

Tips On Hosting Your Own Wine Tasting

(NAPSA)—The next time you are party planning, try something sophisticated yet casual. Hosting your own wine tasting is fun and the setup is simple. Your guests will appreciate your creativity and enjoy the opportunity to try something new. Gina Gallo, third generation winemaker for Gallo of Sonoma Winery, offers the following tips for a hosting a successful at-home wine tasting:

- **Plan Ahead:** Keep the guest list small to allow each person time to sample and discuss the different wines. A white tablecloth and clear, stemmed glasses will best show off the color of the wine. Wine spittoons should be accessible for emptying glasses or spitting excess wine. Placing paper and pencils at each setting allows guests to take notes or jot down the names of their favorite wines.

- **Set The Theme:** Setting a price range and asking each guest to bring a bottle of their choice helps ensure everyone's satisfaction, provides variety and keeps costs down for the host. Creating a theme is a good way to taste wines from a specific region or varietal, while also learning to taste subtle differences among similar wines. If you have a favorite winery, serve a full line of their wines to see which varietal you and your guests prefer. An example of a lineup might include Gallo of Sonoma Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot and the special Single Vineyard, Barrelli Creek Cabernet Sauvignon.

- **Guest Appeal:** If your guests are beginners, try offering several varietals to help them realize the basic differences among wine types. For guests that are more advanced, spice things up with a blind tasting. Covering the wine labels will make it more challenging to guess which one is in the glass. Remember to keep a second bottle of each wine on hand to offer guests more of their favorite.

- **Savory Snacks:** It is important to keep the palate clear so



Hosting a wine tasting is a fun and easy way to bring together family and friends.

food should be kept to a minimum during the wine tasting portion of your party. Water and unsalted, unflavored crackers or bread will help clear the palate between wines. When tasting wine, try to look for characteristics such as its acidity or the tangy tart taste of tannins. Swirl the wine in the glass to open its bouquet so all of its wonderful scents are released. Once the tasting part of the party is over, offer a variety of cheeses, breads or crackers and fruits to complement the wines you'll be drinking.

- **Tasting Techniques:** When tasting multiple wines, taste white wines before reds. It is also a good idea to start with wines that are light-bodied before going on to fuller-bodied wines. Holding a wine glass up to the light will best show the color, while swirling helps to determine body style and releases pleasant aromas. When tasting, hold the wine in your mouth for at least 10 seconds to identify the different flavors and characteristics.

Wine tastings are a terrific way to learn more about wine and have a little fun while you're doing it.

For more information, visit www.gallosonoma.com.