



A VERY NICE
GLASS of
Wine

Helen McCinn

Call

Call

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GLASS *of*
WINE

HELEN MCGINN

60

CHRONICLE BOOKS
SAN FRANCISCO

Call

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Introduction



This guided journal will help you explore, discover, and, ultimately choose wine with confidence. It's about ensuring that when you do decide to settle down with a glass of wine after a busy day, it's going to be worth it. On the shelf in my study at home is a row of long-ago-emptied wine bottles, each one marked with a date and occasion in silver pen, including a bottle of 1988 vintage Champagne that marks the year the Husband and I got together as teenagers. It was a wedding present and we imbibed years later, to celebrate the birth of Eldest Boy. I haven't been lucky enough to have it since, but I'll never forget how I felt when I drank it. The thing is, I love wine. Really love it. And I don't just mean what's in the glass. Obviously that's a really big part, and I love that there's always more to discover, but for me wine is about so much more than that. It's about bringing us together around a table. Wine makes us sit down (especially like that part) and converse. Wine connects us with places, with stories, and, best of all, with each other. Almost twenty years ago I decided I'd like to make my working way in the world with glass in hand—literally, because I liked what was in the glass. Now, a few years on, I can see that it wasn't just about that; it was as much about the people—those who make wine and those who drink it. One of my favorite nights in my not-particularly-social calendar these days is my book-club evening. Sure, we talk about the book, but really it's about a group of friends getting together around a table, sharing funny, sad, mad, and sometimes very bad stories, mixed in with opinions, food, and—of course—a really nice glass of wine.

I've spent my entire working life in the wine industry, feeling fortunate enough of it that, like Charlie Bucket, I'd won the Golden Ticket. For years I was a supermarket wine buyer. When the first of my three children came along, I gave up the travel for the travel cot, and now work part-time in

wine. Friends have always asked me for wine recommendations, whether it's for everyday drinking, slightly posh dinners, parties, weddings, christenings/naming days, anniversaries, or big birthdays ending in a zero. And they've always told me how the great wall of wine they face each week in the market can feel utterly overwhelming. Consequently, for years I sent a regular email to friends who'd asked for recommendations, especially on good wine deals, and the title of that email was "The Knackered Mother's Wine Club." And that was where it all started; the blog was born one night when the Husband was away and I'd had enough of working late with the laptop on the sofa. I thought that sharing my own weekly wine purchases—two wines a week, whatever I happened to be drinking—might help inspire others to try something different as well as unearth some hidden gems and properly good deals along the way.

I blogged every week—usually with a glass within reach—whatever my mood: happy, not so happy, or just plain knackered. For the first few months the blog was read religiously; by my sister, mother, and the Husband. Then I started to get comments from people who were (a) not related to me and (b) seemingly normal, interested in wine, and wanting to know more about it. And so the weekly posts continued, with added video blogs and tasting tips, among other stuff. I received emails from women telling me they'd never realized Chablis was made from Chardonnay grapes (fact) or that "legs" on a glass was a sign of alcohol content rather than quality. In short, my blog had hit on something. These were busy, knowledge-thirsty women, reading my blog and enjoying learning more about wine. It was a revelation. My audience started to grow and suddenly there I was, doing what I love, namely sharing my thoughts on good wine and helping others grow in confidence when choosing, buying, and talking about wine, while encouraging them to try new things.

How I drink now is very different from how I drank before I had children, not least because looking after children with a hangover is rarely worth the pain. More than that, as I get older I'm realizing, actually, I don't want to drink as much as I used to. The shallow part of me worries

about the extra calories I'm taking on; the less shallow part of me knows that it isn't good for my general health. The recommended weekly allowance is about seven glasses of wine a week, depending on the strength of the wine and the size of the glass. Pre-children, that was my weekend right there (sound familiar?). Nowadays, I go wine-free at least two nights a week. Overall, I drink less but I drink better. By that, I mean that instead of drinking the same wine week in, week out, I shop around and try different things whenever possible. With so much choice on the shelves and online, you could try a different wine every week and still taste only the tip of the wine-iceberg. I hope that the information in this journal will help you step outside your wine comfort zone and give you the knowledge you need to get more from your glass of wine, to lead you by the hand—or perhaps the nose—through what to drink with Sunday roasts, for book-club tastings, TV dinners, and more. You will feel inspired not to drink more wine, but to drink *better* wine. I'm going to help you think about tasting wines properly, learn how to make tasting notes, and not feel like a pretentious wine-freak writing down what you do and don't like.

Wine is an excellent thing. After a typical hectic day I don't have the mental capacity for much beyond a glass of wine and easy conversation. This guided journal is about helping you understand more about wine so that, seeing as you are probably drinking less than you used to, you make each glass count and drink better.



I don't have a glass of wine every evening, but more often than not I do.

And if I'm going to have a glass of wine, I want it to be one worth drinking; not something that is instantly forgettable. Buying the same affordable Pinot Grigio week in, week out, might give us the bargain-hit we crave, but it doesn't give us a thrill on the tongue. I'd rather open a better-than-average bottle during the week and make it last longer than have a cheap wine I don't mind drinking.

How much do you need to spend? The wines in my fridge door and in the wine rack change every week. I have become an expert at shopping around, finding good deals, and avoiding bad ones (sadly, some really are too good to be true—more on that later).

It follows that as the cost of the bottle rises, so does the quality of the wine. This is not always the case, but generally it's true. When you think how much you might spend nowadays on a cup of coffee or some emergency chocolate, good wine seems cheap by comparison. Obviously, only you know how much you are willing to spend and if that wine is worth it to you. I generally shop for wine priced between \$8 and \$25, depending on what the wine is for and what my budget is.

When it comes to selecting our fridge-door whites and in-the-wine-rack reds, these are wines we're likely to drink at home during the week, rather than wines we might bring when eating with friends or family on the weekend (which we'll come to later). This is about how to have wines on hand that are a delight to drink, not just something that is consumed and forgotten. Given that all wine starts the same way, as a grape on the vine, we need to explore what makes wines taste so very different. That way you can start to navigate your way around, allowing you to find the good stuff and avoid the bad.

What's in a Wine?

Grapes: Whoever thought so much joy could come from such a small but perfectly formed fruit? Each grape just hangs out on the vine until ripe, ready to be picked and popped into our mouths—unless they are picked to make wine, which is obviously much more fun. Grapes are made up largely of **water**. It's all the other stuff in there that makes the grape great for wine. There are **natural sugars**; there are **flavors** that vary depending on the variety; and there is **natural acidity**. Another ingredient delivered with that little package is **tannin**.

What is Tannin?

Tannin is one of the ingredients—a **poly-phenolic compound**, to give its proper definition—that makes up a grape. They are found on the skins, stalks, and seeds of a grape, and how tannins are managed during the winemaking process has a very big influence on the resulting wine. If you are wondering what I mean by “tannin,” think of the feeling you get in your mouth when you take a sip of that cup of tea you made, the one where you got distracted by something or someone (probably small).

and by the time you got back to your tea the tea bag had been in for a bit too long, leaving it stewed and lukewarm. The relevant thing to remember is the bitter, astringent character of that fated cuppa. realize I'm not selling tannin well here, but in wine it plays a crucial role as it preserves the wine, enabling it to age well. When making red wine, the skins of the grapes are left in contact with the clear (almost always clear, no matter what the color of the grape is) juice so that color (a.k.a. **anthocyanins**) and tannins can be extracted. Generally, the thicker the skin of the grape, the more color and tannin it will give to the grape juice.

Tannins come in different guises: **"Big" tannins** are often found in wines that are big in every other way, especially fruit and alcohol, such as New World Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz, and Malbec from Argentina. **"Firm"** is a word often used to describe a wine where the tannins are very obvious, perhaps even a little harsh, as is sometimes found in very young wines. **"Soft" tannins** are found in wines made from grapes with thinner skins, such as Gamay, Merlot, or Pinot Noir, so the resulting tannins are lighter than their thick-skinned friends.

The best way to understand the difference tannins make to a wine is to try a "big" tannin wine next to a "soft" tannin wine; take a French Pinot Noir and taste it next to an Australian Shiraz. Be sure to taste the Pinot Noir first, then the Shiraz. Note how different the wine feels in weight. Obviously there are loads of other differences to take into account, such as the fruit characters, how much alcohol they have, or whether they have been aged in oak barrels (since these also add tannin to a wine), but the "feel" of the tannins will be incredibly different.

The essential ingredient is, of course, **alcohol**. Alcohol isn't in a grape when picked, but when nature's party trick happens, otherwise known as **fermentation**, yeasts convert the natural sugars in the grape to alcohol.

Oak, or rather the flavor of oak, is another ingredient that might be found in a wine. If a wine is aged in oak barrels, flavors and tannins from the oak will shape the wine over time. Oak is often wine's walking stick, allowing it to age gracefully and keeping it standing much longer than it otherwise would. So there we go. **Water, sugar, flavors, acidity, tannin, alcohol**, and sometimes **oak** are what's in a wine. We'll explore all of them in more detail as we go, but for now, that's a good place to start.

Where in the World?

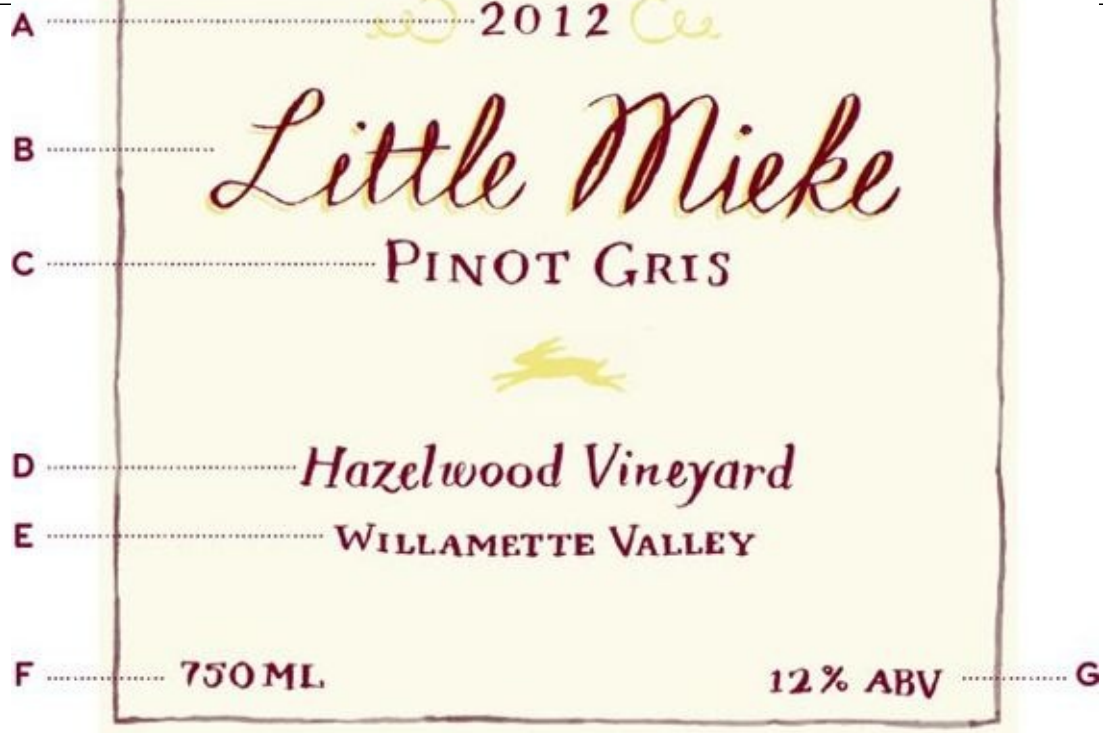
Billions of bottles of wine are made around the world every year, and they are often categorized as being either from the **Old World** (meaning, generally speaking, wines from European countries) or from the **New World** (meaning wines from everywhere else, including Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, and South Africa). Someone once described the difference in terms of style: Old World for more subtle wines, New World for more robust, fruity wines. While this is partly true, as a wine buyer I'd meet French wine-makers in Chile, Chilean winemakers in New Zealand, and Australian winemakers in France. Actually, the most obvious difference between the Old World and New World is one you can see rather than taste. It's the way the wines are labeled. Historically, wines from France, Spain, Italy, and other European countries have labeled their wines depending on **place** rather than **grape**, giving top billing on the front labels to the place where the grapes are grown rather than the grape variety. For example, Rioja, Chablis, and Gavi are all places; they are wine-producing regions. If you take a look at a wine from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, or Argentina, you'll find the name of the grape variety writ large on the front label. So it helps if you know your

grape varieties and your places. However, there are thousands of different grape varieties and wine regions all over the world. I don't plan to tell you about all of them, but I do want to teach you how to navigate the world wine map.

Arguably, we have too much choice, leaving us cowering before a great wall of wine, wishing for a sign to point us in the right direction. Unfortunately, help is not always at hand and we're left to go on our own, using a wine label, and previous experience, alone. In which case, it's good to know how to decode a label. Here's what to look for when you pick up a bottle of wine:



- A:** Producer
- B:** Region of origin
- C:** Vintage/year of grape harvest
- D:** Volume
- E:** Country of origin
- F:** Alcohol by volume



- A: Vintage/year of grape harvest
- B: Producer
- C: Grape variety
- D: Where the grapes are from
- E: Region/country of origin
- F: Volume
- G: Alcohol by volume

Off to the Market

Write down the country and grape for each style of wine listed below, and take the list shopping, whether that's at a supermarket, a wine specialist, or an online retailer. Search for some of these wines and see what you find. If you can't find the grape, try a different grape or something from another region in the same country at a similar price.

COLOR: White
STYLE: Crisp
COUNTRY: Italy (Campania region)
GRAPE: Falanghina
WHY CHOOSE IT: Dry, refreshing, undemanding but lovely
PRICE: \$12 to \$18

COLOR: White
STYLE: Fruity
COUNTRY: Chile (Casablanca region)
GRAPE: Viognier
WHY CHOOSE IT: Bright and sunny, with pineapple fruit

PRICE: \$12 to \$17

COLOR: White

STYLE: Smooth

COUNTRY: New Zealand (Gisborne region)

GRAPE: Chardonnay

WHY CHOOSE IT: Ripe and round, perhaps with a bit of oak

PRICE: \$12 to \$17

COLOR: Rosé

STYLE: Cheerful

COUNTRY: Spain (Navarra region)

GRAPE: Garnacha

WHY: Juicy, lively, and easy drinking

PRICE: \$12 to \$17

COLOR: Red

STYLE: Easygoing

COUNTRY: France (Beaujolais region)

GRAPE: Gamay

WHY: Light, bright, and friendly

PRICE: \$10 to \$17

COLOR: Red

STYLE: Juicy

COUNTRY: Italy (Sicily)

GRAPE: Nero d'Avola

WHY: Ripe, juicy, and crammed with berry fruit

PRICE: \$12 to \$17

COLOR: Red

STYLE: Bold and beautiful

COUNTRY: Argentina (Mendoza region)

GRAPE: Malbec

WHY: Bit of a show-off but great fun

PRICE: \$12 to \$17

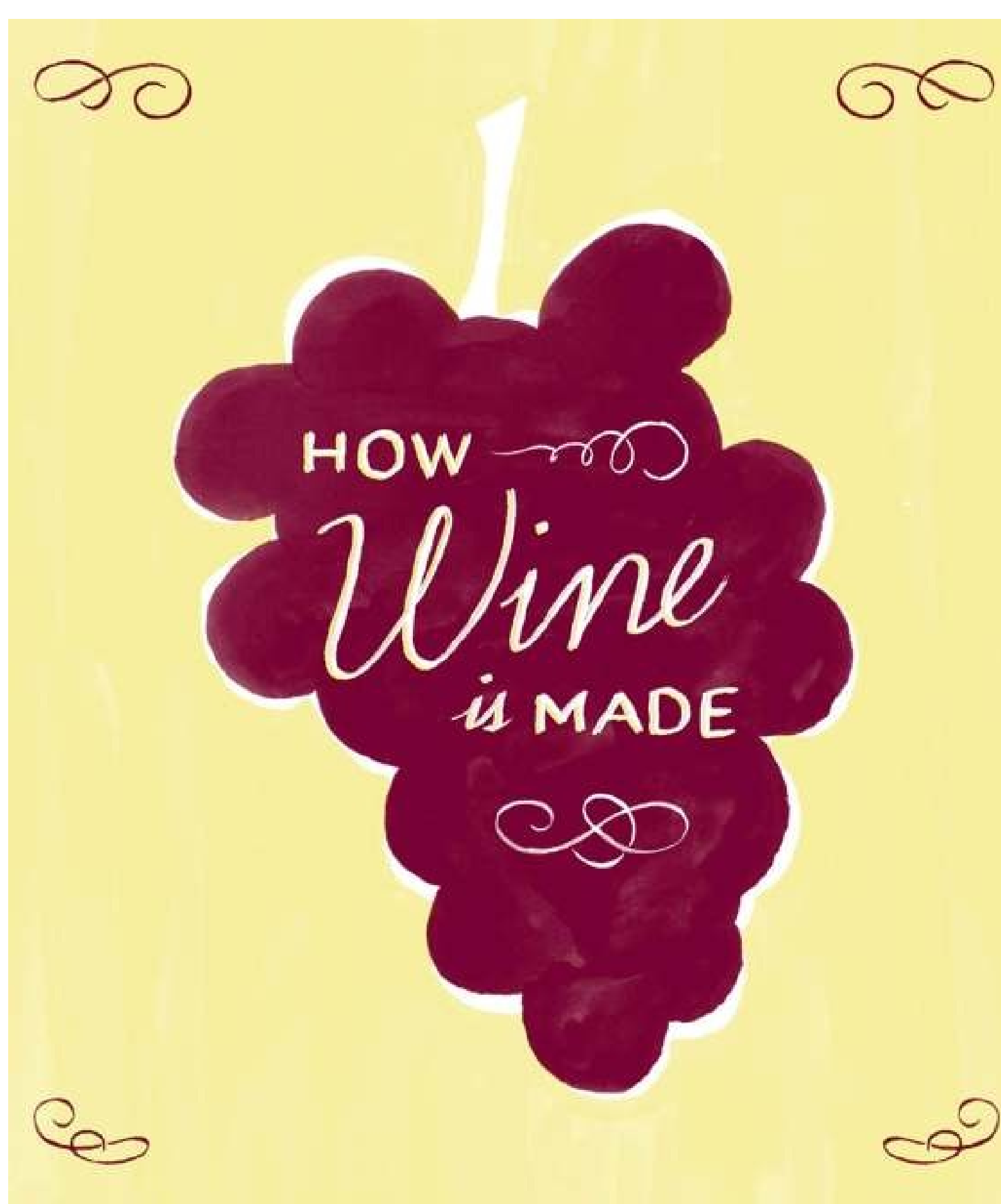
When shopping, I check out the sales before looking at the rest of the wine aisle. The problem is, the choice of wines on sale gets a bit samey, so I urge you to move on from the bargains if you've tried the wines before. If you're in the supermarket, look at the labels, scan for the country, place, grape variety, and vintage. Read the story on the back label. I know this means slowing down the shopping dash just a bit, but it's time well spent. It's likely it will just be you and at least 500 labels to look at, with a few bits of information scattered around on the shelves. If, however, you are in a

specialty wine shop, ask the person behind the counter what they recommend. Ask them if they have tried it themselves—they probably have. ~~The people who work in wine shops are usually abnormally~~ obsessive about wine, so give them an opportunity to help you explore their range and see what happens. The last time I did that in my local wine shop, I left with an Italian red made from a grape I'd never tried (or even heard of) and it was utterly delicious. It is worth asking if you can try it before you buy—you never know. They might be happy to open a bottle if they think others might want to try it.

The idea behind this exercise is to give you a starting point and to get you thinking about wine and being open to trying new things. If you don't like it, that's fine. But you need to try it—perhaps a few times—before saying no. Off you go.

There are thousands of grape varieties grown all over the world. We've started with just a few, but we're in it for the long run.





This is a bit of a crash course, but here's my guide to how wine is made.

Funnily enough, there is more to it than getting some ripe grapes, squashing them, adding yeast, and hoping for the best. I know this technique is still employed by many who fancy themselves as a bit of a winemaker (my brother-in-law included), but I have tasted “Chateau Coach House” and, trust me, it could burn a hole in your throat.

Modern-day winemaking means that winemakers are capable of making the very best from nature’s party trick. The main aim when making a wine is to preserve the natural fruit flavors of the grape, and so it follows that really good wine can be made only from really good grapes. White wines are made by picking the grapes, crushing, and pressing them to get the juice out, then fermenting them without the skins. This is because the grape juice is clear; it is the skins that give the resulting wine its color. White wine needs to be made without the skins so the juice stays clear and the resulting wine stays white.

Red wine is made differently. The juice of red grapes is also clear, but letting it ferment with the skins of the grapes gives the juice color. Red grapes will be crushed and sometimes left to macerate (left in contact) with their skins so the juice can take up more of the color and tannin from the skins before fermentation. Some wines are made using natural yeasts, that is, yeasts found on the skins of the grapes. However, this makes the fermentation process a tad unpredictable, so many winemakers now add manufactured yeasts for a little more predictability and to help it along. The juice, skins, and yeasts are left to ferment, usually in large stainless-steel tanks or concrete vats and sometimes, for the very brave (due to the cost and slightly less predictable results), in (usually) oak barrels. Fermentation temperatures need to be carefully controlled, ensuring they don’t get too hot (when flavors might be lost) or too cold (when fermentation might stop). The juice needs to warm up enough to allow fermentation to happen, which is usually at about 55 degrees Fahrenheit or above. The fermentation may take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks depending on what’s being made; and if it’s a red wine, the skins and juice will be mixed up to ensure the juice takes on the color of the skins. Most wines are then filtered and fined (any unwanted bits taken out) to be ready for bottling, unless the winemaker has decided to stick it in barrels to age it a bit more, in which case off it goes to do its thing (again, more of that later).

What Affects the Flavor of Wine?

Whereas the ingredients list for wine is incredibly short, the list of things that can affect the flavor of a wine is not. These include (1) the grape variety, (2) where it’s grown, (3) how it’s grown, and (4) who made it. All these things will determine the end flavor. There are thousands of grape varieties, and they can vary from very aromatic to downright dull. They can produce huge bunches of big, juicy grapes or tight little bunches of tiny grapes. And the color of the grapes can vary from the palest yellow to inky black. Where the vine is grown affects how the grape will grow. There are vineyards that lie close to the sea, brushed over daily by sea breezes; then there are the picture-perfect vineyards

that lie on gently sloping hills, like those in the Côte d'Or in Burgundy (where one day I shall retire, drink Pinot Noir, and eat stinky cheese for breakfast if I so wish). More dramatically, there are vineyards that nestle in the foothills of mountain ranges, as in Chile and Argentina. Grapes need about 1,500 hours of sunshine to ripen, black grapes needing a bit more than white. If a vineyard is near the sea or high up in mountain foothills, the cooler air will slow down the ripening process, allowing the grape to develop distinctive varietal characters. If a grape ripens too quickly, the end result may be a wine with lots of alcohol but not enough acidity.

What is Terroir?

This is a French word with no direct translation. The best I can do is “soil,” but that doesn't do it, really. “**Terroir**” is a reference to the actual place where a grape is grown, the combination of soil, aspect of the vineyards, and climatic conditions. In fact, everything outside of the winemaker's control is one way to think of it. It can't be easily defined in a word, as it's a combination of factors, so it's not a word you'll find on the label. However, some wines do use the name of a distinctive character such as **silex** (a type of soil found in the Sancerre region) on the label.

Rules Rule, Okay?

Tradition is a big thing in wine. Over time, traditions develop for seemingly no other reason than the fact that this is how it has always been done. Wine traditions have shaped what variety is grown where and how a particular wine from a particular region must be made, down to how many grapes can be taken from the vine to make wine, time spent aging in oak barrels, and what goes on the labels. This is largely an Old World thing, resulting in rules and regulations being put in place to protect these traditions. In France, the Appellation Contrôlée system works to do just that. Spain, Italy, and most other European wine-producing countries have their own rules and regulations, and now the rest of the world is following suit. Rules can be good when it comes to enforcing, or rather protecting, wine quality. If you see the letters “**AC**” (for French wine), “**DO**” (for Spanish) or “**DOC**” (for Italian wine) on the label, it tells you that the wine has been made according to the traditions and rules of a particular region. Finally, there is the way the wine is made, what the winemakers do to it. Depending on where it is made and what is allowed according to local rules, they might put it into oak barrels, or add some sugar to it, or even take some alcohol out of it, and all these things will affect the flavor.

A Word about Sulfites

As it stands, wine doesn't require a list of ingredients on the back label, apart from “contains **sulfites**.” What this means is a small amount of sulfur-based chemicals are added to the wine in order to stop it from **oxidizing** (going brown). Sulfites are used in all sorts of food groups as a preserving agent, including dried fruits, processed meats, french fries, and ketchup. All wines contain at least a small amount of sulfites as they're a natural result of the fermentation process. What isn't on the label is the other stuff, apart from grapes, that is used to make wine. That might include yeast, tartaric acid

(the same stuff usually found in baking soda), and tannin additions (usually in powder form). If you want to buy a wine whose ingredients are nothing but grapes, then you need to give natural wines a tr

TRUE OR FALSE:

*Sulfur in Wines
Causes a Hangover*

Sulfur is used in winemaking as a tool to keep air away from the unfermented grape juice and resulting wine, so the liquid in question won't oxidize.

Think of the flesh of an apple, freshly bitten into. If you leave it on the table for a while and then come back to take another bite, the flesh will have started to brown. This is because oxygen has come into contact with the flesh and the flesh has oxidized as a result.

Sulfur acts as a barrier to oxygen and means the wine is kept fresh and not exposed to the risk of oxidation. Some people think the levels of sulphur in wine might be the cause of headaches, but the levels found are so very low that's unlikely to be the case. Open a pack of dried apricots and there's more than forty times the sulfur in there than in a glass of wine. The reason for that headache is drinking wine without eating enough food or imbibing enough water at the same time. There has been research to link headaches with levels of naturally occurring histamines in wine, but again this is far from substantiated, and a very clever doctor friend of mine says it's tosh. So, it's probably not the sulfur that's giving you the headache. It's the wine. The secret is to drink lots of water and eat food (but perhaps not apricots).



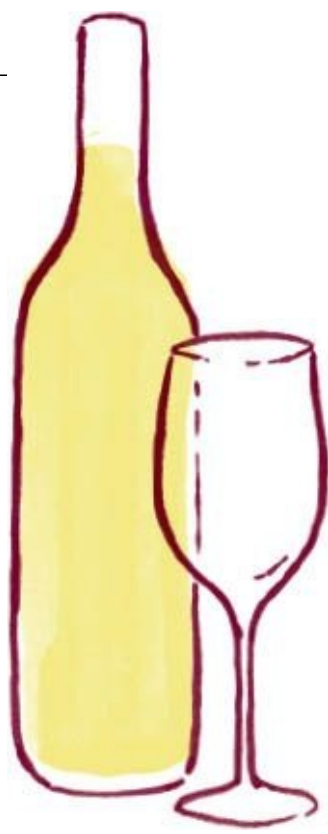
*What Makes a Wine
Lower in Alcohol?*

If you don't want to go completely booze-free but like the idea of drinking significantly lower-alcohol wines (wines with less than 9 percent alcohol by volume), there are a growing number of wines available, made in different ways. The first is made by picking the grapes early, when sugar levels are lower than they might reach if left to ripen. As sugar is fermented to alcohol (remember that bit?), lower sugar will mean lower alcohol in the resulting wine. However, picking the grapes early means acidity levels will be higher than if the grapes were picked later, which is fine as long as you are in the mood for crisp rather than ripe fruity wine. Another way to achieve naturally lower alcohol levels is to stop the fermentation before it has completely finished naturally. Again, this means lower resulting alcohol, but it also means higher natural sweetness, as there is more sugar left in the wine. So you ge

lower alcohol but more sweetness. There is a third way, and that is removing the alcohol from the wine. Progress is a wonderful thing, and we now have the technology to do this via various machines but the quality of these wines varies enormously. Some that I have tasted, at around 8 percent, taste like wine, just not as I know it. Light but not that fresh and definitely lacking in flavor, which isn't what I'm after. But these wines are getting better all the time, so I'll keep trying them. In the meantime, you could add water, or soda, and make a spritzer. If I'm going to have a lovely, light glass of wine, I look for grape varieties that are able to produce wines with alcohol levels below 12 percent naturally, like Melon de Bourgogne and Riesling.

What are Natural Wines?

Natural wines are those made with as little intervention as possible, either in the vineyard or in the winery. The movement dates back to the 1970s, particularly to the Loire and Beaujolais regions of France, but it's grown to embrace winemakers all over who want to do things as naturally as possible. The wines are usually made from organically or even **biodynamically** grown grapes (sort of superorganic, if you like, a more holistic approach), meaning, ideally, no chemicals or additives. However, some are more "natural" than others, depending on the winemaker. Some may choose to add a bit of sulfur dioxide when they bottle the wine to keep it fresh, and some use cultivated rather than wholly natural yeasts. The point is, the wine is usually made in small quantities and is often fairly unique in taste. Some of the natural white wines I've tried are a bit ciderlike for me, and some of the reds remind me a little too much of that not-so-lovely country smell you get at manure-spreading time, but generally the really good ones are exactly that: really good wines. The fact that they are natural is even better. The problem is finding them—you'll need to venture beyond the supermarket shelves for these wines—but such is the interest in the natural wine movement that more and more independent wine shops are getting behind them. You're looking at spending at least \$15 on a bottle, and whatever you do, don't leave these ones in the wine rack for too long. They need to be consumed young to be at their best.



ABOUT BUBBLY

What makes wine bubbly? There are a number of ways to get those bubbles in a bottle. The traditional—and most expensive—method is by adding a bit more yeast to wine in a bottle, sealing it, and letting it undergo a second fermentation in the bottle. This double fermentation process creates tiny bubbles (CO_2), and if the bottle is sealed, then obviously the bubbles can't escape. Instead, they stay in the wine, adding sparkle.

Champagne is made this way, along with other sparkling wines around the world, including Cava. If made this way, the dead yeast cells, called lees, need to be removed from the bottle before it's sold. This is done by riddling (slowly moving the bottles by hand or machine) so that the lees end up collecting in the top of the bottle. The tops of the bottles are then frozen and the ice cube containing the lees is popped out, the bottles topped up with the desired sugar dose (or **dosage**, as it's known in Champagne), and resealed. Hence the price.

A cheaper way to make sparkling wine is to do the second fermentation in a tank and then bottle the wine under pressure to keep the bubbles. This is known as the **tank method** or **Charmat method** named after the man who invented it. This is how Prosecco is made, accounting for the softer bubbles (and cheaper production costs).

Then there's the **bicycle-pump method** (the technical term is "carbonation," but I prefer "bicycle pump"), the premise being that you get a tank full of wine and pump bubbles into it. The end result is fairly coarse, big bubbles that dissipate quickly, but bubbles nonetheless. This method is used to make cheap—and sometimes not very cheerful—sparkling wines.

Choosing Bubbly

When it comes to choosing sparkling wines (indeed any wines) for a crowd of people without it costing the earth, you need to do a bit of research. Do an online trawl to see what's on sale at various supermarkets and wine shops, and sign up for e-newsletters while you're there (they're a brilliant way to get advance warning when a good sale comes along, which is essential when buying in bulk). But to save yourself time and money, it helps if you know what are the main types of wine with bubbles.

CAVA *Cee*

Style: Usually dry or off-dry and fruity

Country: Spain (mostly in the Penedès region)

Grape: A blend of some or all Xarel-lo, Parellada, Macabeo, Chardonnay

Price: \$10 to \$25

For parties: A bit hit-and-miss, but find a good one, especially vintage, and you're laughing

CHAMPAGNE *Cee*

Style: Sharper than Cava, more serious

Country: France (Champagne region)

Grape: A blend of some or all Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier, Pinot Noir

Price: At least \$30 at full price

For parties: More expensive, but worth it if you can afford it

PROSECCO *Cee*

Style: Light, easygoing, simple

Country: Italy (Veneto region)

Grape: Glera (usually called Prosecco)

Price: \$17 to \$20

For parties: Brilliant for parties, especially daytime ones

OTHER SPARKLING WINES *Cee*

Style: Often use traditional Champagne grapes. Usually dry, crisp, fruity, and good value

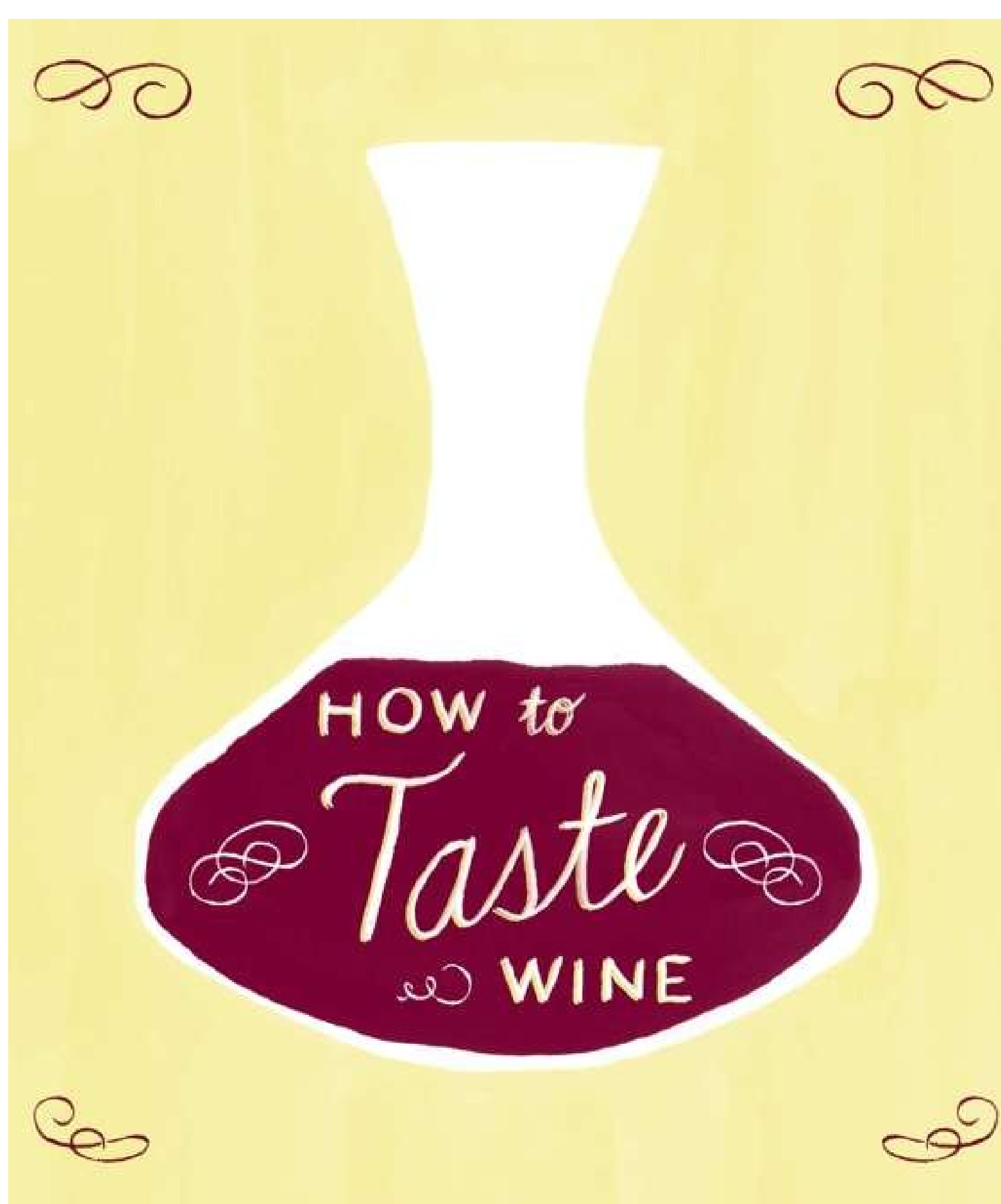
Country: Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, England

Grape: Can be anything!

Price: \$13 to \$40, with price depending on where it's from

For parties: Much more variable, but good ones can be perfect for parties

A note on quantities: It's always better to over-cater than run out. When calculating quantities for parties, you need to allow for a glass per person. Work on six glasses per bottle. With some people driving and some compensating, this usually covers it. At my own wedding, my father was very impressed with his carefully worked-out quantity calculations, as we had only four bottles of Champagne left at the end. What he didn't know was that my brother was last seen at 2 a.m., loading car up with all the leftover full cases before disappearing off to finish it with friends in a nearby barn. Apparently it was quite an after-party.



I do a lot of wine tasting as part of my job. This involves both vertical

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