

# LEARNING to LOVE the WINE LIST

*Intimidated by a restaurant wine list? Don't be with these suggestions from our sommelier for special occasions*

By Peg San Felippo

**W**hile most of us enjoy dining out to celebrate a special occasion, there can be a blip up in anxiety when the wine list arrives. Here are my guidelines to help you enjoy your evening - and the wine.

## Do your homework

Familiarize yourself with the restaurant's wine list before you go. Most restaurants now include the wine list on their website, although it's a good idea to call and confirm a listing you're particularly interested in. You may also want to check to see if they're offering weekly or monthly specials, by the bottle or glass, that may only be displayed on the premises. These selections may give you the opportunity to upgrade your wine at a nice discount.

## Wine by the glass

If you and your guest or guests want totally different wines, buying by the glass is the way to go. Normally, however, it's more cost effective to purchase a bottle for the table. The problem with ordering a glass of wine is the freshness factor. If the wine hasn't been stored or sealed properly, it may taste flat or oxidized. If that's



the case, don't be afraid to ask them to pour you a fresh glass from a new bottle.

## Try before you buy

If you see a wine you'd like to purchase by the glass or bottle but are not sure which to buy, ask for a taste. Sampling will not only help you decide, it helps check for freshness.

## BYOB

Although they don't publicize it, many restaurants will allow you to bring your own bottle of a wine for a charge. Corkage fees are usually \$15-\$45 but worth that if you have a special bottle you'd like to

open the evening. Call ahead to find out if it's permitted and if they have any other restrictions. For instance, some restaurants will not allow you to bring in a wine they already in stock or from the same winery.

## Give an example

If you are looking for some suggestions from the server or sommelier, be prepared to tell them what you like. It's also OK to give them a price range. Feel free to say, for example, "We enjoy Oregon pinot noir and would like to stay in the \$60-\$80 range. What would you recommend?" It's also helpful if you let them know you are

willing to try something different. Keep in mind that every restaurant's mark up on wine is different so don't assume it will only be 100 percent of the retail price. Some may charge 300 percent so it's important to pay attention.

## Regions matter

Just because you like Cabernet Sauvignon from California is no guarantee you'll enjoy one from France or Italy. New World wines come from regions such as Australia, the United States, New Zealand and Argentina. They tend to have ripe, fruit-forward flavors, are fuller bodied and

higher in alcohol. Old World wines refer to wines from Europe and the Middle East. These wines are typically dry, lighter bodied, with restrained fruit and mineral characteristics. They also are normally lower in alcohol and higher in acidity. There are exceptions and a new wine term you will hear more frequently is "old world wine made it in a new world style."

*Peg San Felippo is a certified sommelier who has served as a judge on the annual American Fine Wine Competition, South Florida's homegrown wine event; and THE Rosé Competition.*

## Solid choices

If a restaurant has an extensive list with unfamiliar names, people may gravitate to wines in their comfort zone from California. While the choices may be great, they may also be pricy. If you're looking for terrific tasting options that are good values check out the wines on the list from Italy, Spain, New Zealand and Australia. Not only will you find varietals that are food friendly, you'll also get a chance to explore some great wine regions of the world.

## Heartwarming Reds to Try

**AIX Rosé 2018, Provence, \$19.** *Total Wine.*

**Jean-Louis Chave Selection "Mon Coeur" (My Heart) 2017, Côtes du Rhône, \$24.** *Wine Wave, Delray Beach.*

**Marqués de Murrieta Rioja Reserva 2014, Spain, \$30.** *Crown Fine Wine & Spirits.*

**Château Coufran Haut-Médoc 2009, Bordeaux, \$38.** *Virginia Philip Wine Spirits & Academy, Palm Beach.*

**J Vineyards Sparkling Brut Rosé NV, Sonoma, \$43.** *Total Wine.*

**Cristom Estate Pinot Noir Eola-Amity Hills 2014, Oregon, \$54.** *Wine Watch, Fort Lauderdale.*

**Jordan Winery Cabernet Sauvignon 2015, Alexander Valley, \$60.** *ABC Fine Wine & Spirits.*

**Malvirà San Guglielmo Lange Rosso 2014, Piedmont, \$69.** *Le Bistro Restaurant, Lighthouse Point.*

**Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Brut Rosé NV, Champagne, \$79.** *Crown Fine Wine & Spirits.*

**Shafer Vineyards "Relentless" Syrah 2015, Napa Valley, \$99.** *Basser's Fine Wine & Craft Beer, Coral Springs.*

**Kenzo Estate "Rindo" Red Blend 2016, Napa Valley, \$150.** *Wine Wave, Delray Beach.*

**Ruffino Estates Alauda 2015, Toscana IGT, \$200** *at Cipresso at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel in Hollywood.*

