

ENTERTAINING IDEAS

Entertaining At Home: How To Host A Wine-Tasting Party

(NAPSA)—As more people are choosing to entertain at home, it can be a great idea (and a lot of fun) to add a twist to the typical dinner party and incorporate a theme—like wine tasting. All across the country, there's a growing interest in learning more about wine, and you don't need to be a wine connoisseur to host your own gathering.

"So many people love the taste of wine but want to learn more about what scents and tastes to recognize when trying wine," says Doug Gore, award-winning winemaker for Columbia Crest winery. "When you learn how to taste wine and identify certain flavors, you learn more about yourself and what you like."

Gore offers the following step-by-step guide to help you host your own wine-tasting party:

Planning for the wine-tasting party

Decide if you will be sampling one type of wine, such as Chardonnay, or if you will be trying wines from a specific region. If your guests bring wine, give them a price limit. It is worth noting that price is by no means a guarantee of quality, and quality does not have to come with a hefty price tag.

Party set-up

- The wines: Choose five to eight wines for tasting.

- Setting the table: Use a white tablecloth or white sheet of paper so guests can evaluate the color of the wines. It is a good idea to have some bread or plain crackers and water on the table to cleanse the palate between tastings. Also, provide spit cups for guests that don't want to drink every sip of wine they taste.

- Tasting notes: Provide your guests with pads of paper or wine-tasting forms so they can record their immediate thoughts about each wine. Once they taste and



When preparing for a wine-tasting party, be sure to have enough glasses for all your guests (not to mention enough wine).

identify each wine, it will help them remember their favorite selections.

- Glassware: Place enough glasses on the table for each person to use a new glass for each wine. If you don't have enough glasses, ask your guests to bring a set or rinse each glass before tasting a new wine. You can rinse the glass with a small amount of the next wine you're going to taste, as water dilutes the flavor of the wine.

Preparing, pouring and tasting the wines

- White wines should be tasted before reds, driest to sweetest. If you're sampling the same type of wine, start with the youngest aged wine and end with the most mature.

- Look at the appearance of the wine. Color and clarity are two important aspects of wine. A white wine that has been aged in oak will be more golden than a white wine that has not.

- Smelling the wine is the next step. Swirling the glass will

aerate the wine and enable the taster to appreciate the aroma (smells that come from the grapes) and the bouquet (smells that the winemaker introduces, like oak). Don't be afraid to stick your nose deep into the glass and breathe deeply.

- Take small sips, rolling the wine over your tongue before swallowing. You'll get a sense of the texture (whether the wine is soft and silky, drying or sharp).

- Allow your guests to discuss the wines and compare their tasting notes on each wine.

Once the wine tasting is over, keep the wines out so guests can enjoy their favorite wine; you should allow a total of half a bottle of wine per person. So, if you are having eight guests, be sure to have at least four bottles of wine available.

If you want to learn more about hosting a wine-tasting party, visit www.columbia-crest.com for a party checklist and a tasting notes form.