

Virtual *Wine Tasting Guide*




WINE


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Like many of you, I enjoy my wine, and I drink a fair amount of it. But I'm tired of the standard wine reviews where every wine gets a good or positive rating to avoid offence. There's nothing worse than buying a recommended bottle and then hating it when you open it. The truth is that not all wine is good, and your enjoyment of it can be influenced dramatically by the food and people with whom you share it.

The reality is you don't need to know a lot about wine to enjoy it – and you don't need to have a huge bank balance either. Many of Australia's best wines (and I mean quality, not the price tag) never make it to the large retail outlets or chain stores. For many years now I've been scouring the country's wine regions to find Australia's hidden gems. I've been hanging out with vignerons and winemakers from the Barossa to the Tamar and Yarra Valleys, and beyond. I even got so passionate about wine that I went to learn more about it – and received London's International Wine Spirit Education Trust Level 3 qualifications. In fact, I have also almost completed my two-year Diploma in Wine and Spirit (WSET4).

I'm sure you'll agree that one of the best things about drinking wine is sharing it with friends over some good food. The matching of wine to people is actually quite a difficult skill, but it's something I just kind of 'fell' into and have become pretty good at. So much so that my friends regularly ask me for wine suggestions – from everyday drinking wine to special occasions; and from drink nows to exploring the benefits of cellaring.

Matching food to your wine can also be a challenge, and something many people get a little nervous about. The old adage that white wine can only be matched to chicken, fish or seafood no longer applies. For years I've been designing food matches from simple 3-course meals to extravagant 14-course degustation dinners with my wife, Mrs Matchmaker, who creates the recipes. Together we enjoy exploring the flavours of wine and how each could be amplified and complemented with various dishes, and it's something we've become pretty good at together.

So, in a nutshell, that's what Wine Matchmaker is all about: no holds barred reviews of everyday wines I taste, as well as some of my favourite 'hidden gems' for you to explore; how each wine could be best matched to food, and what kind of person would enjoy each wine. This, coupled with a few recipes you can cook at home means you can create your own perfect dinners that are sure to impress and delight. We also run exclusive wine dinners and education sessions, and commencing in October 2020, they'll be run through our very own back vintage wine bar – Life's Too Short Bar in East Melbourne – so you can learn even more, should you wish.

So please have a look around, read some of the posts and give me your thoughts and feedback. Whether you agree with me or not please feel free to leave your constructive thoughts.

Enjoy,
Antony Anderson
The Wine Matchmaker.

Virtual Wine Tastings

I have written about how to connect with friends and family to do social drinking online and the associated etiquette. This is great advice for people who are separated overseas due to covid, and for those overseas still battling lockdowns. In this post I'll cover the approaches some wineries and wine distributors are using to share their wines and wine knowledge in this age of physical distancing.

Interestingly some of these approaches may actually continue after we go back to 'normal' - they're great ways to connect to consumers without lengthy travel, the threat of booze buses and the associated carbon footprint.

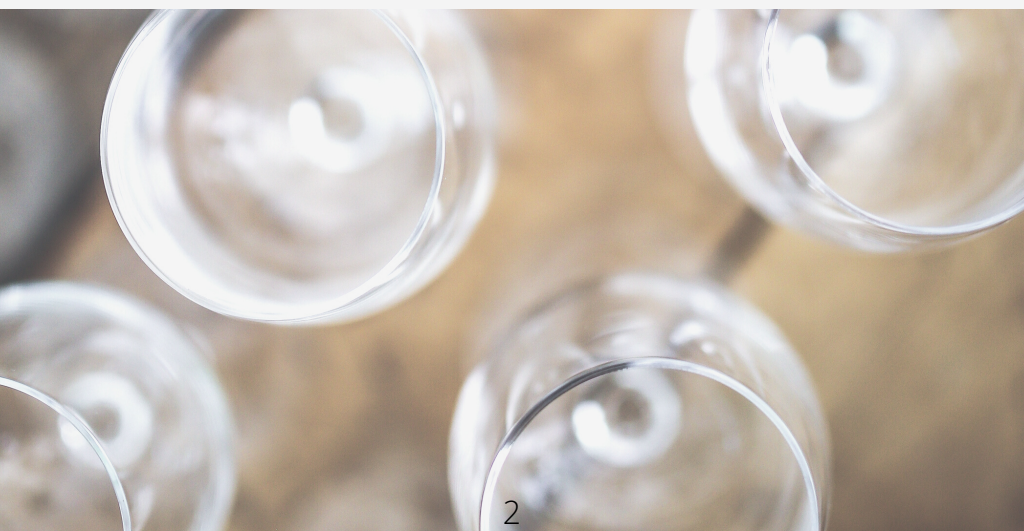
Maybe tastings have finally been brought into the 21st century?The first method is a one-way tasting where you don't actually have the wine to drink. This is where the person conducting the session can't see you and tastes and describes the wine for you. This is commonly done via Facebook Live.

Pros:

- Free (no cost outlay)
- Quick and easy to setup and participate
- Works well for a large number of participants were interaction is impractical.

Cons:

- Impersonal
- You can't try the wines
- Difficult to give feedback and get advice





The next method is a one-way tasting where you do have the wines. This allows you to follow along with the tasting and gain more from the experience. The wines can be shipped to you or purchased beforehand from a wine store. Once again it can be done through Facebook Live but some interaction can be done through chat/comments.

Pros:

- Relatively quick and easy to setup and participate
- Can fully experience the wines
- Works well for a large number of participants where interaction is impractical.

Cons:

- Cost and time to obtain the wines
- Difficult to give feedback and get advice

The next method is a two-way tasting where you both have the wines and can converse as you taste them. This allows you to gain much more from a personal experience. Again the wines can be shipped to you or purchased beforehand from a wine store. These are normally done through Google Hangouts Meet or Zoom and interaction can also be done through chat/comments.

Pros:

- Can fully experience the wines
- Can give feedback and get advice
- More intimate and boutique

Cons:

- Cost and time to obtain the wines
- Requires more time to setup and participate
- Doesn't work well for a large number of participants where interaction is impractical.

I recently did a two-way tasting with Sanguine Estate where we got a bottle from our cellar (in my case an excellent 2012 Progeny Shiraz)

and they retrieved the same wine from their cellar. We ended up with only four callers which allowed a lot of great interaction and information.

Two-way tastings are what we recommend at Wine Matchmaker - they're the most personal method for remote wine tastings and education. To aid these we can supply reasonably priced back vintage wines from our selection, and if the participants like the wines they can buy more from our store. If this might be of interest to you please feel free to reach out to me and we can discuss it further.

Cheers,
Antony.



Drinking wine online:

setup and etiquette



We have covered some of the main platforms to facilitate virtual catch ups and drinks with family and friends. I hope you've had the opportunity to try at least one. I use Google Hangouts Meet for virtual meetings as it is easy and free to catch up with friends. One of the reasons it went so smoothly is we had good preparation and followed virtual etiquette.

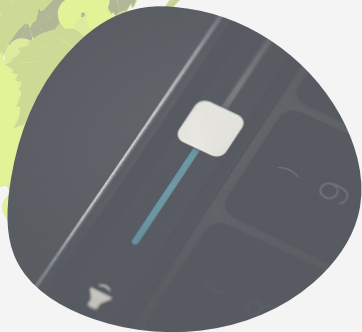
Virtual etiquette begins with preparation for the catch up. Like any physical catch up you want to be prepared before hand to show your respect and not waste their time. This includes the following:

- If you are responsible for sending the invite make sure you have the correct email address for the person and include the invite link to the video conference platform (examples were covered in my previous post);
- If you are receiving the invite then open it when you receive it and confirm the details are correct. Click on the meeting link to check if you need to install any software (it can cause delays if you try and do it just before you try and join the meeting);
- Test your microphone, audio (speakers or headphones) and video before the meeting. Most video conference solutions will allow you to do this ahead of time by clicking on the meeting link.

Give some thought to your setup location including:

- Is your device camera situated in your line of sight or do you need to move it? For example my laptop is off to one side on my desk with a separate monitor in front. So to be sure the camera is on my face I need to move my laptop to a different area to do calls. This could also be addressed by having an external camera;
- Is the microphone built into your computer sensitive enough to pickup your voice or do you need an external microphone? In one recent call someone's microphone was so poor they were almost hugging their just to be heard. These days many headphones have a built in microphone which can reduce this risk;
- Can you hear adequately through the speaker or do you need to use a headset? There is nothing more disruptive than a weak or distorted speaker when you are trying to converse with someone like you would face to face. I encourage the use of headphones with a microphone. You may even be able to use the ones you use with your mobile phone;
- Be aware of what's behind you. Drying washing or a distracting photo may not be the best background and may provide the viewer an unwarranted peek into your personal life. Skype allows you to blur the background, and Zoom (paid) allows you to upload your own virtual background which can be fun.
- Consider the lighting. Lighting that is dim will make it difficult for the person to see you. Lighting coming from directly behind you can wash you out and make you hard to see. And light shining directly on your face can make you look just plain creepy. You don't need a professional lighting rig but check out the meeting window with your face in it to check your lighting is adequate.





There are a number of things to watch out for in the actual meeting:

- Put yourself on mute when you're not talking. You wouldn't make distracting noises when someone was talking in front of you so don't do it on a virtual call;
- Try not to talk over people. This is particularly difficult if someone has a delay at their end and start talking before you have finished. A good suggestion is to leave a bit of extra time between comments to give people time to respond;
- If you have a poor internet connection feel free to turn off your camera to improve voice quality. If you are in a group call don't feel obliged to have your camera on all of the time but this is more difficult one on one;
- And wear pants ... I think that speaks for itself.

Cheers,
Antony.



Your guide to buying wine online.

Due to recent limitations in work capacity overseas due to COVID-19, there is a shortage of wine supply in comparison to previous years. In this article I want to cover the tips and pitfalls that you may come across when ordering online.

There are a number of ways to buy wine online and they all differ a little:

- Wineries direct;
- Wine retailers who have a physical and online store;
- Restaurants;
- Online-only retailers.

I always encourage people to buy directly from the winery. Not only are they well setup to ship you wine but you are supporting them directly and allowing them to keep more of the margin. This is particularly important during these trying times. You will need to wait to get your wine, but you will also be limiting your exposure to the virus. Delivery can be as little as \$10 per carton which is less than \$1 per bottle in dozen packs. There are also currently no restrictions on how much you can buy from wineries. One of our favourite wineries is Maddens Rise in the Yarra Valley and Emma or Ben will be happy to look after you. As I always say ... support local and sustainable.

Most of the major wine retailers, like Dan Murphy's, will allow you to order online and then provide two options:

- Delivery to your nominated address;
- In store pickup (sometimes called "Click and Collect"). Your order can be available in as little as 30 minutes



However during this current coronavirus situation major wine retailers have restrictions on how much alcohol you buy regardless of how you order and receive it. Picking up your order from the store can also increase your exposure to the virus..

The Government has also temporarily relaxed licensing restrictions on restaurants selling bottled alcohol as long as food is also being purchased. This is currently for pickup or delivery only and you are restricted to one or two bottles. This may mean you only have to visit one place to get your food and wine needs, which could also keep you safer. Check out Queen Caterina Pizza e Birra in East Melbourne who do a great pizza but also have some very approachable Italian wines that go very well with their pizzas.

Finally, one of my favourites, is that a number of boutique wine retailers that also take orders online, like Armadale Cellars are currently offering free delivery if you purchase 6 bottles of more. Nicks Wine Merchants in Doncaster also has a great range of wine ready for delivery some of which are even cheaper than Dan Murphy's.

And don't forget Wine Matchmaker's own online store which has just opened with a carefully selected cellar clearance of back vintage and hard to get boutique wines. We offer contactless delivery (limited area) or you can pick up from East Melbourne.

And remember, however you get your wine, stay safe and drink in moderation.

Cheers,
Antony.



I hope you enjoyed learning more about how to run a virtual wine night!

The advice here is just as relevant today as it will be in the future as there are many changes to the way we will work in the future. Teams spread throughout the country and indeed the world will be separated for some time yet.

It's also a great way to stay connected to customers and partners while saving a few dollars on the running of events. Something we all need to consider as the economy recovers.

If you do want some more advice or assistance in running a virtual or physical event please do get in touch and happy to have a complimentary initial consultation. Just email me at info@winematchmaker.com.au

Take care and remember that life is too short to drink bad wine!!

Cheers
Tony



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Antony (Tony) Anderson is the Wine Matchmaker (WSET3, WSET4 pending), passionate about helping people "get wine confident" – no more bottle-shop-shock, wine list paralysis or invite paranoia. Antony will teach you how to gain confidence when selecting, cellaring and getting the maximum enjoyment out of wines from all over the world. Antony runs business seminars to impress your clients or reward your staff with a Wine Confidence Night. Contact me for more details.

A man with glasses and a purple shirt is smiling while holding a glass of red wine. He is positioned in the center, with a circular frame around him. To his left is a large bunch of green grapes, and to his right is a large bunch of dark grapes. The background is white.

List them here and send through a photo of your questions to [Facebook.com/winematchmaker](https://www.facebook.com/winematchmaker), for Tony to answer them.

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