

SNOW ON WINE

PERSONAL WINE TEMPERATURE PERFECTION

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People often ask me, what is the perfect temperature to serve a given wine? For years I'd suggest reading the back label for suggestions, or calling the winemaker, who would undoubtedly have tried their wine at various temperatures.

A huge advantage of living in eastern Washington is that many of us actually know some winemakers or at least winery staff. Taking my own advice, I asked a wine maker at what temperature he had found his red blend showed the best. He recommended 66 degrees but admitted he hadn't really tried it at different temperatures. He just went by what wine books said for these grapes.

So the winemaker and I, our wives, and a few winery friends proceeded to taste this wine at 66 degrees, then over a range of temperatures below and above. There was fair agreement the best overall taste was at 72 degrees – a surprise to all of us.

Since then I have asked a number of vintners if the recommended temperature for serving their wines comes from actual testing. Everyone I asked so far has admitted they don't. And even if we knew the best temperature, how many of us would pull out an accurate wine thermometer and coax our bottle to just the right temperature? I've done that a few times and it is just a pain in the patutti! And does it even matter?

Well yes, it does. As my regular readers will recall, the aroma and taste of wine comes primarily from volatile flavor chemicals. Each of the 1500 known flavor chemicals has a specific temperature at which it becomes volatile, escaping into air above the wine where we can smell and taste it. Too cold and flavor remains trapped in the wine. Too warm and it escapes and wafts away before we can enjoy it. If only there was a simple way of getting the temperature right, we'd get so much more of the yummy flavors we crave.

So, if you are having COVID-19 "shelter-at-home" boredom, here's how to kill two birds with one stone...while-away some time by having fun drinking wine and learning how to get your favorite wines to their perfect/your preferred drinking temperature (without a thermometer). You only have to do this once for any wine you drink often, (but what fun is that), and it will work for every bottle of that particular wine. *Here's how to begin:* open a bottle of white wine (say a Sauv. Blanc) from your refrigerator (refer). Set out 4 identical glasses and pour 3 or 4 ounces of wine in the first glass, then place the bottle back in the refer. WAIT – NO SIPPING YET! Now repeat that process every 5 minutes until all glasses are poured. OK students, you may now sniff and taste. Starting with the coldest pour, compare the smell and taste of all the glasses to find out which is your favorite. Now you know how long to wait after pouring a glass from your refrigerated bottle to reach your preferred temperature. And as a general rule, simply double that time for a whole bottle of that wine for it to reach that same best/preferred temperature. This process also works to help you understand how far ahead to bring up that bottle of red wine from the cellar (or cooler) prior to opening it, or how long you need to leave a warm bottle of rose in the refer for it to get to the best/your preferred drinking temperature. Given the same starting temperature (always about the same for your refer or cellar), and the room temperature of your house, all you need is your watch or a timer to bring that particular wine to it's just right temperature (and remember that).

Cheers, have fun experimenting (and learning) about temperature perfection, and with enough (who said that) different wines, this can keep you busy until COVID-19 is a distant memory.