

From James the Sommelier – Wine Etiquette

‘Wine honors the soul, so honor it with yours’

Wine Etiquette

Wine has few friends amongst its alcoholic peers. If I could equate it to a playground child, wine would be the slightly cooler, more mature classroom recluse standing calmly in the corner with Armagnac, Cognac and Sherry. Meanwhile, Vodka, Whiskey, Scotch, Brandy, Lager, Draught, Stout would be zooming around playing, teasing and wreaking havoc with their abundantly fiery natures. In Hollywood terms, it's Bond vs. Balboa. Wine's brooding, quietly confident, silky class definitely puts it in a league of its own.

Like an educated, charming and refined person, wine exudes etiquette; that it has been brought up in high society and acts accordingly. A dinner amongst friends becomes more intimate, more fulfilling whilst sharing a bottle of wine. Simply, you feel that you are in the presence of wine rather than the other way around.

Over the next month I will be exploring some of the things that define the etiquette of wine. Hopefully, I can shed light on the bizarre but distinguishable nature behind the world's drink.

Storing wine

Wine demands grooming and care like a royal, a racehorse or a prizefighter. Concentrated storing and keeping of wine brings out its full potential enabling it to fulfill your expectations. Think of a traditional cellar and what do you see? A windowless room underground filled with bottles sleeping on their sides... this is ideal. The fluctuation of temperature decreases the chances of wine keeping for very long- sunlight and UV rays cause wine to be 'light struck' and any vibration can also affect its quality. So, a constantly cool, dark and still place is the optimum condition for storing wine.

The bottle being stored on its side is also an important point. If kept standing up, the wine cork will dry out, shrink and let air into the wine resulting in it becoming 'corked'. Consequently, when storing wine the intake of air is all-important. A wine's longevity can decrease dramatically if air is allowed to enter the bottle. In white wines the difference can be between 2-3 years unopened and 3-5 days opened. In red wines 2-10 years unopened and 2-3 days opened. Have you ever heard of wine breathing? This personification refers partly to the intake of air during storage. So, in a way it does.

I suppose, the last point would be to make sure it doesn't have 'bad breath' by storing it with strong smelling products. Bear that in mind next time you snuggle it up in the fridge with your favorite cheese, fruit or fish from the other night. Nobody wants to drink a cheesy, fishy, durian smelling wine. Would you?

TIPS: Buy a wine stopper and pump for keeping wine at home

For more information about wine join our wine classes at That Little Wine Bar, 54 Chow Thye Road,
George Town, Penang

Email thatlittlewinebar@gmail.com for details