

THAT LITTLE WINE BAR

James The Sommelier – The Guys' Guide to Wine

'Wine honors the soul, so honor it with yours.'

The Guys' Guide to Wine

Are you a guy who likes to drink wine but would never order it for fear of embarrassing yourself? Putting your trust in wine to impress your friends or your latest beau can make it feel like you have offered yourself to the blood-hungry punters at a gladiator tournament. Will you get the thumbs up or the dire opposite? Will you go down in history as the one that won the crowd or as the disappointing contender? Are you in over your head?

Delusional pride will instantly put some of you on the defensive and I predict a chorus of cherubims in denial; 'not me,' 'would not like to be that sort of guy,' 'imagine,' 'only an idiot would do that.' Flippant as it may be, as a guy you would probably have more amusement imitating a penguin with a wing corkscrew than with wine itself, and some would applaud your skills of improvisation. Why can't wine be as fun, involving and easily impressive? It can and here's how.

Proving that you can talk the talk puts you in the higher percentile of wine drinkers. Basic pronunciations of Cabernet Sauvignon (Ca-ber-nay So-vi-neon), Pinot Noir (Pee-no Nw-ar), Merlot (Mer-low), Sauvignon Blanc (So-vi-neon Blon) will ensure that at least the waiter taking your order knows what you're talking about. "Appellation" is another way to describe a wine region but while giving the impression of having an IQ of 180, use "tannic" to ask whether a red wine has that dry nature and try not to think about your favourite model when talking about the "body" of a wine and more of its strength and thickness.

Talking the talk is nothing, however, without being able to walk the walk. When at a restaurant or wine bar, then, there is no shame in asking the resident Sommelier (Som-el-yay) for a recommendation. If they are professional they will effortlessly make you look good and ensure you and your party have a great night. If you're buying from a retailer, then go and choose a wine with a big picture of what you will eat in your mind. Buying a mixed case will easily ensure that you find something that you like.

And what *will* you be eating? I like a fine dining, 5 course meal as much as the next guy but what really brings a smile to my face are the binge foods; pizzas, burgers, barbeques, Asian food. Queue nods of agreement. Give wine a break from its veneer and allow it to relax with you in replacement of that cold stubby. With pizzas and burgers get a nice Australian Shiraz blend and serve slightly chilled, or opt for a French Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot. Possibly, a Spanish tempranillo or an Italian sangiovese with a summer BBQ. Lastly, pair Asian food with a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc or an off-dry/dry Reisling (Rees-ling) served cold.

Rest assured fellow hombres, it is easier than you think to involve wine in your life. Whether it's in a serious, fun or impressive way, wine can become your beverage companion in any situation you find yourself in.

TIPS: If your aim is to impress then go for a grand cru from St. Emilion, Pomerol, Saint Estephe or Cote d'Or. Get ready to dig deep though!