

# Cheers!

By Colette Hutchings  
Battalion Staff

Wine is probably the most mysterious drink of them all.

The ancient aura which surrounds the drink probably sprang from its first discovery, when some fortunate soul accidentally sipped the liquid from a fermented grape and enjoyed — thus the birth of wine.

Wine is most predominant in the European countries, but is becoming more and more popular in the United States for casual drinking.

The French, known for serving wine instead of water at mealtimes, are the most reputable in the wine business, but German, Italian and Spanish wines are also favored by connoisseurs.

California is also adding to its reputation with several well-known and liked wines.

Although developing a sensitive "wine palate" may take years of experience, with a little help from books and area restaurants, you'll be able to bluff your way through a fancy meal without embarrassing hesitation.

(Very impressive if it's a first date and the only palate you've got is for tasting nachos and washing 'em down with an Orange Crush.)

"Gulp Your Gallo....But Sip Your Ripple," written by M. A. Sharp, is a great paperback on the basics of wine.

Sharp explains how to pick the wine that's right for you (ie. wine that you like) and offers a guide to reading those horrid foreign wine labels.

A few terms for wine-tasting may be of help in describing the wine to your date.

Below are six terms used by the pros:

**Acidity** — the quality of tartness found in the wine, sometimes with a sour odor.

**Aroma** — the perfume of fresh fruit; it is replaced by bouquet with age.

**Cloying** — too sweet with too little acidity.

**Long** — the flavor lingers in the mouth. (opposite of short when the flavor doesn't linger.)

**Musty** — moldy, bad odor and stale flavor, usually from bad storage. (not a good sign in a wine.)

**Sharp** — excessive acidity.

Knowing how to tell a bad wine, Sharp says, is another step in learning about wine. It also helps to prevent some nasty tastes if the lousy wine is discovered prior to swallowing.

If the cork smells unpleasant and the wine tastes of fungus, the cork is probably the culprit and it's wise to send the wine back.

(If the bottle has a screw-on lid, skip this one, but you should be ashamed.)

If the wine has a cloudy haze in the bottle, this is a danger signal — bacteria could be contam-

inating the wine or it could be metal contamination — both could be a health hazard.

Bubbles in the wine coupled with cloudiness and a nasty smell and taste could mean a secondary fermentation caused by yeast still present in the bottle. It's best to discard this vintage.

Wine which tastes like apples is common in young wines.

A grapy wine usually means a young wine too. (Compare this taste to a zingy glass of grape juice.)

A "nutty" taste usually means the wine has been well-aged — a taste predominately found in sherries.

A sweet taste is caused by a certain amount of sugar that was left in the wine during fermentation.

If the wine is dry, no sugar products remain in it. (Dry in this case does not mean the glass is empty.)

Although aftertaste is usually not preferred in diet soft drinks, in a good wine, the taste should remain in the mouth for a long time after swallowing.

Perhaps another reason for carefully selecting the wine you want to drink.

The most common way wine is derived is from the ever-popular grape.

Several varieties exist in the United States and around the world, but there are a few grapes which are frequently used for the finer wines.

Chardonnay is a white grape used in making chablis and champagne.

It produces a full-bodied wine with a distinctive aroma.

Chardonnay is found on a variety of bottles in the U.S.

Pinot Noir is a red grape which, according to Sharpe, is considered to be the world's finest red wine grape, used in the better champagnes.

Zinfandel is the most popular red grape in California and produces a good red table wine.

Two local restaurants specializing in wines, The Grapevine and Fish Richards Half Century House, both in College Station, say they are happy to help inexperienced wine drinkers select a wine to compliment the meal as well as to offer a few pointers for the up and coming connoisseur.

After all, Fish Richards owner and manager Bill Perry says, wine "should be a part of the meal."

Sheri Jones, manager of Grapevine, says the restaurant sells Californian, German and Italian wines. She has noticed most college students prefer a balanced wine — "not too dry and not too sweet."

Grapevine's most popular wines, Jone said, are a white German wine and the French white wine that is their house wine.

Perry said they sell mostly French and German wines, but do have a variety of European wines.

Perry said Fish Richards has

100 wines on the list for customers to choose from. The most popular wine sold at the restaurant is the house wine, but for bottled wine, a German Moselle semi-dry wine is "very easy and drinkable," Perry said.

The price of wine varies about as much as the grapes it's derived from.

From \$2 for a bottle of Ripple to the hundreds for a high quality vintage, one can find a suitable price for the taste.

Fish Richards price range for wines is from \$10 to \$20 all the way up to the top price of \$600 for a French wine — Chateau Lafitte Rothchild from Bordeaux.

Grapevine's price range is less steep, with bottles selling from \$3 to the top price of a little over \$10, Jones said.

Perry said the highest price tag doesn't mean the wine is the best. "It just means that's how much some people are willing to pay for that particular wine," Perry said. The quality curve at Fish Richards is usually \$10 to \$12 and as Perry says "it doesn't rise too rapidly."

Although wine is not usually served with hotdogs and beans, *the drink can give a little class to a meal* — no matter what you're serving.

Listed below are a few common foods and some matching wines as suggested by Sharp.

**Barbeque** — Pinor Noir from California is an example of a good barbecue wine, although most strong red wines would suffice.

**Chili** — Burgundies, reds, Clarets or Chianti (Italian) wines would taste great with Chili.

**Fried Chicken** — Beaujolais (French), Bardolino (Italian) or Reisling (California) would work well.

**Chinese Food** — Dry Rose or Dry White complement the flavor.

**Mexican Food** — Beer would be your best bet (Mexican beer at that.) but Chianti — either Californian or Italian would match well.

**Pizza** — A hearty burgundy (California) or any of the dry roses from Portugal or a French wine would mix well with the pepperoni.

In selecting which wine to go with which food, it's a matter of personal taste and there is never a bad choice.

Certain wines do go better with some foods than others, hence the old rule of thumb, whites for poultry and reds for meat.

Perry said at Fish Richards the shellfish dishes demand a dry white wine. "We do not recommend the customer to order red wine with shellfish," Perry said.

However, he added that the beef, pork or lamb dishes can take just about anything.

Jones said she always uses an

# Bottoms up in style

old saying when choosing wine to accompany food. "The best wine is the wine you like best."

"Usually with steaks people tend to go with red wines," Jones said.

Wine serving has its own etiquette and it's important for the taste of the wine and psychologically it may even make the drink taste better.

Red wines should be left standing in the dining room for approximately 24 hours before the meal. Serving them at room temperature enhances the flavor.

White and rose wines are served chilled but not cold.

If you've always been a clutz and spilling drinks is one of your habits, maybe you can leave the pouring to someone else. Host or not.

Perhaps the most important lesson in learning about the "art of wine" is to relax and enjoy yourself. And the second most important — practice ... it makes perfect you know.



# Jeers!

By Todd Woodard  
Local Wino

Four inexpensive wines that would add to any Thanksgiving table are also old favorites: Country Kwencher, Yago Sant' Gria, Thunderbird and MD 20/20.

Though they might add to any table, varnished or not, they won't give much enjoyment to the gobblers eating turkey and dressing.

Two of the wines are white: Kwencher and Thunderbird. The

other two approach red. All of them are as close to dry as Lawrence, Kan., is to deep-sea fishing.

I first savored the sweet whang of Kwencher at 16, in the back of a red 1971 Camaro. By graduation I had become a Kwencherssieur, being able to discriminate between vintages aged two and three months.

But those skills have dimmed. I couldn't tell whether this superb \$1.99 value had been squashed in August or September. To further show my sliding palate, I couldn't decide where the vines or trees had been grown. A fellow taster, a Liebfraumilch drinker named Jerrold Scharminghausen, suggested Atlantic City, N.J., which led me to conjecture Newark, because of the distinctly channeled taste. We couldn't agree.

So, since we couldn't agree on the location, we agreed to move on to the purplish Sant' Gria. To reset our taste buds we decided to compromise on a suggestion by the New York Times wine critic Terry Robards.

Robards says in his book, "The New York Times Book of Wine," to "sell on cheese and buy on bread." I had some muenster and a loaf of whole wheat bread in the fridge, but because we couldn't decide whether this review would sell the reader down the river or buy him a day of severe stomach pains, we chose quick-fried-to-a-crackly-crunch Chee-tos. Additionally, I heated up spinach and jalapeno black-eyed peas to accompany the Chee-tos. We were set.

The \$3.19 Yago accompanied the peas and spinach quite well, I thought. It was fairly tasty, smooth compared to Kwencher, and not overwhelmingly sweet. In fact, if someone were to give me the

