

Get the Most From Your Wine

That bottle never tastes the same as when it was fresh at the winery, but these tips can help bring the flavor.

by John Kerr
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Over the years, I've heard so many people lament that the wines they enjoyed at the winery or event never taste quite as good at home. Certainly, part of it is being swept up in the fun of the event itself. But the professionals do have their ways to get the most out of the wines they serve.

Can you replicate these industry "tricks" at home? The answer is, yes, if you use one or more of these simple tips.

But remember, you didn't hear them from me.

Our first trick is the half-hour rule. The guideline we always hear is that red wines are served at room temperature. But most red wines actually taste better around 60 to 65 degrees. So pop your



bottle into the refrigerator about half an hour before serving time. And set the kitchen timer so that you don't forget to retrieve it.

Really?

We were skeptical too until a vintner put us to the test, serving his refrigerator red next to a bottle from the table. The half hour did not make the wine taste chilled. Instead, it lowered the taste of alcohol and made the flavors really pop.

And for whites, take them out of the refrigerator a half hour before serving. The difference is like eating a cheese straight from the ice box versus a little time on the table.

Okay, let's move to the next trick, air time.

Aeration is the best way to open up red wines, making them more balanced and smoother.

Even white wines improve with a little air.



Placing a bottle of red wine in the refrigerator half an hour before serving it can help to bring out the flavor. On the other hand, take a bottle of white wine out of the fridge a half hour before serving.

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The key to aeration is timing. A young, tannic red might need two hours of air to open — this can help even low cost wines taste more expensive. Fifteen minutes to a full hour might be best for a more mature red. But keep in mind that very old wines are fragile, and usually need little air time.

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Don't want to wait? Here are a few tips for those in the fast lane.

Use a good aerator, and let the wine pour against the side of the glass for a second breath of air. And if you don't have this gizmo in your kitchen drawer, use my college roommate's trick — turn the open bottle upside down and let the wine chug into a pitcher. Unless the wine is old, it will survive this abuse.

My corollary for young French or Italian reds is the Cheerios rule. When you're done with breakfast, open the bottle and push the cork back in about a quarter of the way. At the end of the day, your wine is perfect and ready for your dinner.

This doesn't work as well with new world wines, which often have riper fruit and can actually taste worse with too much air. So get to know your wine.

The last trick is cheese. Perhaps the perfect pairing for any wine, since cheese softens tannins and makes wine taste more balanced and smooth. This is one reason you'll find cheese at wine tastings.

If you're looking to keep your party costs down, serve cheese alongside your budget wine.

So don't leave these tricks to the professionals. To get the best out of your wine, definitely try these at home.

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