance but scarcely affect aromas or flavors. The most common examples occur in the bottle when tartrates, yeasts or coloring substances precipitate and form sediment.

Some defects in wine can be recognized easily by an experienced taster, though certain maladies could be diagnosed only by an enologist or chemist. These are the most common types of defects discernible in odor and flavor.

Corked or corky. Cork defects can be caused by different phenomena. When the top has been cut from cork oak infested by a parasitic fungus, it can give off a moldy smell of mushrooms or damp earth. Sometimes mold forms under

corks of bottles left standing upright, which is why horizontal storage is suggested. The resulting odor is sometimes described as dusty or compared with wet cardboard.

Dry or moldy wood. When barrels are left empty and not cleaned with sulfur, they may transmit odors of dry wood and astringent flavors to wine aged in them. Old casks that have not been well maintained can transmit odors of mold and rot to the wine.

Sulfur defects. Wine with an excess of free sulfur dioxide emits an odor reminiscent of a struck match. If swallowed, it creates an acrid prickle at the back of the throat. Hydrogen sulfide created by reduction of yeasts during fermentation smells a bit like burned rubber or rotten eggs. If it stays in the wine after bottling, it forms mercaptans, which smell vaguely of garlic and sweat.

Oxidation. When a dry wine, usually white but sometimes red, turns brown and emits an odor like burned caramel, it is oxidized. Certain strong and sweet wines - such as Marsala and Madeira - undergo controlled oxidation in barrel in a favorable form to become maderized or *marsalato* in Italian.

Evolution in the color, odor and flavor of certain twines

The following tables trace the development of three types of wine from youth to maturity and age.

Dry white wine vinified in large containers or tanks

At six months

Appearance: pale lemon or straw yellow with green highlights, clean and clear.

Odor: scents of fresh fruit and blossoms, fragrant but fleeting.

Flavor: dry, tart, light in alcohol and body and short on aromatic sensations with a sharply acidic finish.

At 1 to 2 years

Appearance: full straw yellow with light golden highlights, brilliant tone.

Odor: fairly intense and persistent aromas of dried fruits and flowers.

Flavor: dry, softly fruity and warm with medium persistence, nicely balanced finish.

At 2 to 5 years

Appearance: golden with light amber highlights, fading in tone.

Odor: fairly intense suggestion of cooked fruit, but short and awkward with a hint of Marsala.

Flavor: flabby and short on aromatic sensations with a flat finish and slightly bitter aftertaste.

Dry white wine vinified in small oak barrels

At 1 to 2 years

Appearance: straw yellow with barely perceptible green highlights, clean and clear.

Odor: intense and persistent with complexity in bouquet of tropical fruits and vanilla.

Flavor: dry, full and round with a balanced finish and good aromatic persistence.

At 4 to 6 years

Appearance: brilliant golden yellow.

Odor: depth and complexity in an ample bouquet with scents of honey, toasted almonds, marmalade, tea and tobacco.

Flavor: dry but round and generous with a harmoniously complex finish and long aromatic persistence.

Dry aged in oak casks

At 1 to 2 years

Appearance: deep purple with violet highlights, not yet clear.

Odor: intense and fairly persistent aromas of fruit and berries with a hint of vanilla.

Flavor: dry, fresh, warmly tannic, with good body but a somewhat sharp finish and fairly brief aromatic persistence.

At 2 to 7 years

Appearance: bright ruby with garnet highlights.

Odor: intense and persistent with scents of spices, fruit and berries and aromatic herbs.

Flavor: dry, full and well structured, slightly tannic, with a smooth finish and fairly long aromatic persistence.

At 7 to 10 years

Appearance: brilliant garnet with brick red highlights.

Odor: depth and uncommon complexity in an ample bouquet with scents of leather, chocolate, anise, licorice, tar and sandalwood.

Flavor: dry but round and generous, elegantly complex with a harmonious finish and long aromatic persistence.

3/ Wine And Food

WINE'S ROLE IN DIET AND HEALTH

Wine is the quintessential food beverage, bringing dietary benefits and pleasure to the table. Evidence, both historical and modern, confirms its role in a healthful diet. Its virtues are most evident when it is consumed in proportion to each person's capacities and needs and when it accompanies foods that go naturally with it. That probably explains why the Mediterranean diet, exemplified by the symbiosis of Italian food and wine, continues to gain advocates in an increasingly health conscious world.

Wine is a food. Its contents of vitamins and minerals don't make it a nutritional necessity, but it supplies the human organism with ethyl alcohol and sugars that are a vital source of caloric energy. Wine's medicinal properties were known to ancient peoples even before the Greeks and Romans. Though its healing powers may have been overstated at times when other cures weren't known, modern medicine is tending to rediscover healthful virtues of wine that were once dismissed as folklore.

When consumed in sensible doses, wine has favorable effects on the digestive, cardiovascular and nervous systems. This is how it benefits certain organisms.

The heart and circulatory system. Wine's tonic effect on the cardiovascular system is due to ethyl alcohol, which dilates the veins and increases the resistance of blood vessels. The iron content of red wines helps combat anemia by "building blood". Tannins and coloring pigments counteract fatty deposits and help to lower cholesterol.

The stomach. Wine facilitates digestion by increasing secretion of gastric juices, stimulated mainly by ethyl alcohol and tartaric acid.

The liver. Wine stimulates the metabolism of elements in the formation of blood, due to its sugars, mainly glucose. It also favors the secretion of bile, due to glycerine.

The kidneys. Wine augments diuretic action, due to ethyl alcohol and acid salts, notably potassium bitartrate.

The intestines. Wine has a mild laxative effect from lactic acid as well as antiseptic qualities, due mainly to alcohol.

Dry wine in small doses is sometimes recommended to diabetics as a means of building glucose tolerance. It is known to stimulate the appetite of underweight persons. It provides a quick source of energy to those on weight reduction diets. Wine also has psychological benefits, helping people to overcome shyness, anxiety and depression. It stimulates the intellect and desire to communicate, thereby inspiring creativity.

A rule of thumb in some European wine drinking countries is that, in a day, a healthy male adult can effectively metabolize a gram of alcohol for each kilogram of weight. For a man of 75 kilograms, or 165 pounds, this translates into 750 milliliters of wine of 12.5 degrees alcohol - or a standard bottle a day. Recommended quantities vary, though it is generally acknowledged that physical activity stimulates metabolism and that men have somewhat greater capacity to absorb alcohol than do women.

Excessive use of alcohol diminishes or reverses the favorable effects of moderate wine drinking. The dangers of alcohol abuse are well known and widely discussed, as they should be in a reasonable modern society. But recent emphasis on the negative issues in some countries has unjustifiably obscured the time-proven knowledge about wine's healthful virtues.

MATCHING WINE AND FOOD BY ANALOGY AND CONTRAST

Rules about matching wine and food are useful when they combine good taste with good sense. For instance, the "white with fish and red with meat" principle is a handy guideline, but not a hard-and-fast doctrine. Rules should never be so rigidly interpreted that they create fears of making errors or inhibiting experimentation.

Through much of history, the question of which wine with which food didn't create dilemmas. Most Italians ate and drank local produce, though no doubt a natural selection took place as they came to favor foods or create dishes that went well with local wines. On the other hand, certain wines were no doubt conceived or modified to go with local foods.

The Association of Italian Sommeliers, whose members include experts on gastronomy from each of the country's diverse regions, has analyzed traditional and modern dining practices to come up with a guide to the two basic ways that wines and foods are matched: by analogy and by contrast. The first category applies to wines and foods that correspond somewhat in colors, odors or flavors. The second applies to wines and foods of diverse flavor characteristics that nonetheless balance or complement each other.

By Analogy

Wines and foods are considered by typology, color, aroma and structure. Here are some examples of matches:

By typology:

- Rustic dishes and rustic wines
- Refined cuisine and fine wines
- Local specialties and local wines

By color:

- White wines and light colored foods: most seafood and shellfish, chicken and veal with light sauces
- Red wines and dark-colored foods: salame, red meats, game, pigeon, duck, dishes with brown sauces
(The most frequent exceptions to the color guide are cheeses and desserts).

By aroma:

- Wines of delicate scent with foods of subtle taste and odor
- Aromatic wines with foods of pronounced odor and flavor
- Wines of rich bouquet with smoked or spicy foods

By structure:

- Full-bodied wines with dishes of rich textures and flavors

By Contrast

The different tastes of wine become pleasing when they strike a balance at the finish. Likewise, contrasting flavors in wines and foods can achieve harmony on the palate. Here are some examples:

- Acidic or tannic wines of an aromatic vein go with foods of mellow flavor and a high fat content
- Soft and somewhat alcoholic wines go with foods of tart piquant flavor
Strong but mellow-flavored wines go with highly flavored foods
- Softly sweet wines go with dishes marked by a bitter vein
The final balance is the key to success. If one of the contrasting flavors - sweet, acid, salty/spicy or bitter - predominates, it will cover the others and the balance will be off. Desserts do not go with dry, acidic wines, for example.

SUGGESTED MATCHES OF FOODS AND WINES

Using the theories of analogy and contrast, the Italian sommeliers have created a listing that follows the normal sequence through a meal with examples of dishes and the type of wine recommended with each.

Antipasti

Antipasti range from the tidbits or snacks served with *aperitifs* to elaborate arrays of foods of all description served before the pasta or soup course. Choices of wines vary according to ingredients and methods of preparation. The following are some popular examples of *antipasti*:

Raw or poached seafood:

Dry, zesty, perfumed whites of medium strength.

Seafood salads:

Light, dry, fresh, fragrant whites.

Smoked or lightly salted fish:

Dry but sturdy and well-flavored aromatic whites.

Caviar.

Spumante brut made by the classical method.

Omelets, souffles, vegetable flans:

Soft whites of medium strength, tasty and perfumed.

Prosciutto, salami, raw meat salads, carpaccio:

Dry, fresh, fragrant roses or medium to light red, also *frizzante*.

Patés of liver or poultry:

Softly dry to lightly sweet whites of good strength, full flavor and rich aroma.

Warm puff pastries, tarts and quiches:

Dry *spumante* or soft, fragrant whites of medium strength.

Hot appetizers with sausage, cooked ham or cheese.

Light, dry fragrant reds of zesty flavor, also *frizzante*.

Soups*Vegetable soups:*

Dry, tasty rosés or soft, fragrant reds.

Cream soups:

Soft, fresh, lightly aromatic whites.

Fish soups (with light-colored broth):

Dry, tasty, fragrant whites of medium strength.

Fish soups (with dark-colored broth):

Dry, tasty, softly perfumed rosés or zesty young reds.

Pasta in broth (of meat or poultry):

Light, dry, fresh, well perfumed whites.

Pastas and risottos

With pasta *asciutta* or *risotto* dishes, the wine depends primarily on whether the type of sauce or dressing is based on fish, meat vegetables or cheese, along the following lines.

With white sauces based on fish:

Dry, fresh, perfumed whites of light to medium strength.

With white sauces based on vegetables:

Dry, soft, fragrant whites of light to medium strength.

With dark sauces based on vegetables:

Dry, soft aromatic whites or fragrant roses of medium strength.

With dark sauces based on meat:

Dry, tasty, lightly tannic reds of good body and bouquet.

With melted cheese:

Dry, medium-bodied, lightly tannic reds of good bouquet.

Fish

This group includes edible marine creatures, whether they live in salt water or fresh, in the categories of molluscs, crustaceans and other fish, ranging from tuna, swordfish, sardines and sole to salmon, trout and eel. For most fish, the wine depends as much on the style of cooking as it does on the type of flesh. If wine, whether white or red, is used in a sauce, broth or stew, normally the same wine is served with the dish.

Poached or boiled molluscs (clams, oysters, mussels, squid, octopus, cuttlefish):

Dry, light, fresh, well-scented whites.

Grilled molluscs:

Softly dry, aromatic whites of medium strength.

Poached or boiled crustaceans (lobsters, crabs, shrimp, prawn, fresh water crayfish):

Fresh, young, lightly aromatic whites of medium strength.

Grilled crustaceans:

Softly dry, aromatic whites of good strength.

Other fish poached or boiled:

Light fresh, softly dry whites.

Other fish grilled:

Dry whites of sturdy structure and rather full aroma and flavor.

Other fish stewed:

Dry whites (or rosés) of ample flavor, aroma and strength.

Meat dishes

Three categories are considered: white meats, beef and game. The choice of wine depends largely on the method of cooking. Usually the wine used in preparing a sauce, gravy or stew should be served with the dish.

Grilled white meats (veal, rabbit, pork, baby lamb) and sausages:

Young, fresh, softly dry, well-scented red wines or mature whites (possibly woodaged) of full flavor and bouquet.

Stewed white meats and sausages:

Dry, medium-bodied, lightly tannic reds of good bouquet.

Boiled beef (also as part of bollito misto, prepared with veal, tongue, sausages and hen):

Fresh, fragrant, lightly tannic young reds of medium body.

Grilled beef:

Dry, mature reds of good body and fine bouquet and flavor.

Roast beef (with brown sauce or gravy):

Well-aged reds of robust structure and richly complex bouquet and flavor.

Spit-roasted game of dark flesh and strong flavor (venison, hare and fowl such as woodcock, thrush and wild duck):

Mature reds of robust structure, dry, lightly tannic flavors and full bouquet.

Roasted or stewed game (with brown sauce or gravy):

Well-aged reds of notable body and strength, smooth flavors and richly complex bouquet.

Poultry

The choice of wine with poultry depends on whether the flesh is light-colored or dark, as well as on the method of cooking. Again, any wine used in preparing a sauce, gravy or stew should be served with the dish.

Boiled or stewed poultry of light flesh (chicken, turkey, capon, hen):

Young, fresh reds of medium body and gentle flavor and bouquet.

Grilled or spit-roasted poultry of light flesh:

Mature reds of good body, softly dry flavor and elegant bouquet.

Roast poultry of dark flesh (guinea fowl, pigeon, duck, goose):

Dry medium-aged reds of good body, mellow flavor and fine bouquet.

Stewed poultry of dark flesh:

Aged reds of good body and strength, full dry flavor and rich bouquet.

Other meat and poultry dishes

Parts of the interior and the head of certain animals are often used in Italian cooking. Wine choices are based mainly on color, though ingredients of sauces are also important.

Light-colored meats (sweetbreads and brains):

Dry, fresh fragrant whites of medium body and strength.

Dark-colored meats (liver, heart, kidneys):

Softly dry reds of good bouquet and medium strength.

Mushrooms and truffles

Wine choices with mushrooms depend partly on the species but more on the type of cooking and the other ingredients included in sauces. Truffles are a case apart. The prized white or yellow truffles found in several parts of Italy are usually shaved raw over pasta and other dishes. Black truffles, also common in Italy, are usually cooked, so the choice of wine depends on the ingredients of each dish.

Raw mushrooms:

Light, zesty, aromatic whites.

Mushroom soups:

Softly dry, fragrant whites or rosés of medium bodied young reds.

Grilled mushrooms:

Softly dry reds of good body and full bouquet.

Stewed mushrooms:

Dry, lightly tannic reds of ample body and bouquet.

White truffles with pasta, risotto, cheese fondue or meat dishes:

Softly dry reds of good body and strength and notable flavor and bouquet.

Vegetables

With vegetable dishes alone, a fresh rosé is often the best choice. When they are served as a side dish, the wine depends on the food they are served with or their sauces. Wines do not go well with salads dressed with vinegar.

Cheeses

Wine choices depend on whether soft cheeses are fresh or aged and whether hard cheeses are eaten as they are or are melted or cooked.

Fresh soft cheeses (Robiola, Caciotta, Mozzarella, Caprino):

Softly dry to lightly sweet whites of full aroma and flavor or mellow young reds or rosés.

Matured soft cheeses (Taleggio, Fontina, Bet Paese, Gorgonzola):

Mature reds of full body, bouquet and flavor or golden fortified wines of richly dry to mellow flavors.

Hard cheeses (Parmigiano, Pecorino, Asiago, Caciocavallo, Provolone):

Mature reds of full body, bouquet and flavor.

Cooked or grated and melted hard cheeses (Parmigiano, Grana Padano, Pecorino Sardo or Romano):

Dignified aged reds of ample structure, bouquet and flavor.

Desserts

The degree of sweetness in desserts usually dictates the level of sweetness in the wine. Ice cream and sweets based on chocolate are not well suited to wine.

Puff pastries with cream or fruit fillings or white sauces:

Medium sweet whites, soft and flavorful, with full aromas - also *frizzante* or sparkling.

Tarts, pies or cakes with fresh apples, pears, pineapple, lemon:

Sparkling whites of medium strength and sweetness and rich aroma.

Tarts, pies or cakes with fresh berries:

Medium sweet to sweet reds of full body and aroma, possibly *frizzante* or sparkling.

Short crust tarts with marmalade or candied fruit:

Richly sweet aromatic wines of golden color and soft, round flavors.

Sponge cakes with creams or liquors:

Very sweet golden wines of soft flavor and full bouquet or else sweet fortified reds of rich flavor and bouquet.

Chocolate cakes and mousses:

As a rule, no wine can stand up to the strong flavor of chocolate, but attempts are sometimes made with very sweet *passito* (from raisined grapes) or with fortified wines.

Fruit

Fresh fruit, a frequent substitute for dessert in Italy, does not require wine. Fruit cocktail (macedonia) is often made with an aromatic dry white as the base. Red wine, usually medium sweet, may be poured over bowls of strawberries or raspberries or mixed wild berries. Cooked or stewed fruit, such as apples, pears and prunes, go well with rich reds of notable structure bouquet and mellow flavors hinting at sweet.

The sequence of wines through a meal

The wines served through a meal should follow a sequence based on body, strength and taste sensations, from light and dry to rich and full-bodied to sweet and strong. This is partly because the senses become less acute through a meal, so that flavors and aromas need to be increasingly accentuated. This is the scale of types:

- Young whites, zesty and delicately fragrant, light in body and strength.
- Mature whites of ample flavors and aromas and good body and strength.
- Young rosés of light body and moderate strength.
- Young reds of fresh scents and light to moderate body and strength.
- Mature reds of full bouquet, flavor and strength.
- Aged reds of full body, mellow flavors and complex bouquet.
- Medium sweet whites, also sparkling, of full aroma and medium strength.
- Fully sweet whites or reds, rich in bouquet and alcohol.

The number of wines served can vary from a single type with a simple meal to five or more with a full menu. It depends not only on the number of courses, but also on the importance of the occasion and on how many persons are involved (the more there are, the more bottles will be needed, increasing opportunities to switch wines).

Remember, though, that wines need to be changed only if the course being served is clearly different from the last. There is nothing to the notion that switching wines through a meal is harmful. As long as the wines are of good quality, the only real concern is quantity, taking care to consume only a limited portion of each.

These are some of the rules of thumb about precedents when more than one wine is being served:

- Dry whites before rosés.
- Rosés before reds.
- Dry sparkling wines before still wines.
- Dry wines before sweet ones.
- Young wines before aged ones.
- Delicately scented wines before aromatic wines.
- Aromatic dry wines before wines of ample bouquet.
- Acidic wines before tannic wines.
- Light-bodied wines before robust ones.
- Weak wines before strong ones.

But there are exceptions to those sequences. The key to success is that the wine just served should leave no regrets that the preceding one is gone.

4 / Buying, Storing And Serving

30

CONSUMER PREFERENCES IN WINE

In Italy and other countries where wine with meals is a long tradition, consumer preferences are often based on habit. Until recently, most wines were sold locally in demijohns or large containers as a matter of convenience. But the trend among discriminating drinkers in Italy and much of Europe is toward bottled premium wines from their own regions and beyond.

In nations where wine drinking is a rather recent phenomenon, such as the United States, there is less consumer loyalty to local or even national products. The consumption of premium wines is still confined to a fraction of the population, but there has been a tendency to popularize wine drinking and to equate it with fine food and other aspects of the European concept of the good life.

National differences in attitudes about wine are less pronounced than they once were. Changes in life style, work habits, diet and communications in much of the industrialized world have led to increasingly universal patterns of wine consumption.

Aged red wines of classical style have maintained their prestige and following among experienced drinkers. But the most notable international trend has been toward lighter, more modern wines of recognized varietal names and flavors, more often white than red. These consumer preferences have influenced wine producers everywhere as world markets have become increasingly competitive.

Beyond general trends in patterns of consumption, there are also seasonal preferences to consider. White wines of light body and zesty acidity are most in demand in the summer, though they are also popular through the year as pre-dinner drinks. Fall and spring provide the climates for medium-weight, well-balanced wines, both red and white, that go well with a wide array of foods.

Winter favors aged red wines whose warm, hearty flavors go well with the more robust foods served in the cold months. The demand for sparkling wines, both the classical dry types and sweet *spumante*, reaches a peak during the Christmas season. Sweet and fortified wines also find most favor during the holidays.

THE SOMMELIER'S ROLE IN WINE

Sommelier is used in Italy and many other countries to describe a professional wine steward or waiter. It is a French adaptation of the old Italian term *somigliere*. The 18th century Edicts of the Dukes of Savoy in Piedmont declared the "Somigliere di Bocca e di Corte" as a public official in charge of selecting the duchy's finest wines for the court. His duties included research and evaluation of the wines and determining the correct manner of serving them. In the mid-19th century the term *sommelier* came into use in France.

But the occupation of selecting, bottling and serving wine was recognized long before the *somigliere* was appointed by the Dukes of Savoy. The Greek symposium, an ancient version of a wine-drinking society, was directed by the "symposiarch." Wines were selected and served to the Roman emperors by the "rex bibendi". In Renaissance times, the "coppiere" (literally cupbearer) held an important position in Italy's royal-courts, with a well-defined set of rituals to follow in selecting and serving wine.

Today, the Italian Association of Sommeliers has more than 7,500 members involved with wine in a professional way. The courses they follow provide practical points on buying, storing and serving wine, as summed up in this lesson. The information should prove useful not only to professional *sommeliers* in other countries but to anyone interested in wine.

Stocking a cellar for a restaurant or shop

The first consideration in acquiring wine is to have a realistic idea of the establishment's potential supply and demand. Bear in mind that customers at any level expect a wine's price to reflect its quality.

Before buying any wine, taste it several times, preferably after acquiring samples in different places. Control not only its class, but also the quality of bottles, labels, capsules, cartons or crates and, above all, the condition of corks. Prestigious and expensive wines require more care in tasting and more attention to the potential of each vintage.

When stocking wines for aging from great vintages, try to buy early and in adequate supply to meet demands for years to come, thus avoiding future price increases.

Beware of special discounts for quantities. Acquiring a large stock of a certain wine may tempt you to push that and neglect other types that make up a well-rounded selection.

For wines that need to be drunk within a relatively short time span, order quantities annually but arrange for delivery every three to six months to avoid overloading the cellar.

Follow the advice of wine experts, but don't be unduly influenced by opinions or ratings. Rely on your own palate in searching out unpublicized or rare wines and offering your discoveries to customers. Wine drinkers like to be pleasantly surprised.

Storing wine

It's important to have a cellar or storage space large enough to hold a longterm stock of wine, but only if conditions are right. The room should be con-

stantly cool (50-60° F) and with a source of light ventilation to avoid excess humidity. Nothing odorous should be stored in the room, which should be isolated from traffic vibrations, noise and odors. Lighting should be dim and direct sunlight rigidly avoided.

Even if the area is primarily for storage, it's wise to keep it neat and attractive. Customers like to visit even the most primitive of wine cellars. Shelves should be built of wood, tiles or cement, which resist temperature changes better than metal. Bottles should be stacked horizontally with their labels facing up and grouped by estate or zone of origin or type. Horizontal stacking is important because it keeps the cork in contact with the wine, thus damp and elastic, and also because when the bottles are massed together the temperatures of their contents tend to remain stable.

If the room is subject to temperature fluctuations, it is best to keep sparkling wines, dry whites and rosés close to the floor, where it's cooler. Aged reds and strong dessert wines may be kept higher, since their alcohol helps preserve them.

Wines should be recorded by type and vintage with a note of original cost. In some large cellars, wines are catalogued under a numbered code that is kept in a computer keyed to register any changes in the wine list.

Creating a wine list

The first purpose of a restaurant wine list is to inform the customer about the contents of the cellar. But there are different approaches to creating a wine list, which depend on the size and importance of the cellar and on the style of the establishment. Wine lists may range in scope from a handwritten sheet of paper to a typewritten or printed pamphlet to a bound volume that resembles a work of literature.

However simple or ambitious their design, all good wine lists have some points in common. They are clearly arranged, informative, easy to comprehend and free of errors in names, locations, vintages and prices.

A good wine list must also be periodically updated. Many restaurateurs revise them in the spring, when wines from the latest vintage begin to arrive, and the fall, when wines for aging are most often acquired. Lists managed by computer can be changed regularly, even reprinted daily. Some lists follow a numbering code for wines - a method that may be efficient but risks giving the list the appearance of a Chinese restaurant menu. Whatever the system, changes in the stock of wines need to be recorded faithfully. Few restaurant experiences are more annoying to a wine lover than discovering that a favorite bottle on the list is no longer available.

The list can be organized in various ways, though a logical order to follow is the normal sequence of wines through a meal by categories:

- Dry sparkling wines
- White wines
- Rosés wines
- Red wines
- Dessert wines

Then, depending on the size of the list, further breakdowns might be given in each category by nations, regions or specific zones or by references to certain types of wines or grape varieties. Lists in restaurants that specialize in regional gastronomy often begin with local wines before proceeding to others.

Beyond basic information, some lists give details about estates or vineyards and descriptions of the wines. Some are artistically designed, including illustrations such as labels, maps, photos and drawings. The more attractive the list, the more likely that customers will ask for a copy as a souvenir. Making extra copies is worth the expense, for there are few better means of publicizing a restaurant and its wines.

The sommelier's tools of the trade

Serving wine is a pleasurable occupation but it is no light task. After the grape grower, the winemaker, the taster, bottler, shipper, importer, wholesaler and retailer, the *sommelier* represents the final link in the chain between the wine and the consumer. He or she must provide information, offer advice and answer questions which require a thorough knowledge of the subject.

Presenting wine in its most favorable light requires the proper tools. The following is a short list of the accessories needed for top-flight restaurant service of wine:

Small wine service tables on rollers so that they can be shifted from place to place.

Carafes or pitchers of fine glass or crystal for decanting wines that have sediment or that need to aerate, or breathe, before being served.

Buckets half filled with ice and water for quick cooling of sparkling wines and certain dry whites and dessert wines - or for maintaining temperatures if they are already chilled. Insulated containers may also be available for maintaining temperatures of certain wines.

Special pincers that resemble a nutcracker for freeing corks on sparkling wines if they are too stubborn to be removed by hand.

Serving baskets or cradles used for holding bottles of certain aged red wines as close to horizontal as possible, so that they can be poured with a minimum of motion to avoid stirring up sediment.

Candles to provide light behind a bottle being decanted to check that the sediment remains in the shoulder without being poured. Such candles should be made of odorless wax.

Tastevins, the shallow silver saucer that *sommeliers* often carry on a neck chain, may be used to check the color, odor and flavor of a small amount of wine poured into it before serving. Some wine waiters consider the *tastevin* more symbolic or showy than practical.

Bottle openers normally used by *sommeliers* are in the form of a jackknife with a corkscrew and lever at one end and a blade for cutting the capsule or foil at the other. The corkscrew should consist of a slender spiral open at the center with a sharp point to penetrate the cork without drilling a hole through it and depositing scraps in the bottle - as a solid, screw-shaped type often does. Also, the lever which is placed against the lip, of the bottle should be long enough to permit the cork to be pried out easily in a gradual, uninterrupted motion.

Among numerous alternative openers, some lever models are larger than the jackknife type and permit stronger leverage and quicker maneuvering, though they can't always be carried in a pocket.

Wine glasses

Glasses, in a sense, are the ultimate tools of the *sommelier's* trade. They should be carefully chosen, first of all for function but also for effect, to fit the setting or the occasion. To say that a fine wine loses something if served in a tumbler or plastic cup isn't just an example of snobbery. Those vessels lack the form, size and visual and tactile qualities that allow wine to express its sensorial best. On the other hand, a common wine will still taste common, or worse, if served in crystal stemware or a silver chalice.

Glasses vary to extremes in design, reflecting the endless theories and ongoing debates over which is right for each type of wine. Most table wines can be served in glasses of the familiar chalice or tulip type, slightly closed at the top. Their rounded forms maintain aromas and their stems allow them to be held so that the hand neither impedes vision of the wine nor warms it.

Such glasses may vary dramatically in size and shape as well as in quality. But whether they are made of ordinary glass or the finest crystal, experts tend to prefer perfectly transparent glasses - untinted and with a minimum of etching or design. Drinking vessels made of metals, crockery or other materials have been largely dismissed as folkloric.

Wine glasses should be selected according to needs and tastes. The first consideration is function, being sure the form and size are compatible with the character and class of the wine to be served. But almost as important are the aesthetic and psychological effects. An artistically designed glass of thin crystal has not only the look but also the sound and feel to exalt a wine, to show it at its best.

A normal restaurant setting includes glasses for red and white wines and water. There should also be a reserve of special glasses for sparkling and dessert wines and liqueurs. Some deluxe restaurants may have two or more types of glasses for each category of wine. Following are the main categories and the most suitable type of glass for each:

Dry sparkling wine:

An elongated chalice or "flute" allows for a lively, uninterrupted display of bubbles to demonstrate the wine's perlage.

Sweet sparkling wine:

A broad, shallow chalice sometimes known as a "cup" or *coppa* allows the wine to immediately express its full aroma.

Young white wine:

A rather small, slim chalice best expresses the fresh flavors and delicate aromas. A slight flare at the rim channels the wine to the sides of the tongue where it senses the bracing acidity.

Aromatic white wine:

A chalice of medium size, round and slightly closed at the rim, captures the essence of aromas.

Young rosé wine:

A small chalice somewhat wider at the bowl than the rim favors the fresh fragrance of the wine first and then its delicate flavor.

Young red wine:

A medium-sized chalice with an egg-shaped bowl and a slight narrowing at the rim favors the expression of youthful freshness in aroma and flavor.

Mature red wine:

A fairly large chalice with a well-rounded bowl and an inward taper at the rim lets the bouquet develop gradually as the wine is sipped.

Well-aged red wine:

A large, bowl-shaped chalice, sometimes called a "ballon," provides ample space for the bouquet to show its depth and complexity while favoring a gradual evolution in flavor as the wine breathes.

Dessert wine:

A tall, slender, cylindrical chalice is designed to express the immediate aromas and sweet flavors of most types of dessert wine.

There are, of course, options for special types of glasses for wines within each category. But with a full set available along the suggested lines, most serving problems will be solved.

Sometimes a table setting includes the full array of glasses at large banquets, for example, where many wines are being served in rapid succession. In such cases, glasses should be arranged from right to left in the order that the wines are served. But as wines are ordered in normal restaurant situations, the correct glasses should be placed on the table just before pouring.

Glasses for most types of wines should be only partly filled. For example, some ballon glasses could hold an entire bottle, but the wine poured should merely fill the lower part of the bowl to perhaps a tenth of capacity. A sparkling wine flute or dessert wine glass may be filled halfway, but never to more than three-fifths of capacity.

The procedures of serving wine

In many restaurants the *sommelier's* duties include selecting, storing and cataloguing wines. But perhaps the greatest test of knowledge, skill, experience and tact comes in dealing with customers. The *sommelier's* introduction is the wine list, presented along with the menu or at a strategic interval after guests have had a chance to consider the dishes.

An astute waiter can often size up a customer's familiarity with wine by weighing the response to a calculated question. In the best of circumstances, a rapport will be struck that will lead to ready acceptance of the suggested wine or wines to be served. If the choice is difficult, patience may be required, but the solution must bear out the axiom that, in the end, the customer is always right.

With orders in hand, the *sommelier* should quickly check that all bottles to be served are at proper temperatures or will be by the time they are opened. If any bottles are still in the cellar, sparkling or white wines will need to be cooled slightly and mature reds will need to be gradually warmed a few degrees. Then the serving procedure begins.

First, the bottle should be brought to the table so that the person who ordered can confirm that the label shows the right wine and vintage. Then a

servicing table should be placed nearby and any cellar dust or mold on the bottle should be removed with a dry towel.

Place the bottle on the serving table with the label facing the guests. With a knife blade or foil cutter, remove the top of the capsule neatly so that it won't come in contact with the wine being poured. Wipe away any mold or residue that was left between the capsule and cork.

Then insert the corkscrew, set the lever against the lip and slowly pry the cork upward, making sure that it doesn't begin to break or crumble. If it does, extreme caution will be needed to remove it without getting scraps inside the bottle. The cork should come away easily and cleanly, but don't pull it so forcefully that it makes a loud pop.

Use the moist lower end of the cork to clean away any residue around the top of the bottle and sniff it to make sure there are no obvious off odors. If there is any sign of cork scraps in the bottle, remove them by quickly pouring a tiny amount of wine into a glass. Remove the cork from the corkscrew and set it aside within view so that the customer can check it on request.

Pour a small amount of the wine into a glass and quickly and decisively sniff and taste it. If there is any sign of a problem, tell the customer that you are getting another bottle and why - but don't seek permission, since that would reveal doubt.

If the wine is right, grasp the bottle so that the label is evident and pour a small amount into the glass of the person who ordered - unless he indicates that someone else present should taste it. If not approved, for whatever reason, don't contest the decision but offer to get another bottle of the same wine or, if you are certain that the taster is at fault, suggest another wine.

If approved, after a sniff or a taste, begin serving, following the usual etiquette of ladies first. Serve from the right of each guest, filling glasses to prescribed levels and keeping the label in view. End each pour with a gentle half twist of the bottle to remove any drips from the lip. A clean white napkin should be held in the left hand to avoid any drips on the tablecloth. Conclude the first pouring by filling the taster's glass to the right level.

During the meal, check the level of wine in the glasses frequently and provide refills before any is empty. Before the bottle is empty, ask the person who ordered if he would like another of the same or another wine. If there is a change of wine, place clean and appropriate glasses around and repeat the serving procedure. Remove the preceding glass only with each guest's consent.

Decanting wine

The decanting of wine into a carafe or pitcher is necessary only if there is sediment in the bottle or if it needs, aeration.

Decanting for aeration, or oxygenation, is used mainly for young or medium-aged wines that seem to have a temporary problem. The procedure consists of pouring the wine into a large carafe or pitcher, provoking a rapid exchange of oxygen. It may be useful for the following types of wine:

- Young whites that seem to have an excess of free sulfur dioxide detectable by the nose. The odor should disappear almost immediately after decanting.
- Mature whites or reds that have been bottled for years and have a slightly closed or musty odor that may be the effect of oxygen reduction. The odor should subside within minutes, though in some wines it takes longer and in others it may not go away at all.
- Sparkling wines that seem to be aggressively effervescent. Decanting should reduce the intensity of carbon dioxide. In some parts of Italy, bubbly wines are habitually served in a pitcher or carafe.
- Wines of any type or color with a slightly disagreeable odor that an experienced taster believes will disappear with aeration.

Decanting to separate the wine from the sediment is a more delicate operation. It is done with well-aged red wines that have a natural deposit of residue due mainly to the gradual precipitation of tannins and coloring substances. The carafe should be of fine glass or crystal with a rounded base and a long, straight neck.

If the bottle to be served has been standing upright at room temperature for several hours, the sediment should have collected at the base. But if it is brought directly from the cellar, where it has been stored horizontally in cool conditions, the procedure requires more time and attention. The bottle must be carried with extreme care and kept in an almost horizontal position to avoid stirring the sediment. After being shown to guests, it should be placed in a basket or cradle and left for at least 15 minutes before decanting so that particles will resettle.

The ritual begins by preparing the carafe. If the wine has come directly from the cellar, the base of the carafe should be held briefly in a basin of hot water so that the wine's temperature will be raised a few degrees during decanting. If it is already at room temperature, this step isn't necessary. Pour a little of the wine into the carafe and swish it around, depositing the rinse in a service glass. This step, known as *avvinare* in Italian, is designed to remove any odors - such as chlorinated water or cleaning agents - from the carafe.

Light the candle and hold the bottle - whether in a basket or not - in a pouring position so that the neck is illuminated by the flame. Pour slowly and

with a steady hand, holding the carafe at an angle so that the wine runs down its neck into the base. Stop pouring when the first signs of sediment appear at the bottle neck.

Check the wine's transparency by holding the carafe against the candle. Then pour a little into taster's glass for approval. Some connoisseurs prefer to let the wine rest in carafe for a while to compose bouquet and flavor before being served, though that isn't always necessary. Some very old wines lose vitality if they remain too long in carafe, so it is best to taste them and decide immediately after decanting.

Serving sparkling wines

Place the proper glasses - flutes for dry sparkling wines, rounded chalices for sweet *spumante* - around for guests and put a bucket filled with one-third ice and one-third water on the service table. If the wine has been refrigerated, the ice bucket will maintain a temperature of about 45 -50 F. If brought from the cellar, the wine will need about ten minutes in the ice bucket to reach the right temperature.

When ready to serve, dry the bottle with a towel if it has been in the bucket and place it upright on the serving table. Using a corkscrew blade (or the tab inserted on some bottles), remove the upper part of the capsule or foil so that the wire baling over the cork is exposed. Unwind the spiral stay with one hand held firmly over the cork to be sure it doesn't pop out when the baling is removed.

Grasp the bottles in one hand and with the thumb and two fingers of the other twist the cork gently but with a firm grip to avoid a quick release. If it doesn't yield to this pressure, use a pincer to begin removal. Tilt the bottle and ease the cork out in a spiral motion that must be braked to assure a subdued puff of carbon dioxide rather than an explosion. A towel or napkin held over the cork during removal subdues the sound and can be used to catch any foam that issues.

Hold the bottle at an angle for a few seconds to let the CO₂ fumes escape before pouring a small amount into a tasting glass to check aroma, color, clarity and perlage. Serve the wine by holding the bottle with the thumb inserted in the "punt" (the conical indentation underneath), while grasping the base with the fingers and part of the palm. Pour a small amount into the glass of the person who ordered. If approved, serve the other guests. Pour slowly to avoid having the foam rise above the rim and let it subside before filling the glass sufficiently to show perlage. Place the wine in the ice bucket with a towel draped across the top to dry the bottle before each serving.

As of October 10, 1996, 294 D.O.C. and 17 D.O.C.G. wines had received recognition. Many of those D.O.C. wines include sub-specifications that boost the total number of recognized wines to nearly 1,000.

Among Italy's 20 regions, Piedmont ranked first in 1994 with 47 D.O.C. and D.O.C.G. wines, while Tuscany was second with 32.

In 1994, Italy produced 9,762,070 hectoliters; (257,422,890 U.S. gallons) of D.O.C. wine. That was about 16% of total domestic wine production.

In comparison with total output, the percentages of D.O.C. and D.O.C.G. wine production by broad geographical area in 1994 were as follows:

- Northern Italy: 28.3%
- Central Italy: 24%
- Southern Italy: 4.2%

There are now 17 D.O.C.G. wines:

Red:

Barbaresco (Piedmont)
 Barolo (Piedmont)
 Brachetto d'Acqui (Piedmont)
 Brunello di Montalcino (Tuscany)
 Carmignano Rosso (Tuscany)
 Chianti (Tuscany)
 Chianti Classico (Tuscany)
 Gattinara (Piedmont)
 Sagrantino di Montefalco (Umbria)
 Taurasi (Campania)
 Torgiano Rosso Riserva (Umbria)
 Vino Nobile di Montepulciano (Tuscany)

White:

Albana di Romagna (Emilia-Romagna)
 Asti (Piedmont)
 Asti Spumante
 Moscato d'Asti
 Vermentino di Gallura (Sardinia)
 Vernaccia di San Gimignano (Tuscany)

White & Rosé:

Franciacorta

5 / Classification Of Italian Wine

41

The wines are divided into the following categories:

VINI DA TAVOLA (wines outside the D.O.C. - D.O.C.G. system)

VINI DA TAVOLA CON INDICAZIONE GEOGRAFICA (wines with geographical designations)

D.O.C.

They take the name of the V.Q.P.R.D.

D.O.C.G.

Fortified or Liqueur Wines

SPECIAL WINES -

Aromatized Wines, Sparkling Wines

VINI DA TAVOLA

The Vini Da Tavola must meet the following requirements:

- They must be made from grape varieties recognized by the European Community (E.C.).
- They must be produced in the E.C.
- They must have a minimum alcohol level (developed) of 9 degrees with a maximum of 15 degrees.
- They must have total minimum acidity of 4.5 grams per liter (in tartaric acid).

They are "anonymous" wines in that their labels may not mention:

- A geographical indication or area of origin.
- The name of a variety.
- The vintage.

However, the label must mention:

- The personal or corporate name and the principal place of business of the bottler.
- The alcohol content.
- The volume of wine contained by the bottle.
- The number of the bottler's code (it can appear on the cork or capsule).
- The term "Vino da Tavola."

The following information may also be given:

- Brand name (which should be such as not to create confusion with V.Q.P.R.D. wines).

- Color (whether initially or after the evolution of the tone).
- Total alcohol content (developed as well as undeveloped).
- Those involved in the sales network (distributors - importers).
- Type of product (with reference to sugar content): dry, sweet or sweetish.
- Recommendations addressed to the consumer (combinations with foods, tips on how to keep and serve the wine).

VINI DA TAVOLA CON INDICAZIONE GEOGRAFICA

The indication can consist of a region, a province, a commune or a communal subdivision or to a zone that is not administratively delimited.

The terms that must appear on the label are the same as those for Vini da Tavola with, in addition, the geographical indication.

The information that can additionally be provided is the same as in the case of Vini da Tavola plus:

- The variety (if it accounts for at least 85% of the wine).
- The year of harvest (vintage).
- Prizes won by the wine (enological competitions).
- Abbazia. (Monastery) or Castello (Castle), provided that the wine comes entirely (100%) from the property of an abbey or castle.
- Vino Novello (if the wine was bottled before December 31 of the year of harvest).

VINI A DENOMINAZIONE D'ORIGINE CONTROLLATA

The name must correspond with that of a determined region, the area from which the wine comes.

- The producing vineyards must be inscribed in the regional C.C.I.A.A. Register.
- Maximum permitted yields per hectare (2.47 acres) must be respected.
- Maximum permitted yields of wine from grapes must be respected.
- The grape varieties used in the production of the wine must be indicated.
- Minimum natural alcohol levels must be respected.
- Minimum percentage of alcohol must be respected.
- The minimum percentage of dry extract must be respected.
- Production per hectare must be formally declared each year.

- Each shipment or production batch of wine must be subjected to chemical analysis.
- Each shipment or production batch of wine must be tasted and assessed.
- The stipulated period of aging must be respected.

In addition to the standard terms required for the Vini da Tavola a Denominazione Geografica (alcohol, volume, etc.), the label must indicate:

- The determined zone from which the wine comes.
- The term D.O.C. (spelled out).
- The phrase CEE V.Q.P.P.D." (it need not be spelled out).

Further information that can be provided is the same as for Vini da Tavola a Denominazione Geografica.

In addition, the following terms can appear on the label:

- Classico: if the wine comes from the oldest production area of the D.O.C. zone.
- Superiore: if the alcohol level is superior to the level laid down by the production code.
- Riserva: if the period of aging is longer than the time span stipulated in the production code.

VINI A DENOMINAZIONE D'ORIGINE CONTROLLATA E GARANTITA

There are some D.O.C. wines of extra-premium quality that must meet the following requirements, in addition to those laid down in the D.O.C. discipline:

- They must be offered for sale to consumers in containers not larger than 5 liters (1.3 U.S. gallons)
- They must be tasted and assessed during the bottling process.
- They must bear the Government seal, which must be attached in such a way that the bottle can not be opened without breaking the seal.

The label must bear the same inscription as that required for a D.O.C. wine, except that the term D.O.C.G. (spelled out) must be used.



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