

Snow on Wine

VERY COLD for VERY HOT

By Dr. Jeff Snow



With August heat nearing 100⁰F, reading under the beach umbrella turned to Summer daydreams of sipping a frosty flute of “colder than ice” Champagne. Indeed, no other wine is typically served so cold. Wine writers recommend serving still white wines at temperatures in the 50’s, and temperature tests at our wine tastings have proven this¹.

Then why do Champagne and other sparkling whites taste ideal cold? Well, first allow me to share a Champagne chilling trick I learned from an old sommelier. After your bottle has been in the ice water bucket 30 or 40 minutes, give it a few quick twists. The agitation releases some carbonation, raising the pressure, which releases some heat, which is then absorbed into the ice. Repeat once or twice for 5 or 10 minutes, then pop the cork. With the sudden release of pressure, the wine instantly becomes colder (well below the temperature of the ice). Same principle as refrigeration compressors utilize. Trust me, the first sip on a warm August evening is so refreshing.

But why does table wine served too cold lose its’ fruit character and aroma, while the sparkler tastes so good when it’s icy cold? A little research gave the answer: ***It’s the bubbles silly.*** You see most wine flavors come from volatile chemicals only after wine warms enough to release them into the air and they may be sensed in the nose. With still table wine we inhale the volatiles from the airspace of the wineglass as we sip and sniff through the nostrils. If the wine in the glass is cold, few volatiles are released. But then it warms in the mouth and the flavor chemicals warm enough to volatilize. In the sparkler, warming also releases carbonation gasses. These gasses push the flavors back and over the soft palate and into the nasal cavity much more so than with still table wine.

So the **HOT** tip on a **HOT** day when your parched mouth wants a **COLD** wine but you still want great flavor is – grab Champagne, or any sparkler. And of course, bubbles make everything more fun.

1. Spokaneenologicalsociety.org; Wine Education, Taste and Temperature.