

NH LIQUOR COMMISSION WINE EDUCATION SERIES

WINE

# Tasting

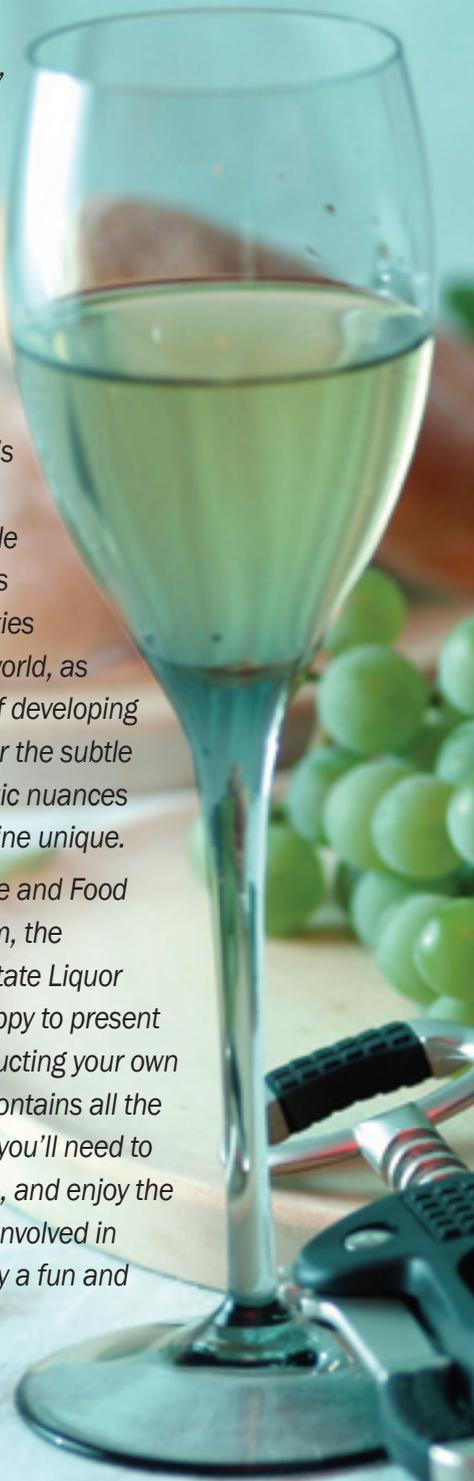


*Explore. Discover. Enjoy.*

*A*lways in good taste, a wine

tasting is a great opportunity to share special moments with friends or family and, of course, a host of wonderful wine selections. It's also a perfect way to discover the wide diversity that exists among wine varieties from around the world, as well as a means of developing an appreciation for the subtle tastes and aromatic nuances that make each wine unique.

As part of our Wine and Food Education program, the New Hampshire State Liquor Commission is happy to present this guide to conducting your own wine tastings. It contains all the basic information you'll need to help plan, prepare, and enjoy the various elements involved in what can be a truly a fun and memorable event.



# Hosting **A WINE** tasting

Your own wine tasting can be as simple as sampling a few California Chardonnays, or as complex as a dinner with complementary wines for every course. Your wine tastings will likely be more successful if you first gather together a few of these helpful items:

- A selection of wines – larger bowls for reds, and smaller bowls for whites
- A supply of wine glasses – there should be enough for everyone as well as being the same size and design
- A pitcher of purified water
- A spit bucket or container for guests who do not wish to swallow every sample.

*Note: it is not necessary to swallow the wine to taste it sufficiently if you are tasting correctly, but it is appropriate to spit your wine into a bucket!*

- Napkins
- A loaf of plain French bread
- Neutral cheeses, such as Colby, Monterey Jack, nuts and perhaps dried fruits (if desired)

# Choosing THE Wine

When selecting the wines to be tasted at your party, there are a number of details you should consider. One of the most important is the experience level of your guests as well as yourself.

## Varietal Tasting

If you are fairly new to the world of wines, you may want to consider tasting one, or more of the major grape varieties. The most common varieties are Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling (all white grapes) and Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir (all red grapes). This will give you a basic idea of which red or white wines you prefer. There are, literally thousands of other varieties, any of which could be used to create an all-white or all-red tasting once you have developed a feel for the major types of wine. Most wine shops can help you with additional varieties.

## Regional Tasting

If you already have a preference for a particular grape variety, you may want to try to see how different countries or regions affect the same grape. For example, you could sample the same grape from different microclimates in California (*i.e.*, Sonoma, Napa, Carneros, Santa Barbara, Russian River Valley, Monterey, etc.).

You could also sample the same wine from different countries. For example, you could choose Chardonnay from California, France (which would be White Burgundy if from that region), Italy, Australia and Chile. The winemakers have a lot of influence on the outcome, but even more important is the climate.

**Extremely hot climate** = very ripe grapes, usually full-bodied, high alcohol content wines.

**Cool climate** = just ripe, usually more subtle, elegant wines with lower alcohol.

## Food and Wine Tasting

You can have a lot of fun by choosing a specific cuisine (say...Northern Italian, Provencal, Spanish, etc.) and having wines from that area or wines that would complement the foods of that area. In general, wines from the regions in which the food originates will usually pair well with the selected dishes.

# Tasting THE Wine

As a general rule, the proper order of tasting is:

- White before red
- Dry before sweet
- Older before younger

Sweet white wines can complicate the order, but they are generally tasted last after the dry reds.

## HERE ARE THE STEPS IN TASTING AND EVALUATING WINE:

### Examine the wine for clarity

Holding the glass by its base or stem, tilt the bowl to show the wine against a white background so you can evaluate the wine's color, clarity, depth and intensity. This can tell you a lot about the wine before you even taste or smell it.

### Release the wine's bouquet

Swirl the wine in the glass to release the bouquet. This will also allow you to assess the "legs" of the wine. (The longer the legs take to fall down the sides of the glass, the fuller bodied the wine will be in your mouth.) Your sense of smell is your best evaluation tool. Does the wine smell of a certain fruit or herb? Is it nutty? Is there a woody smell, such as oak or cedar? Does it have a flowery aroma?

### Taste the wine

Take a good mouthful of wine, purse your lips, and draw some air through the wine in your mouth, but be careful not to choke. Exhale the air through your nose to ensure that the wine's flavor and aromas have been evenly distributed throughout your mouth. The tip of your tongue recognizes sweetness only, while acidity and salinity are perceived by the taste buds along the sides of your tongue, and bitterness is detected by the back of your tongue. So, if you are sipping a dry wine and touching just the tip of your tongue, then the wine will surely taste just bitter because it has little or no sweetness. You must take a good amount in, and cover your tongue; about the same as you would with any other beverage.

### Swallow or expel the wine

Now you can swallow the wine or spit it out. In this case, spitting is good! If you are tasting a number of wines, spitting is the only way you will keep your perceptions clear. Take a bite of bread or a sip of water to cleanse your palate before tasting the next wine.

### Rinsing

Better to rinse with wine than water unless you are changing styles drastically, like going from red to white. Rinsing with water will dilute the following wine.

## *Serving* **FOOD** **WITH** *wine*

If you'd like to serve food at your wine tasting, you can present your guests with a variety of items from light fare (chicken, seafood, white sauces and vegetable dips) to heavy dishes (meats, grilled foods, and dark sauces). Your wine selections can be further evaluated and matched with the "taste power" of the food.

### Cheese

Some believe that only white and sweet wines go with cheese but we think you should let your own palate be the judge. For instance, we think that Parmesean-Reggiano cheese from Italy goes beautifully with Champagne as well as aged full-bodied reds. There are no hard fast rules about food and wine pairing anymore, in part, because of how wine and food has evolved. Granted, certain wines with certain foods will pair better than others, but ultimately, you should decide for yourself.

### Cheers!

## *Information*

For more information about the different types of wine varieties that are available, please refer to our Wine Facts brochure. If you'd like to know which wines go best with which foods, our Wine and Food brochure is a valuable resource. Our website is a convenient resource for helpful information about our products and store locations. Visit [www.nh.gov/liquor](http://www.nh.gov/liquor) or call 1-800-345-6452.

## SPECIALTY WINES AVAILABLE AT THESE LOCATIONS

### **BEDFORD** (55)

Colby Court Plaza  
603-627-5878

### **BROOKLINE** (22)

44A Route 13  
603-672-8426

### **CENTER HARBOR**

(12)  
Route 25B  
603-253-3169

### **CLAREMONT** (8)

Claremont Mall  
345 Washington Street  
603-543-0200

### **CONCORD**

Storrs Street (1)  
603-271-1700  
100 Fort Eddy Road (72)  
603-271-1725

### **CONWAY** (23)

Route 16  
234 White  
Mountain Highway  
603-447-2782

### **GILFORD** (56)

Airport Plaza,  
9 Lake Shore Drive  
603-524-6083

### **GLEN** (54)

Route 302  
603-383-9000

### **HAMPTON**

Interstate 95 (73)  
(South Bound)  
603-926-3272  
Interstate 95 (76)  
(North Bound)  
603-926-3374

### **HOOKSETT**

Hooksett Rest Area (66)  
I- 93 (North Bound)  
603-485-5663

### Hooksett Rest Area (67)

I- 93 (So. Bound)  
603-485-5816

### K-Mart

Shopping Plaza (4)  
1271 Hooksett Road  
603-641-5145

### **KEENE** (15)

6 Ashbrook Court  
Monadnock Plaza  
603-352-1568

### **LITTLETON** (7)

568 Meadow Street  
Globe Shopping Center  
603-444-5726

### **MANCHESTER** (33)

North Side Plaza  
31 Hamel Drive  
603-622-5044

### **MEREDITH** (42)

Olde Province Common  
Route 104  
603-279-7018

### **NASHUA**

27 Coliseum Ave. (69)  
603-882-4670

### Southgate

Shopping Mall (50)  
269 DW Highway  
603-888-0271

### **NEW LONDON** (64)

New London  
Shopping Ctr.  
Route 11  
603-526-6868

### **NO. HAMPTON** (68)

Village Shopping Ctr.  
Lafayette Road  
603-964-6991

### **NO. WOODSTOCK**

(47)  
North Woodstock Plaza  
Main Street  
603-745-8922

### **PETERBOROUGH**

(21)  
One Jaffrey Road  
603-924-6671

### **PLAISTOW** (49)

Shaw's Plaza  
Route No. 125  
603-382-8511

### **PORTSMOUTH**

Portsmouth Plaza (6)  
800 Islington Street  
603-436-3382

### Portsmouth Traffic Circle (38)

603-436-4806

### **SALEM** (34)

417 South Broadway  
603-898-5243

### **W. LEBANON** (60)

Powerhouse Plaza  
10 Benning Dr.  
Route 12-A  
603-298-8629

### **WOLFEBORO** (39)

35 Center Street  
603-569-3567

For what's on sale and product information,  
visit our web site at [www.nh.gov/liquor](http://www.nh.gov/liquor)



*Explore. Discover. Enjoy.*

Please drink responsibly.

You must be 21 years of age or older to purchase or consume alcoholic beverages.