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Bottle of Red, Bottle of White? WINEANSWERS.COM Has the Answer
New Site Launches Today: 24-Hour-A-Day Resource of Wine Information and Expert Advice

(January 23, 2001) -- Think you're alone when it comes to feeling nervous about wine selection? Think again. Americans are almost as frightened about ordering a bottle of wine for the table at dinner as they are of asking for a raise at work or meeting the in-laws for the first time, according to a recent poll conducted by SurveySite Research.

According to Leslie Brenner, author of "*Fear of Wine*," Americans love wine, but misperceptions about how to store and serve it keep many people from enjoying it more than five or six times a year.

"There's no reason to be afraid of wine," Brenner says, "It's really not as complicated as people think. The best rule to follow is drink what you like."

For anyone who has been baffled about what to do if the cork drops in the bottle or how to save the remainder of a half-finished bottle of wine, a new Web site has come to the rescue. WINEANSWERS.COM is a 24-hour-a-day resource created by the Wine Market Council with the help of leading wine experts. The site features, among other things, a searchable archive that will answer any wine-related question in just seconds. Or, visitors can email their questions to a wine expert panel and receive an email answer in 48 hours or less.

"Our goal for wineanswers.com is to help make wine more approachable and demystify it," says Brenner, who is a major contributor to the site.

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The site is good news for millions of casual wine consumers. According to a study conducted by Merrill Research & Associates, 42 percent of wine drinkers say they don't feel confident about picking a good bottle of wine and 41 percent are perplexed about serving the right variety of wine with food.

"It's a shame we put wine on a pedestal when so many people say they enjoy the taste and the way it enhances the flavors of any meal," Brenner says. Another Merrill Research finding shows that 90 percent of infrequent wine drinkers say wine is appropriate for most occasions, but nearly half say they reserve drinking it only for special occasions.

According to Wine Market Council President John Gillespie, wineanswers.com will put the relaxing back into everyday wine drinking.

"We have spent more than five years researching what Americans do and don't know about wine," Gillespie said, "Wineanswers is the consumer-friendly information resource people have been asking for. It addresses the real questions people have about wine and offers quick, easy tips and facts which can raise anyone's confidence level with wine."

Wineanswers.com features include a searchable question archive, columns and articles by wine experts, a glossary of wine terms and interactive e-greetings and quizzes.

While 73 percent of wine drinkers say they like to have wine on hand, many are more likely to enjoy a glass of wine at a restaurant or a friend's home. Brenner says it often comes down to feeling more comfortable about selecting and storing wines at home.

Here are some of Brenner's top tips for everyday wine enjoyment:

- **Keep a Cook's Stash** – It's easy to create a nice pantry selection that will go with any meal. Gather several bottles each of all-purpose white and red selections. Keep these bottles under \$10. For whites, sauvignon blanc is a good choice. If it doesn't have too much oak, it will pair with everything and work well in any sauce. For red, pinot noir, soft merlot, Rioja from Spain, inexpensive Italian red or Beaujolais are versatile choices for cooking or enjoying by the glass. Round out your wine stash with a sparkling wine and a couple of special occasion bottles and your wine stock is complete.
- **Drink What You Like** – Instead of nervously wavering over white or red, trying to find something to complement your meal, let your own taste buds be the guide. When dining out, try going with a wine from the same region as the restaurant's food specialty. A good Italian restaurant is likely to have a solid selection of Italian wine. When in doubt, ask the server for a recommendation.
- **Re-cork It** – More than half of the wine drinkers interviewed in a Merrill Research study said they did not realize an open bottle of wine can stay fresh for at least 3-4 days. The alcohol in wine will help preserve the open bottle. Re-corking a red or white wine (or using a simple bottle stopper) and refrigerating it will keep the oxygen out and preserve the flavor. Just take your red wine out of the refrigerator an hour before you want to enjoy it.
- **A Chill or a Cool Room Temperature** – There are no hard and fast rules for wine serving temperatures, just guidelines. Let your personal preference be your guide. Some people enjoy cold ice water, while others prefer room temperature water. The same goes for wine. Generally, white wines, rosés and sparkling wines taste best chilled – 45 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit, but not ice-cold. An hour or two in the refrigerator is plenty of time. Most red wines taste best at a cool room temperature, about 50 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Try popping a bottle of red into the refrigerator for 20 minutes or so before serving to see if you find the wine more refreshing.

For more detailed advice on any of these topic areas and more, visit wineanswers.com to

view feature columns by Brenner and other renowned wine experts.

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Wineanswers.com is sponsored by the Wine Market Council, an independent, non-profit trade association of grape growers, wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and other organizations affiliated with the wine industry.