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## **THIS NEW YEAR'S RESOLVE TO TASTE SOMETHING NEW**

### *Master Sommelier Says "Don't be Shy" When It Comes to Wine*

CHICAGO – Lose weight...learn a new language...get promoted...stick to a budget...stop smoking...exercise more. We've all made New Year's resolutions. This year have fun with your resolution – be bold and break out of your beverage rut by trying new wines. Master Sommelier Alpana Singh says it's easy...and it all comes down to learning to trust your own tastes.

Trying new wines may be the easiest thing you do in the New Year. New data from the Wine Market Council reveals that Merlot, Chardonnay, and White Zinfandel are most frequently enjoyed by wine drinkers in the U.S., but that's certainly not due to a shortage of choices. There are perhaps as many as 20,000 different wines available in the U.S., so there's plenty of room to experiment. Next time you're at your neighborhood wine shop, in the grocery store wine aisle or at a favorite restaurant, look beyond your familiar favorites and take a chance on a wine you haven't tried before – it could become a regular in your wine rotation.

"I tell people all the time to be more adventurous when it comes to wine – and the best way to do that is to keep sampling new wines," says Singh. "The one thing that you need to remember is that *you* are the expert. No one knows your taste buds better than you do."

She offers her New Year's wine resolution along with tips for shaking up your taste buds: have fun, use your resources and don't be shy!

- **Involve your friends.** Turn friendly get-togethers into low-key wine tasting parties. This can be as basic as asking everyone to bring a favorite bottle that they'd like to introduce to others. Or, Singh suggests setting fun simple themes to guide guests' wine selections. "I just hosted a group of friends for a Miss Universe pageant viewing party and asked everyone to bring a wine from a country they were rooting for. We tried a Spanish Albariño, a Malbec from Argentina, a true French Chablis – and we all learned something in the meantime."
- **Buy by the glass.** When dining out, make a point to try ordering unusual wines by the glass. Not only is this a low-risk way to sample new varieties, it also offers you the opportunity to choose a different wine for each course. "Ask your server for suggestions and don't be afraid to ask for a taste first," urges Singh.
- **Bring your own.** "B.Y.O. restaurants are a great, affordable opportunity to sample new wines," says Singh. "Even if you're just going out for a bite of Chinese food, bring along a nice, crisp Sauvignon Blanc that will taste good with just about anything on the menu." Keep your wine pantry stocked with affordable bottles to have wine at-the-ready.
- **Ask, ask, ask.** Many people feel intimidated by the "experts" at wine shops, but the truth is that most people who are knowledgeable and passionate about wine LOVE sharing their knowledge and passion with others. "Don't be shy about setting a price point and describing wines you've enjoyed in the past to guide their recommendations," advises Singh.
- **Take advantage of freebies.** Have you ever sampled food while you were grocery shopping? No big deal, right? Sampling wine at a wine shop or grocery store is exactly the same thing. Take advantage of these offerings and the approachable staff on-hand to help guide you through the wine offerings and you might just find your new favorite weeknight wine.
- **Watch for restaurant specials.** As wine tasting gains popularity, many restaurants are now hosting special "wine nights" featuring discounts on by-the-glass wines, pre-selected flights of wine or specially designed tasting menus. Keep an eye out for similar specials at your favorite dining spots.
- **Keep talking about it.** Friends and family are some of the best places to turn for wine recommendations. "Start an e-mail circle with friends or family who share your interest in wine," suggests Singh. "When one of you samples a bottle or a wine and food pairing that you absolutely love, you'll be sure to share your find with the group."

For more information, tips and wine pairing advice, check out [wineanswers.com](http://wineanswers.com).

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Wine Market Council is an independent, non-profit trade association of grape growers, wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and other organizations affiliated with the wine industry. For more information, visit [winemarketcouncil.com](http://winemarketcouncil.com) or [wineanswers.com](http://wineanswers.com).