

HANNA
LEE

WINE TASTING DO'S AND DON'TS

By Hanna Lee, President of the NYC Chapter of Women for WineSense, www.womenforwinesense.org

Wine consumption has exceeded beer for the first time in U.S. history, confirming the fact that Americans are drinking more wine than ever. It has increased every year for the past eleven years and went up four percent last year alone. Not surprisingly, more and more wine tastings are being offered to New Yorkers by wine clubs and wine experts. In addition, companies are offering wine tastings to their employees. Simply put, wine has become a major part of the social and business scenes.

As President of the New York City Chapter of Women for WineSense, I've organized numerous wine events and I have also attended others around town. I have noticed, however, that many people don't know basic wine tasting etiquette and how to get the most out of this wonderful experience. With help of a wine expert, Richard J. Genova, Senior Vice President, Pasternak Wine Imports, I've compiled a list of wine tasting Do's and Don'ts.

1. Ladies, don't wear perfume or strongly scented lipstick. Men, avoid cologne or aftershave. Appreciating the

aroma of a wine is a major part of the wine tasting experience. If your own aroma overpowers the wines, you've missed out and you've likely prevented your fellow wine tasters from savoring their wines' bouquets.

2. Don't chew gum. You remember the scene from "Sideways." It's good advice. Gum interferes with your ability to taste the wine.

3. Don't eat mints or brush your teeth immediately before a wine tasting. Did you ever drink orange juice after you brush your teeth? Acid and mint don't mix well.

4. Don't eat vinegary salads or brined foods like green olives. Pairing wine with dressed greens is notoriously difficult.

5. Don't be afraid of wine jargon: long legs, short legs, foxy, fat, tight, spicy, smoky, earthy, etc. All you need to know is whether it tastes good to you or not.

6. Do begin tasting whites wines, then go to reds, then, finally, dessert wines. If you start with reds or dessert wines, you'll coat your palate and it will be difficult to appreciate the lighter white wines.

7. Do the four "S"s: See it, Swirl it,

Smell it and Sip it.

See it. Do notice the color of your wine. In red wines, a deep color is often an indicator of a robust taste; in white, it denotes age.

Swirl it. It helps to bring out more of the aroma of the wine.

Smell it. Take a few moments and a few good sniffs. Ask yourself what you smell. Do you smell alcohol? I do too!

Sip it. Let it fall all over your entire tongue. Pucker up and inhale gently. This will bring the wine's essence to the back of your throat and nasal cavity where it comes into contact with your aroma receptors.

8. Do ask questions. Wine producers love questions!

- What is the wine's country of origin?
- What grape varieties are the wine?
- What is the suggested retail price?
- Where can it be purchased locally? (retail stores and/or restaurants)
- What food pairings can you recommend?
- How would you describe this wine? (ask their opinion)

9. Do use the spit bucket. That's what professionals do. Gently expel the wine in a

thin stream into the bucket. I know it is neither easy nor comfortable to do so for some people (including me). However, while it's tempting to drink the wine you're sampling, it will ultimately dull your senses. Also, drink water or eat bland bread in between the wines to clean your palate.

10. Do be polite to the wine producers (or whoever is pouring the wines).

What about when you don't like the wine? You should still say, "it is an interesting wine," and thank them for their time and effort. Then move on to the next wine or wine station. It works for me!

11. Do remember to feel free to disagree with the "wine experts." Wine is a subjective experience. What's important is whether you like it or not.

12. Do have fun and enjoy the wine!

Since you've learned basic wine etiquette, now comes the fun part - it's time to practice. I invite you to visit www.womenforwinesense.org, which lists the monthly wine tastings of the New York City Chapter of Women for WineSense, a nationwide, non-profit wine educational organization.

Until then, happy tasting!

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ZAGAT 2002

Yorkvillers go "south-of-the-border" at this "dark", "mysterious" Mexican beloved for it's "dependably" "delish" "gourmet" fare and "friendly owners"; their only regret is that this onetime "sleeper" has "been discovered" and it's now necessary to "call ahead."

OUR TOWN

"Maz Mezcal had a quite recent overhaul generated by its expansion. The renovation resulted in a beautiful, restfull, considerably larger space with soft rose walls nuzzled with orange and low, sexy lighting from hand-painted talavera tile sconces. Despite the radical expansion, Maz Mezcal has retained its amiable neighborhood feeling, and the kitchen is putting out better and more ambitious food than ever before, all at quite reasonable prices.

