

Wine Advice: Selecting from a Wine List



A celebration or simply an evening out. You arrive, are seated, handed the menu and wine list. Panic prevails. Far too often diners find wine selection and ordering intimidating. Armed with the following tips it will not be and fellow diners will sing your praises.

Some wine lists are brief and simple. Red or white, perhaps rosé. Less selection, less stress. Wine selection simplified. Other lists are far more comprehensive, some a single page, others multiple, worse yet, a weighty binder. The number of selections overwhelming, perusing them time-consuming and stress-provoking. So extensive you may wish to abandon wine and order cocktails. But remember, perseverance pays.

Waiters often request drink orders before guests have an opportunity to peruse the food or wine menu. Take time to determine your meal selection and optimal food and wine pairing while your companions do the same.

Should you choose to order wine while settling in, consider kicking off the evening with sparkling wine. Champagne, Cava, and Prosecco are cool, refreshing, and excellent palate cleansers. In addition, sparkling wine adds a sense of elegance and celebration to an evening.

An advertisement for Bennys Restaurant & Catering Services. The top half features the text "YOUR PLACE OR OURS?" in white on a dark background. Below this is the "BENNY'S" logo in a stylized, red, cursive font, with "RESTAURANT & CATERING SERVICES" in smaller white text underneath. To the right of the logo is a photograph of a dish, possibly a salad or a small pizza. Below the logo and photo, the text reads "Let us cater your next event!" in white, followed by "Pick Up & Take Out Available - Delivery by 'Feastify'" in a smaller font. At the bottom, a dark red banner contains the phone number "(204) 726-0207 - 612 Rosser Ave. Brandon, MB" and three social media icons: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Narrow wine selection by the style of wine (red, white, rosé, sparkling) and weight (light, medium, or full-bodied), grape varietal, and place of origin. Consider your budget. If sharing a bottle, discuss what meals the group will be consuming and fellow diner's wine preferences. If diversity reigns, ordering by the glass may be preferable. If so, options are generally more limited, the wine costlier. House wine is often bulk-produced and of lesser quality than bottled selections.

I have found the most wallet-friendly wine selections hail from less familiar wine-producing areas and wineries



and those made from less recognizable grape varieties. Such are the bargain wines, the gems, carefully chosen for quality and price. If not, they would not make the list. Order a Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley, **10** expect to pay more.

Some menus offer pairing suggestions alongside entrees simplifying selection. A sommelier or server are valuable resources, especially those at finer restaurants where staff receive additional wine education, often focused on menu selections featured at the establishment. Share your or the groups wine preferences, food selections, budget, and request suggestions. If you would rather not openly declare the budget, point to a menu price, and ask for options in that range.

Bottled wine is presented for approval to the individual who ordered it. Check the label to ensure the wine is indeed what was ordered, and if indicated on the menu, verify vintage date. Once accepted the wine is opened and a tasting sample poured. Sniff, swirl, and taste to



assess for faults, if no faults are evident approve the wine. Fellow diners will be served prior to the tasting glass being topped up. In higher-end establishments, women are served prior to men. At times diner age is considered, serving the eldest female to youngest female, eldest male to youngest, finishing with the person ordering. I find this manner of service infrequent.

Regarding cost, many establishments use a sliding scale to determine menu price. Lower priced menu options have the largest mark-up, the costliest wine the lowest mark-up.

To get maximum enjoyment wine should be enjoyed at optimal temperature. Do not hesitate to request a chiller for red wine reducing the temperature, in the case of full-bodied wine, to the ideal service temperature of 18 – 20 degrees C., medium- bodied reds to 16-18 degrees C. White wine should be served cool, not ice-cold, and kept cool in an ice bucket. For white wine as with red wine, the lighter the body the cooler the service temperature.

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