



WINE GUIDE

Hit the Trail

We all know the importance of supporting local business. If you're fortunate enough to live in an area featuring a trail of local wineries, you can achieve this while enjoying a drink or two.

And depending on your geographic location, odds are you can track down a locally owned winery right in your own backyard. There are now wineries in all 50 states sharing \$2.7 billion in American revenue, according to a comprehensive study by MKF Research LLC of Napa Valley.

FAMILY-OWNED

You can take pride in the fact that by supporting a locally run winery, you are helping invest more money into your community. Wineries by nature have enormous value-added components, meaning they generate tourism dollars in their surrounding areas.

If your local winery doesn't home-grow its grapes, rest assured that you're also supporting a good business somewhere nearby. The MKF report found that there are nearly 24,000 grape growers in the United States bringing in about \$3.5 million in grape sales.

EVENTS

Wineries are a great place to check out your favorite local band or take part in an exciting charity event. Since they are usually located on large plots of land with beautiful landscapes, trees and vegetation, wineries offer the perfect setting for participating in an outdoor wedding celebration or holiday party.

Your winery's calendar is likely full for the next few weekends, so check your local newspaper for upcoming events and plan your next adventure.

FOOD

Winery owners are usually passionate about what they grow. And because wine is the perfect complement to many foods, they also are generally just as passionate about cooking up great dishes for your dining pleasure.

Food and wine pairing is big business and based upon hours of relentless research by food scientists. This is serious stuff. Ask your local winery owner for special recommendations the next time you're visiting. You may find your new go-to dish.



Cabernet Sauvignon

When it comes to red wines, Cab is king. Born from a cross between Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc in southwestern France, this is one of the world's most widely recognized red wine grape varieties.

These grapes grow well in warmer climates with ample sunshine and varieties of rich soil conditions. This means they are versatile enough to be grown in nearly every major wine-producing country.

California and France serve as the ideal growth locations — as with most grapes — but many regions across South America, Australia and the Northwest United States also have claimed their expertise in producing high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon. And nearly every region produces its Cabernet Sauvignon differently.

THE TASTE

What your glass of Cabernet Sauvignon tastes like can depend on the aging process it endured. Some of the wine's most common features include solid acidity and rich, dark fruit aromas.

Its taste is dry in style and can range from medium-bodied to full-bodied. Cabernet Sauvignon also is characterized by higher tannins, which provide structure and complexity while enhancing the wine's rich, dark fruit characteristics.

The most common aromatic and flavor components found in Cabernet Sauvignon are plum, black cherry, blackberry, blueberry, warm spice, vanilla, black pepper, tobacco and sometimes leather aromas or flavors, according to the The International Wine & Food Society.

THE PAIRINGS

If you're seeking the perfect food pairing for your next glass of Cabernet Sauvignon, think meat. Thanks to its aforementioned tannin structure, this wine is built to complement fat and protein. Red meat in particular is the perfect offering for a wine-meal combination.

The next time you're uncorking a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon, fire up the grill and add a burger, brat, prime rib, sausage or bacon-wrapped strip. Add a bold cheese either to the meat or on the side and watch your pairing come alive.



Selecting a Wine Glass

Consider the following scenario and its possible outcomes: You just dropped your favorite wine glass in the sink, watching it shatter into 100 little shards.

Any time is a great time to buy a new set of wine glasses. An online or on-foot search for your next favorite glass will reveal one thing: There is a lot of variety out there.

OPTIONS, OPTIONS

Knowing where to start depends on your preference and how steadfast you are in not straying far from it. Some people stick with one brand, one style and one glass thickness for all wines.

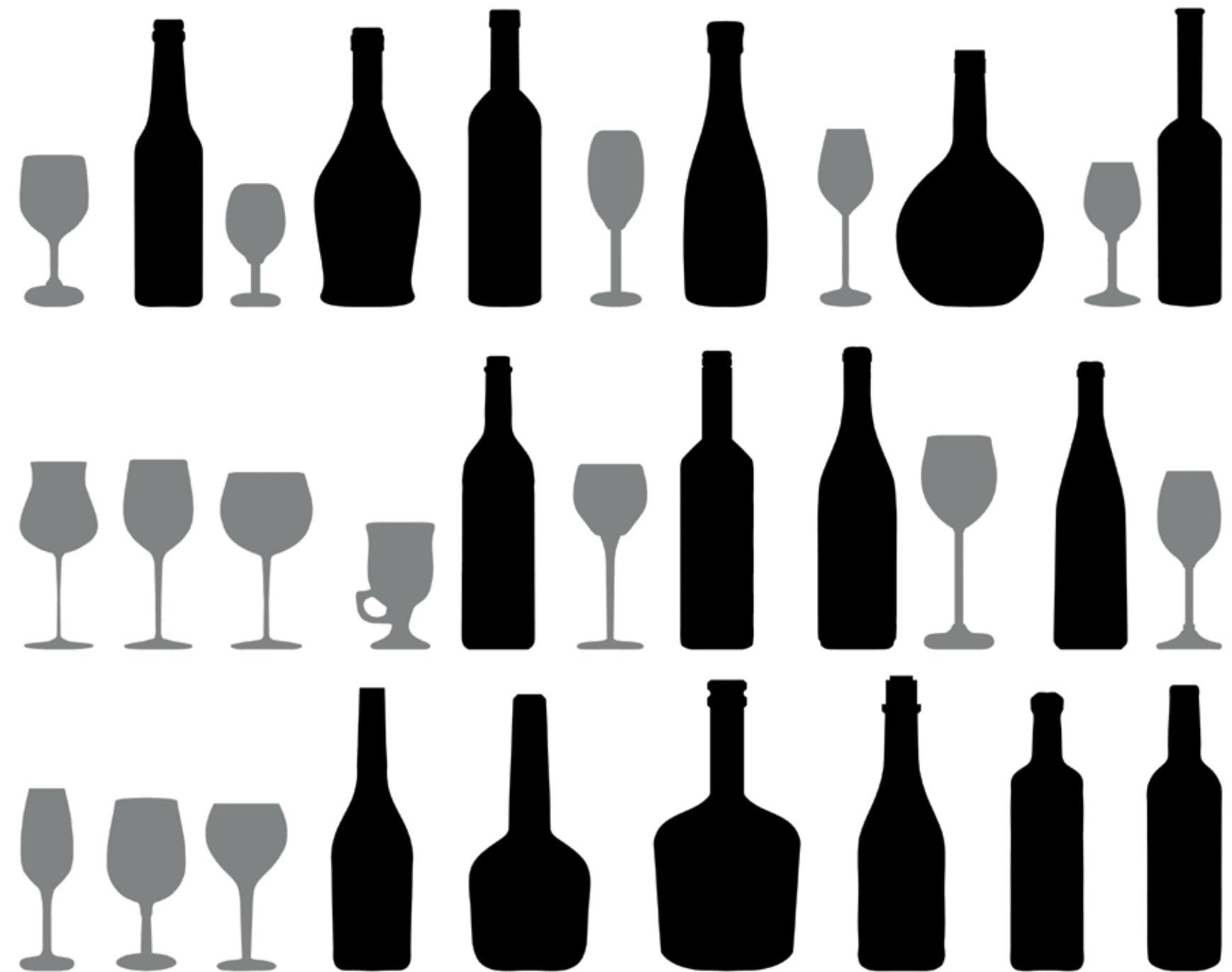
Wine enthusiasts will tell you that finding a slight inward curve at the top of the glass will help focus the aroma of the wine, or that thinner glasses offer a fuller wine flavor than thicker ones.

If you're open to new taste experiences, you should stay flexible. Keep eyes and mind open to find great wine glasses from different producers and stores. If you pigeonhole yourself to one specific brand, you may be missing out on a beautiful relationship with your new favorite glass.

GIFTING GLASSES

A nice set of stemware is always a great gift, no matter if you're buying for a novice or an expert collector. Hint around the next time you're at your friend's house at which wine glasses they prefer, have too many of or not enough of — and let this information guide your purchasing behavior.

Sometimes when buying glasses



for yourself, you'll find one that would be perfect for a fellow wine enthusiast.

If you are a recent buyer, you may

be able to find a great deal on a repeat purchase from the same store.

Keep an eye out for email coupons

or check your receipt for this type of promotional deal. There is no harm in finding a great glass and saving money at the same time.

Grape Grammar

Ever try to hold a conversation on grapes with a local grower? Unless you are a fellow expert, you were likely overwhelmed with the terminology, strategy and various varieties of grapes covered within your chat.

The grape growing industry is comprehensive, with multiple complexities. And the experts within it are knowledgeable of a great variety of subjects, including pest management, plant pathology, food science and rootstocks. They have to be if they want to remain ahead of the grape-growing curve.

The next time you take up a conversation at your local winery, mix in some of the terminology below. They are listed in full and in more detail on The Grape Community of Practice (GCoP) website at www.eviculture.org.

Aging: This is a basic term defined by the period of time a wine spends maturing to achieve its best flavor and aroma. Desired aging can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including within bottles or oak barrels.

Canopy management: First let's define canopy as the foliage of a crop. Managing it involves manipulating the shoots, leaves and fruit for the betterment of the vine and quality of grape.

Fasciation: This occurs when a plant distortion caused by an infection results in thin, flattened or curved shoots.

Legs: Wine with "legs" sticks



to the side of a glass when it is swirled and then slowly drips back down into the glass. Wines with higher alcohol content generally produce this effect.

Over-cropping: A serious issue affecting grapevines, this problem occurs when excessive crop on a grapevine results in negatively affected ripening.

Peduncle: In grapes, this is the same as the cluster stem that grows from the point of attachment to the shoot to the first lateral branch on the cluster.

Scuppernong: A variety of grape native to the southeastern U.S. and named for the area where it grows near the Scuppernong River in eastern North Carolina.

Wine & Weather

With the warm Mediterranean climates of California's Napa Valley and parts of Italy and France, it's apparent that weather is the driving factor behind successful grape growing.

The U.S. grape and grape products industries are largely concentrated in California, which accounts for virtually all table grapes and raisins, and roughly 90 percent of the nation's wine production. New York and Washington State each come in around 3 percent, and the rest of the states at 4 percent combined. These numbers were reported by the Congressional Wine Caucus — a coalition of U.S.

Representatives and Senators with an interest in the grape and wine industry.

Most varieties of grapes thrive in climates of moderate summers and mild winters. They also require consistent weather that stays mostly free of inclement conditions.

Unfortunately, the weather is not always willing to cooperate. Summer heat waves have wreaked havoc on California growers in recent years, forcing them to harvest their crops earlier than usual. Dealing with these types of changing weather patterns just comes with the job for many growers.

IMPACT ON YOUR WALLET

Likewise, weather can impact the price you, the wine connoisseur, shell out at the store. Here's what some



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growers do to keep grapes thriving and keep you from noticing the weather's impact:

- Remove some leaves to let more sunshine hit the fruit
- Implement strategies to quicken ripening in cool years
- Constantly monitor fore-

casts to know what to expect

MIDWEST

While California and the upper northwest dominate the industry, the Midwest has made major strides in becoming a wine hotspot. The

Midwest Wine Press' 2013 winery rankings show that the Minnesota and Wisconsin wine industries are the fastest growing in the Midwest, despite their chilly fall and winter seasons.

A main reason for the

uptick in Midwest wine success is the development of hybrid grapes. Scientists are continuously hard at work coming up with improved varieties that are resistant to common pests and the region's cold winters.

Shift to Sustainability

The numbers are out there; wine is a big business. But instead of resting on their laurels, professionals in the industry are focused on taking on a major challenge to its future success: sustainable growing.

The practice of introducing environmentally friendly practices into growing methods is one that will likely take many years to implement. Meanwhile, the industry is serving a consumer base more health-conscious than ever before, setting the stage for major change that will likely benefit both growers and drinkers in the long run.

The grape and wine industry's ability to propose and adopt sustainable agricultural practices could be a defining factor in just how big it can grow, both financially and in popularity.

SUSTAINABLE WINEGROWING

One organization in California has been created to give growers and vintners educational tools to increase their adoption of sustainable practices. The Wine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers have joined forces to create a certification program to increase the sustainability of the wine industry.

The program's goals are to enhance transparency, encourage statewide participation and advance the entire California wine industry toward best practices in environmental stewardship, con-



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servation of natural resources and socially equitable business practices.

Serving as a model of sustainable accountability for other states, California's success with the program will likely determine its adoptability across other regions.

HEALTH MOVEMENT

The health movement may be driving the shift to sustainability. As more and more people in the United States turn their dietary attention to foods that are

certified as organic or grown in sustainable fashions, the wine industry will attempt to adjust accordingly.

Research documenting many positive health benefits associated with the consumption of grapes and grape products is one tool

wine growers have at their disposal.

As national trends continue to indicate strong consumer interest in nutrition and foods, the wine industry will benefit from further studies linking wine with good health.

Collecting Wine

Do you intensely study wine bottles before buying? Are you the president of a local wine organization. Do you find yourself researching the history of your favorite wines?

It may be time for you to transform from connoisseur to collector. Uncovering vintage bottles of wine from your favorite period in history can be an exhilarating experience that leaves you excited to find the next one.

STAY ORGANIZED

One of the biggest keys to collecting wine is knowing what you have. What good is a vintage bottle from the early 1920s if you lose track of it in storage? You can develop a spreadsheet system that works to let you know what is coming in and going out.

You also can stay organized by starting small. Instead of buying up a large number of bottles initially, come home with four or five that you can get to know. Each bottle will have a long history behind it, one that you can spend time learning about instead of adding more to your collection. Once you can hold an educated conversation about each bottle, it's time to seek out your next additions.

CONSIDER THE EXPENSE

The feat of starting a wine collection can be an expensive one, especially if your goal is to invest in popular



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varieties with the potential for creating revenue.

Like in other aspects of business, if you want to earn money, you've got to spend it.

Set a reasonable budget to get your collection off the

ground, and stick to it. If you're earmarking \$500 on collectibles, keep track of every penny you spend as you spend it. This way you won't be tempted to overcharge or overspend your cash for too many bottles.

STORING IT

Wine is very sensitive, especially when you start dealing with old bottles. It is generally best kept in cool, humid environments of about 55 degrees.

Consider this if you're plan-

ning on storing wine in your basement or cellar. The best storage areas for wine are detached, well-insulated and secure. Another option is finding a reputable facility specifically designed for wine storage.