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WINEGLASS TASTING

Make no mistake—great wine tastes good out of a paper cup. Indeed, it is proof that the wine is great. Even merely good wine can be enjoyed that way. I know this because I've had occasion to drink quite expensive wine out of such vessels. I've used coffee cups too. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

But you should also be under no illusion about this point: your enjoyment of wine can be greatly enhanced by having the right glass to show off the wine's virtues. And the "right glass" is often different for different wines.

Don't believe me? Try a simple experiment—have a wine-glass tasting. It's a simple thing to do and is as much fun as it is educational. You might even invite a few friends over to help you in your research.

The methodology is straight forward enough: gather together one of each type of wineglass you have hanging around the house. In most households there is a motley collection of wineglasses accumulated over the years. We get them in the form of gifts, or a glass style captures our eye and we pick up a few.

Been to a wine festival lately? You probably got a couple of stems as a memento of the evening. If you're like me, you likely have more than a few of these hanging around somewhere. And don't forget the little sherry/port glasses you got as a wedding present from one of your aunts.

Have your friends bring over a stem or two. Maybe you got some new glasses for Christmas—now's the time to use them. Heck, throw in a paper cup or a coffee mug for good measure.

Once you've lined up the entire collection, bring on the wine. It's best to use a wine you know, perhaps a favorite you've tasted several times. You may want to try this with two different wines, Chardonnay for instance, followed by Cabernet Sauvignon. Pour an ounce or so—it doesn't take much—in each glass.

Next, sniff the wine from each container, best done after a brief swirling. You'll notice right away that some of the glasses will give you a more intense experience; in

others the wine will seem dull and muted.

Note the vessels that give the wine the best scent/bouquet/nose.

Now it's time to taste. Swirl again and sip a bit from each glass.

Notice any differences?

The vast majority of tasters do notice differences and usually more than they expected. Often, the differences are quite startling.

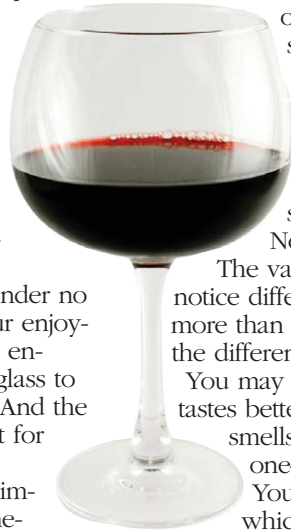
You may discover that the wine tastes better in one glass, yet smells better in a different one—this is not unusual.

You can decide for yourself which aspect of wine tasting, the smell or the taste, is important to you.

More crucial is deciding to what degree having the "right" glass matters to you, or how much of a difference it makes in your enjoyment. Once you conduct this experiment, you may decide it's more important than you imagined.

One interesting sidelight to this discovery is the realization that you can save money by getting the "right" glass. Good glassware, Riedel or Spiegelau for instance, in the right shape and size will flatter a modest, inexpensive wine and make it taste better—you can buy cheaper wine! Or, take the other approach: buy the same wines as in the past, but enjoy them more by serving them in a glass that shows them to their best advantage.

Just don't get carried away. Once aware of this glass/wine phenomenon, some folks start buying a different shape of glass for every wine variety they like, six or eight stems at a time. The next thing you know they have a whole closet set aside



for wineglass storage. While this is good for my business, it really isn't necessary.

Instead, experiment a bit until you find one or two designs that cover all, or most of the bases. In my own home, my wife and I have found that the Riedel Magnum glass pleases us 80 percent of the time, for reds and whites. It's a large glass that shows the bouquet well. It's also the glass we use at our wine tastings in the shop—it makes just about every wine taste better.

For the occasional Pinot Noir that requires special attention, we pull out a glass with a rounder, more bulbous shape. And then, we have a set of Champagne flutes, for obvious reasons. They're the perfect glass for bubbly. I just wish I had the chance to use them more often.

HALF-PRICE WINE NIGHT

Tuesdays 5:30-9 p.m.

Enjoy a great bottle of wine for half price with dinner every Tuesday night in Polaris (some restrictions apply). If you have ever wanted to try a new wine, this is a great night to do so! Our wine list currently features Northwest offerings with an emphasis on boutique wines.

Don't miss this opportunity to taste some limited production wines made in Washington, Oregon and California. Let our staff in Polaris help you find an incredible wine to pair with Chef Paul Marks' fabulous food. Please call 637-4608 to make reservations.

POLARIS BOUTIQUE WINE LIST

In addition to our regular wine list, we feature 15 to 20 wines that are in limited production. All of the wines come from small wineries that only produce up to 200 cases of a specific wine per year. Many of these wines are highly allocated, which means they are only available to select buyers. Fortunately, the Bellevue Club is one of the select buyers. Most of these wines come from Washington, Oregon and California, with a few from France or Italy as well. We hope to build our list of boutique wines and help support some great winemakers. Ask your server in Polaris or Cosmos about our boutique wine list.