

CONTACT: Michael Wehman
312-988-3521
mwehman@currentlm.com

WINE MYTHS UNCORKED

Setting the Facts Straight on Common Wine Misunderstandings

CHICAGO – Uppity wine stewards, stressing about the “right” glassware, sniffing corks. “That’s so old school,” insists wine expert Leslie Sbrocco, author of *The Simple & Savvy Wine Guide* (William Morrow, October 2006). “While there are valid reasons behind most of the pageantry and tradition of wine service, people are finally breaking free from so-called ‘rules’ that may have kept them from enjoying wine in the past.”

According to Sbrocco, the best way to start learning and enjoying wine is to embrace the idea that there really are no rules. “Drink what you like and trust your tastes. You don’t need to know all there is to know about wine just to enjoy a glass of it. The best way to learn is by tasting and experimenting – have fun with it,” she urges.

More Americans seem to be heeding Sbrocco’s advice. In 2006, the United States posted the 12th straight year of wine consumption growth, with 249 million cases consumed in the past year alone. And studies show that almost 60 percent of the youngest wine drinking population, the Millennial generation (currently age 21-29), enjoy reading and learning about wine – in more impressive numbers than their counterparts in older generations. There’s never been a better time to straighten out the facts and pop the cork on some common wine myths...

MYTH: *A bottle of wine needs to be consumed the same day it is opened.*

FACT: According to Wine Market Council research, nearly 45 percent of wine drinkers don’t realize that by simply recorking and refrigerating, partially consumed bottles will stay fresh for 3-5 days. That’s good news for wine drinkers who live alone and like to enjoy a glass or two per day. Some wine drinkers actually even *prefer* the taste of wines that have had a bit more oxygen exposure time.

MYTH: *You must sniff the cork when it is presented.*

FACT: There really is no need to pick up the cork and smell it. “Simply eye it to make sure it’s intact and moist,” explains Sbrocco. Once a taste has been poured for you, move on to smelling the wine itself – making sure you do not detect odors reminiscent of wet cardboard, vinegar or rotten eggs.

MYTH: *Older wine is better.*

FACT: Most wine on the market today is not meant to be aged, but is actually ready for immediate consumption. “As long as you’re purchasing wines from a reputable source, it’s safe to assume that bottles on-shelf are ready to drink,” advises Sbrocco. “When you’re ready to shell out for those powerful, high-ticket reds or Grand Cru white Burgundy, ask the seller’s advice or do a bit of online research to determine preferred vintages and aging recommendations.” To best capture the desired freshness and fruity quality of modern white wines, she suggests actually buying the *latest* vintage available on store shelves.

MYTH: *Screw caps mean the wine is cheap.*

FACT: Screw caps – or twist-offs – are now being adopted by some of the most cutting edge wineries in the world, and for good reason. Experts estimate that an average of ten percent of traditionally sealed wines become contaminated with cork taint – described as “corked” wine. Not only do screw caps virtually eliminate the chance of corked wine, but they’re easy to open, preserve the freshness of wine longer than corks and can be closed again if the bottle isn’t finished.

MYTH: *Each type of wine requires a special type of glassware.*

FACT: True, for trained palates, there are nuances of some wines that are coaxed out by serving them in specialized stemware. “But I really believe that any glass with wine in it is a wineglass,” stresses Sbrocco. “Don’t ever let concerns about ‘proper’ glassware hold you back from serving or enjoying wine.”

MYTH: *A bottle of wine should be opened prior to serving so it has time to breathe.*

FACT: It is true that allowing some time for red wine to be exposed to the air will help open up its flavors and aromas. However, because the narrow space of the bottle neck – the only space where the wine can contact air when left to breathe in the bottle – is inadequate to produce any significant oxygenation, it is recommended to let the wine breathe in individual glasses or in a decanter.

MYTH: *Sulfites cause wine headaches.*

FACT: Less than one percent of the population is actually allergic, meaning they lack the enzymes necessary to break down the sulfites. If you don’t react to other common sources of sulfites (dried fruits, juices, salad bars) you’re most likely not allergic. “The more common culprit of wine headaches is alcohol, which causes dehydration,” says Sbrocco. Her advice? Drink one glass of water for every glass of wine.

MYTH: *White wines should be served cold and red wines at room temperature.*

FACT: “We tend to serve whites too cold and reds too warm,” warns Sbrocco. She recommends keeping these points in mind:

- The lighter the body and color of the wine, the cooler the serving temperature.
- Oak character seems even stronger when a wine is cold, so don’t overchill oaky whites like Chardonnay.
- Sweetness tastes more pronounced when too warm, so serve sweeter wines colder.
- Alcohol seems more apparent when warm, so do not serve high-alcohol wines like Zinfandel too warm.

For more information, tips and wine pairing advice, check out wineanswers.com.

###

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 or wineanswers.com.