

10 Tips to Enjoying Wine More Often

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Hello, and welcome to The Tungsten Club!

Below are 10 tips to enjoying wine more often. These tips relate to some of the most common questions which fellow wine lovers frequently ask. They also outline simple ways in which people can quite easily make a profound improvement to their day-to-day enjoyment of wine. So, grab a seat and a glass of wine and welcome to your new journey of wine discovery with The Tungsten Club.

1. How long do I age my wine for?

To answer this, we need to get back to first principles – why cellar wine in the first place? There are two main reasons. Firstly, young wines are dominated by primary fruit characters indicative of the grapes variety, winemaking processes, and to a certain degree that French word *terroir* (origin, site, soil, aspect etc). After 2-4 years in bottle, depending on variety, secondary flavours not originally present in the wine become evident, adding extra layers of complexity.

Secondly, tannins present in red wine introduced either by oak or extracted via the winemaking process (stems, seeds and skins), may be overt in young wine and require time to harmonise as a drinking experience. Over time, tannin molecules in wine polymerise together naturally and once the molecular weight reaches a certain point (around

MW>100,000), they become insoluble and precipitate out onto the side of the bottle. As a result, tannins soften. White wines have very little or no tannin, so it's the development of beneficial secondary characters which dictates their aging potential.

From a historical stand-point, cellaring began many hundreds of years ago as a practice to soften very aggressive stalk tannins, the most drying and astringent tannins available during the wine making process. You had to lay wines down for at least 5-10 years+ just to make them drinkable such was the astringency of these tannins. Many 'old world' countries (such as France) still use stalks in their ferments and extract long dry tannins which goes some way in explaining why they drink so well for so long. The point is in Australia, winemakers rarely use stems in red ferments – we de-stem our fruit, meaning that the more gentle skin and seed tannins extracted allow our wines to be drunk young. From here, the only tannin which we need to provide time to harmonise is oak tannin (from new barrels) and anyone who has drunk a young Penfolds Grange will know what I mean. So apart from a few exceptions, we do not need to cellar our reds that long. They are drinkable now, so cellaring of 5-15 years will see them develop and age gracefully. Very few Australian wines are made to cellar for 50 years, and we can be grateful that we can enjoy them sooner than some of our old world cousins.

So when is enough, enough? Generally, the best result is a point in time where the wine still has some primary fruit flavours as well as some lovely developed aged characters so that overall balance is maintained yet complexity is enhanced. In effect, the wine is in a sweet spot.

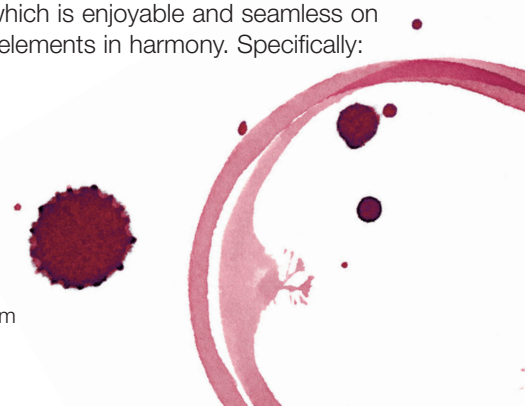
2. What makes a good wine?

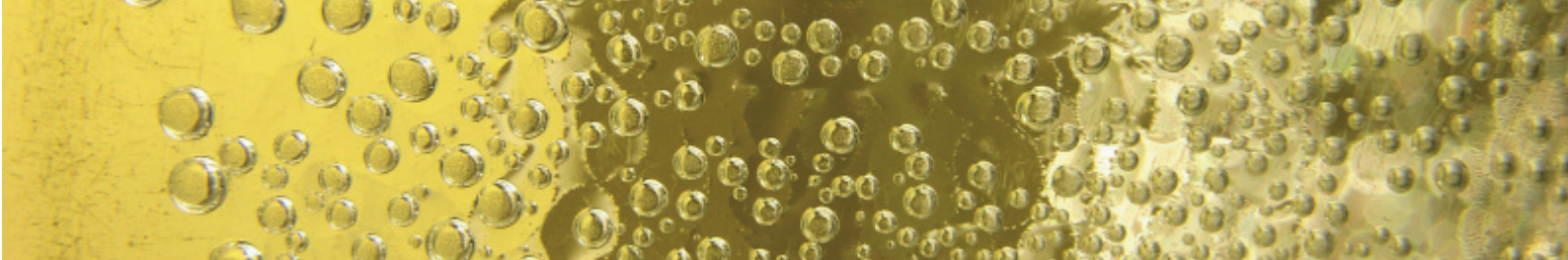
'Structure' is a word commonly used in 'wine-speak'. Wine has five basic components; flavour, tannins, acid, sugar and ethanol. A wine which is enjoyable and seamless on the palate has all five elements in harmony. Specifically:

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Tannin – as mentioned above, tannins come from a number of sources. To enjoy a wine, the level of tannin must be in proportion with the other elements. For example, a big ballsy Barossa Shiraz can have plenty of oak present as long as it has the palate weight and flavour to match. The ripeness of tannins is also important – ripe tannins are not astringent, coarse or green but rather have a texture which lengthens your perception of the wine on your palate. Tannin is one of the two components which enable extended cellaring.

Sugar – most table wines are 'dry' – meaning they have less than 0.5 g/l residual sugar left after primary fermentation so sugar has no visible impact on the wine. Winemakers can however 'play around' with the residual sugar level to either 'fill' a palate which is otherwise lacking depth, use sugar to mask other faults (e.g cheap sparkling red) or leave high sugar levels to make dessert style wines. To balance any wine of significant sugar content, you need a good acid backbone to avoid a wine tasting flabby or cloying.

Ethanol – ethanol (or alcohol) is an interesting one. As well as the obvious effects, it adds a perception of sweetness to wine, increases viscosity and adds 'warmth' to the palate. The main thing is balance. I get tired of tasting great wines which finish too hot – a sign that the winemaker has left the fruit on the vine too long in relation to the level of flavour and palate weight that he has received in return. Hot vintage conditions can make achieving this balance very difficult.

Acid – The amount of acid in a wine is expressed as 'titratable acidity' (T.A) as an equivalent g/L amount of tartaric acid. A T.A of 4-6g/l is common, with cooler climate wines heading more in the 7g/l range – much more than this, and the palate will start to taste too hard and acidic. Tartaric acid, malic acid, lactic acid, citric acid, succinic acid and acetic acid are the main acids present. Malic acid is converted to lactic acid during malo-lactic fermentation which (i) EVERY red wine goes through and (ii) many white wines go through also (to either de-acidify the wine or add butterscotch/buttery complexity e.g Chardonnay and Semillon). Acid is the main 'backbone' of any wine and this acid contributes to cellaring and aging potential.

Flavour – there is no point drinking any wine if it tastes terrible. Complexity, depth of flavour and texture is what it's all about, and if there is a good acid backbone and/or tannin profile (in balance) as well, you can enjoy the wine for longer.

So the 'take home' message is to think of the five structural elements as a 'five legged' chair – if any of the

legs is too long or too short, you will notice it on the palate – you may not immediately recognize which element it is out of place, however with time, you will be able to say "I don't like that wine because X is out of balance". All things being considered, it's very hard to drink a whole bottle of a poorly structured wine – often one or half a glass is more than you can bare. The only variation on this theme is that everybody has different palate and 'sensitivity thresholds' to certain flavours, which is why a Palate Profile process is so important – see point number 10.

3. Taste is a smell

Block your nose and taste your wine – it's a bit of a non-event. Humans taste via the retro-nasal route meaning the volatile flavor compounds coming back up from your stomach contents and hitting your olfactory centre have a large impact on your perception of a wine. This is relevant for point 4 below.

4. Temperature of consumption

Australia is a hot place and we tend to either drink our reds too hot or our whites too cold. When a white wine comes out of the fridge, it's often at 0-2°C – the result being a chemical system that is so cold that the aromatics cannot come out of solution and the wine has no taste. At 5-6°C, a white wine can taste completely different as the aromatics are more volatile at higher temperature. For the same reason, an overly warm red wine at 25°C can often be quite 'spirity' or 'harsh' on the nose with alcohol and volatile acids jumping out of the glass. 15-20°C is a better option, and this is especially the case when enjoying red wine over summer when temperatures are much hotter than this. Cellaring your reds at 10-15°C will not only increase their longevity by slowing the rate of oxidation (aging) in the bottle but have them closer to correct consumption temperature when they are opened. If you don't have a cellar,

I highly recommend that you invest in a wine storage fridge but ask me which one to buy as there a number of things you must look for. For the record, it is also much easier to critique wine properly in a light, bright room compared to a dark one.

5. Food matching

It is true that the matching of wine with food will increase your relative enjoyment of both. Generally, the more delicate the food flavours, the more subtlety the wine should exhibit e.g a nice crisp sparkling with oysters.

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As the food flavour increases (e.g salmon steak) you can increase the flavour of the wine to say a nice Sauvignon Blanc. Also, wines with stronger acid structures can be good for foods which are richer to help cut and cleanse the palate with each mouthful. Sommeliers are experts at food and wine matching and will stress this matching process.

6. The correct glass ware does help

There is no doubt that if you love your wine, you should invest in some decent glassware. Variety-specific Riedel glasses are great if you can afford them but you don't have to spend a fortune. A larger volume balloon will greatly enhance your red wine enjoyment by trapping volatiles in the glass and allow the wine to open up as you swirl it around so that it tastes better when you swallow it (see point 3). Standard tasting glasses for example kill good Pinot. Correctly shaped white wine glasses can also assist white wine consumption by delivering acidity or sweetness more precisely onto your palate.

7. Cork should be a thing of the past

The argument of cork vs modern seals is one of the biggest in oenological history. All you need to know is:

- (i) Cork taint is a cancer because unless the wine is really severely tainted and you know it's 'corked', then any minor degradation from the taint simply leaves you feeling "this wine is average and I won't be buying it again" in an industry where brand equity is everything;
- (ii) Slow controlled oxidation which occurs during aging doesn't require additional oxygen to enter the bottle during that time. As long as the wine has had enough oxygen during the manufacturing process and has not been made too reductively (in the absence of oxygen) then it should never taste stale when opened. It will however taste fresher and take longer to develop under say a screw-cap seal.

The rapid uptake of the stelvin seal (screw cap) by consumer, hospitality and wine producers alike speaks for itself.

8. Wine descriptors

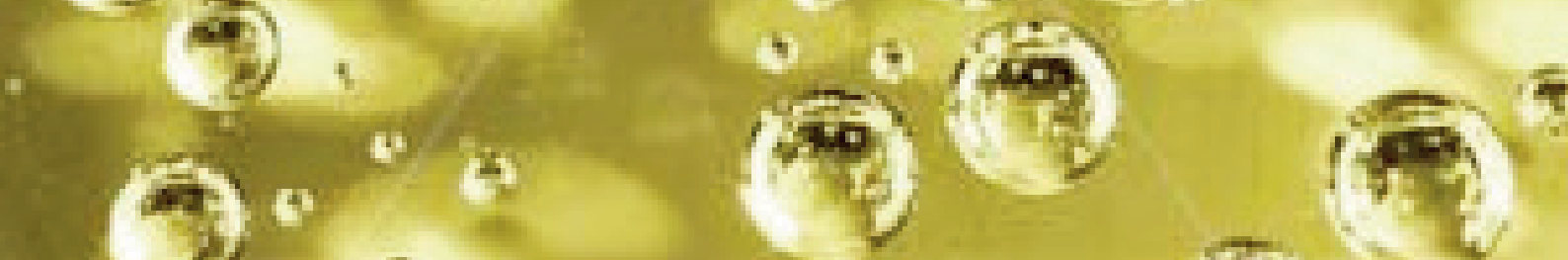
The appreciation of wine can be a language in itself. To help you become for fluent in 'wine-speak' below is a list of varietal wine descriptors which you can print and refer to as you enjoy your wine – it will certainly assist you become more familiar with common terms.

White Wine							
Chardonnay	Sav Blanc	Riesling	Semillon	Gewurztraminer	Pinot Gris	Viognier	Sparkling
Cucumber	Lantana	Mineral	Asparagus	Grapefruit	Rose	Tobacco	Apple
Mineral	Tomato bush	Flint/steely	Green bean	Citrus	Violet	Orange blossom	Citrus
Grapefruit	Fresh peas	Green apple	Straw	Cologne	Floral	Violet	Grapefruit
Citrus	Asparagus	Grapefruit	Cut grass	Perfumed	Perfumed	Iris	Lemon
Lemon/lime	Capsicum	Lemon	Green apple	Cold cream	Lychee	Ylang ylang	Strawberry
Nectarine	Green bean	Lime	Lemongrass	Rose	Apple	Floral	Biscuit
White peach	Grassy	Citrus	Lemon	Aromatic	Pear	Perfumed	Bread
Pineapple	Gooseberry	Orange peel	Citrus	Lavender	Citrus	Musk	Butter
Peach	Green apple	Blossom	Hay	Potpourri	Hay	White melon	Dough
Fruit salad	Grapefruit	Rose/floral	Quince	Floral	Nectarine	Lychee	Honey
Melon	Passionfruit	Jasmine	Fig	Lychee	White peach	Pear	Nutty
Honey	Mango	Perfumed	Honey	Passionfruit	Apricot	White Peach	Savoury
Butterscotch	Tropical fruit	Geranium	Buttery	Mango	Honey	Apricot	Toast
Toasty	Mineral	Kerosene	Biscuit	Guava	Nutty	Tropical fruit	Vegemite
Quince	Gunpowder	Lanoline	Toasty	Tropical fruit	Oyster shell	Marmalade	Yeast
Fig	Smokey	Toasty	Smokey	Spice		Honey	
Cashew	Herbaceous	Honey	Flint				

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Red Wine								
Pinot Noir	Cab Sav	Shiraz	Zinfandel	Sangiovese	Tempranillo	Grenache	Merlot	Nebbiolo
Stalky	Minty	Aniseed	Herbal	Blackberry	Dark cherries	Blackberry	Sappy	Almond
Sappy	Blackberry	Blackberry	Tomato	Black cherry	Herbal	Black pepper	Black olive	Cherries
Rhubarb	Capsicum	Black pepper	Pepper	Caper	Plum	Cherries	Herbal	Fruitcake
Cranberry	Mulberry	White pepper	Spice	Herbal	Spicy	Confectionary	Mint	Dried rose
Strawberry	Plum	Plum	Raspberry	Leather	Leather	Floral	Sage	Violet
Raspberry	Blackcurrant	Blueberry	Cherry	Licorice	Nutty	Licorice	Raspberry	Camphor
Red cherry	Black olive	Cinnamon	Loganberry	Plum	Savoury	Meaty	Mulberry	Cherry
Dark cherry	Clove	Clove	Blackberry	Raspberry	Dried flowers	Perfumed	Blackberry	Plum
Plum	Eucalyptus	Licorice	Blackcurrant	Sour cherry	Cola	Plum	Bramble	Aniseed
Violets	Cigar box	Nutmeg	Briar	Spicy	Tar	Raspberry	Plum	Mocha
Gamey	Licorice	Raisin	Plum	Chocolate	Bramble	Spicy	Violets	Tobacco
Barnyard	Menthol	Stewed plums	Fruitcake	Dusty	Chocolate	Stewed	Perfume	Tar
Earthy	Tomato leaf	Chocolate	Walnut	Earthy		Violets	Anise	Potpourri
Beetroot	Autumn leaf	Coffee	Cola	Meaty		Earthy	Earthy	Tea
Truffle/moss	Violets	Leather/tar	Raisin	Prune		Prune	Fruitcake	Truffle
Cinnamon	Cedar	Prune	Earthy	Tobacco		Savoury	Cinnamon	Prune
Spicy	Chocolate	Savoury/soy	Tar	Farmyard			Tobacco	Savoury

9. Wine ratings

The traditional show judging system uses a 20 point scale with 3 points given for appearance, 7 for nose and 10 for palate providing a rating out of 20. With some judges giving 18.7/20, the idea of a 100 point system evolved made famous by American wine writers. The growing incidence of commercial re-sellers providing value ratings does confuse the link between quality and value e.g a 96/100 (value rating) \$19 wine is not so close to perfection as they would have you think. In the 20 point show system, the following scores and comments apply:

10-13: wines with faults, oxidized, spoiled and generally terrible.

14: a wine that may have a slight fault but is drinkable.

15: a wine that has no faults and is good, average commercial quality displaying varietal characters.

15.5-16.9: *Bronze medal* – no faults, everything is in place, balance is good and one particular thing about the wine is very good e.g nose or palate.

17.0-18.4: *Silver medal* – as above, but there are two things about the wine which are particularly good and the intensity of those aspects is very good.

18.5-20: *Gold medal* – As above, but not only does the wine display intensity and balance, but the complexity, array of flavour and overall structure of the wine is faultless. Seamless drinking!

10. Palate profile

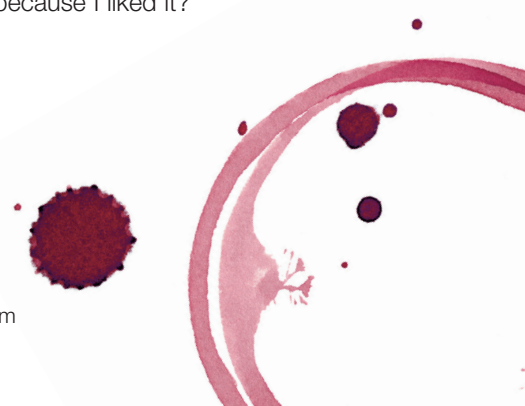
Every palate is different. Have you ever noticed that some people love certain varieties whilst other people don't. The physiological variation in each person's palate explains why you can taste a wine rated 95/100 by one wine writer and yet dislike it. The chemical interaction of wine compounds (there are thousands and thousands) with the chemical receptors in your mouth vary infinitely with every person.

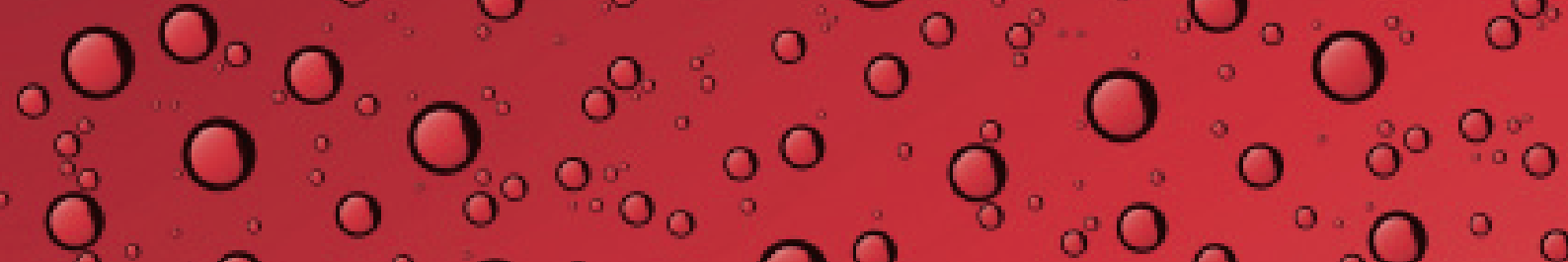
At Tungsten, we know that 'wine ratings' are a subjective assessment of wine quality and not an absolute one. More importantly, recommending a wine to you without firstly understanding the intricacies of your palate (via a palate profile process) is like "shooting in the dark". Quite frankly, retailers or internet re-sellers who use this 'blanket approach' are simply demonstrating their desire to 'get a sale first' and to create a journey of discovery with you second. This is why we don't just sell wine on the Tungsten website – why would I want to sell you a wine you may not like just because I liked it?



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Once a palate profile is utilised to establish the critical to quality (CTQ) parameters of a wine lover, each recommendation can then be individually tailored and people can buy with much more confidence.

There are two stages to this palate profile survey process.

In step 1 (takes ~ 5 mins), we gather a snapshot of favourite wine styles, varieties and regions. From here, individually tailored wine recommendations which match individual CTQ parameters can be regularly provided. There are five key drinker types here – are you an Eagle, Falcon, Hawk, Osprey or a Buzzard?

In step 2 (~10 mins), more in-depth questions are posed and specifically analysis purchasing habits, drinking failures and dislikes and the typical wine enjoyment environment. This is where we get the real insight and this is vital if we are going to take a wine lover on a journey of discovery. Also, it's these extra questions which save time and money, because once people begin to understand the power of this process and have faith in a new way of 'finding wine', they will never purchase wine the same way again.

Thank you for reading my '10 tips to enjoying wine more often'. I have no doubt that you were aware of many if not all of the points listed, but it's often handy to brush up on some of these main issues. Hopefully, I have provided you with a snapshot of what being a Tungsten member is all about.

If you like wine but would simply like to purchase wine with more confidence, then Tungsten is for you. If you have already caught the 'wine bug' and have a growing cellar, then Tungsten can help you find the gems out there in the market place which can be really hard to find.

No matter your current level of involvement, the point is that if you love wine or want to love it more, then Tungsten is for you. And it has to be, because I'm a member too and if it's not good enough for my cellar, then it shouldn't be in yours.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to email me at enquiries@thetungsten.com. If you decide to join Tungsten as either a Gold or Tungsten level member, I look forward to personally welcoming you aboard.

Cheers,

Craig Frawley
Director and Winemaker
The Tungsten Club



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