

LeBlanc's

FOOD STORES



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Weekly Wine



BY
MICKEY
MARTIN

The Hot and Cold of it...

Wine, it seems, is something like Baby Bear's porridge in the story about the Three Bears: Sometimes it's too warm, sometimes too cold, and only occasionally is it just right.

The standard rule of thumb is simple: Serve red wines at room temperature. Serve white wines chilled. But just how warm is "room temperature"? How cold is "chilled"? It's my opinion that the standards of wine go overboard when they insist that you serve your Cabs at 64°F while cooling your Pinots down to 54°F, and so on down the Fahrenheit scale to an exact 41°F for sparkling wine. This strikes me as the kind of overly precise snobbery that puts people off wine and that would require us to pack tiny thermometers alongside our pocket corkscrews.

Instead of being overly finicky about the details, let's simplify: Most of us tend to serve our red wines too warm and our white wines too cold. Standard "cellar temperature" is about 55°F, which not coincidentally is also the temperature of natural caves. This is the ideal temperature at which age worthy wines mature most gracefully in long-term storage. And, certainly in the centuries before central home heating and air conditioning became commonplace, both red and white wines customarily were served straight from the cellar to thirsty diners waiting in drafty chambers where room temperature was probably not all that much warmer than the cellar.

I certainly don't advocate serving all wines at 55°F. But cellar temperature makes a useful starting point for both reds and whites. Quality red wines are best served comfortably above cellar temperature, but sufficiently below modern room temperature. Your glass should feel cool to the touch. For good white wines of complexity and balance, it isn't really desirable to serve them much colder than cellar temperature. Ice-cold wine stuns the taste buds, and you'll notice that the advice "serve well chilled" appears on the labels of only the cheapest wines. Without falling into the trap of recommending exact serving temperatures, these general guidelines work well for me:

- **WHITE WINES:** Put the wine in the refrigerator or ice bucket long enough to chill it well (or simply use the fridge for short-term storage). But take it out of the fridge 30-40 minutes before serving. (Restaurant tip: No matter how much the server pleads, take your wine out of the ice bucket and leave it out.)

- **RED WINES:** Particularly in the summer when even air-conditioned room temperature is on the warm side, refrigerate your red wine for 30 to 40 minutes, or put in the freezer or ice bucket for 10 minutes or so. Don't worry about over-chilling: It won't take it long to come back, and the wine won't be damaged.

- **OTHER WINES:** Pink wines are often most refreshing at colder temperatures, and sparkling wines may froth and fizz when you pop the cork if they're not cold enough. But once the bottle is open, quality Champagnes will reward the time needed to warm to cellar temperature. Moscato based wines are best served cool, not cold. Treat Ports like quality red wines.

And of course, if you have a temperature-controlled wine cellar (or if you live in a cave), you can simply serve your whites straight from the cellar and give your reds just a few minutes to warm up a bit. Again, don't let serving temperature worry you. These are subtle issues, and you can ignore them entirely if you wish. But if you like to play with your wine, I think you'll find it interesting to experiment. Try a favorite wine served warm, cool and cold, and decide for yourself how you like it and why.



"Just, Just Me"
-Mickey Martin

Mick's Picks



Cupcake Wines - What happens when a naval aviator from the Royal Australian Navy turns his sights to winemaking? You get wines that take off in the mouth with well-grounded prices. You get Cupcake Vineyard wines. We carry the Chard, Cab, Merlot, Riesling, and Petite Sirah—along with their #1 hit... Red Velvet, which reminds me of a blackberry cupcake with chocolate icing. Better than Apothic? You decide. The Cupcake Wines are all... **\$11.98**

Want me to write about a certain type of wine? Contact me anytime at mmartin@leblancs.net.

*All wine prices subject to change/some wines not available in all locations.