



# BEGINNER WINE SERVICE



Material contained in this document applies to multiple course levels. Reference your syllabus to determine specific areas of study.

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As a server or bartender, proper wine service is a skill you'll not do well without. From order to presentation and follow up, there are particular steps that are important in the formal service of wine.

First, all bottled wines should be presented using these steps, regardless of the cost or perceived wine knowledge of the guest in your establishment. All bottled wines being delivered to the table should be treated with the respect due the wine maker, establishment, and of course, the person ordering the selection.

## TAKING THE ORDER

While you may not know every detail or idiosyncrasy of a particular wine, it is important that you have a general understanding of the categories on your establishment's list. Even if you are not a wine drinker or haven't tasted much of the list, have a working knowledge of the categories of wines on the list, and have a "favorite" in each. This favorite should be something that is proven and well-received at the location, and should be in the mid-range price level. Any guest can see through a server that recommends only the most expensive bottle in the category. Additionally, have a by-the-glass or bottle recommendation ready when a guest orders a signature dish. Appearing knowledgeable is key.

When a glass or bottle of wine is ordered, repeat the order back to the guest. Be clear and succinct. Be sure that you understand the varietal, brand, and vintage desired.

## PRESENTING THE BOTTLE

Assuming that appropriate, polished glassware is already at the table, approach the host with the bottle of wine he or she ordered. Treat the bottle gently, as though it were special and delicate. Tip the bottle's top back, toward your body, with the body of the bottle cradled in your arm, label side facing the host. "Present" the bottle to him or her by standing at his or her right side and restate the name of the wine including the varietal, brand, and vintage. (All beverage service occurs from the right of the guest, with your right hand, unlike food service, which is from the left with the left hand). The host will nod or gesture that the wine is what was expected. This is your cue to begin opening.

## OPENING THE BOTTLE

Keeping the label facing the host as much as possible, take out your arm or service linen and place over your minor arm, holding the bottle in that same hand. With your other hand, use the wine tool to cut away the foil from the top of the bottle. The foil should be placed in your pocket or apron, not on the table. Once cut away, use your service linen to wipe the mouth of the bottle, removing any dust and debris, and generally cleaning the mouth of the bottle before the cork is removed.

Using your wine key, remove the cork from the bottle. Remember, it is not about strength, but rather leverage that allows the cork's removal. If you have difficulty tableside, practice on by the glass poured wine bottles at the bar, the next shift you work. The bartender will surely allow you to help, offering additional practice.

Once the cork is removed, it is placed to the right of the host's place setting. He or she may choose to smell, keep, or leave the cork altogether.

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## POURING THE WINE

Begin the wine's dispersment with the host. Pour roughly one ounce into the host's glass. Step back, away from the table, and allow the host to swirl, smell, taste, and nod. If the wine is flawed, the host will stop the service and the bottle should be replaced immediately, and the steps of service repeated. If the host is pleased with the selection, he or she will indicate with a nod, gesture, or verbal announcement, indicating that you may pour for his or her guests.

Pour for each guest in turn, from the right side with the right hand, beginning with the ladies and then the men, moving clockwise around the table. The host's glass is the last to be filled, regardless of the host's gender.

When pouring white wines, please fill the glass to just above half full. For all reds, just below half. In the event that a second bottle of different varietal, brand or vintage is ordered, deliver new glasses as well.

## DECANTING THE WINE

Your restaurant or bar location should have a policy related to decanting wines. This policy will indicate which wines the proprietor wishes to decant tableside. Typically, rich or robust wines known for sediment are on this list, among a few others that are hand selected for this process. Be familiar with this policy, and use it whenever possible. If there is ever a question of whether or not to decant a wine, err on the side of the affirmative.

Decanters offer a chance for wines to "breathe" and oxygenate at a faster pace than in the bottle, thus hyper-maturing the wine and readying it for drinking. Additionally, slow and careful decanting allows wine to separate from its sediment, which, if left mixed in with the wine, will impart a very noticeable bitter, astringent flavor. Just like bottle service, formal presentation is always a must when using a decanter. Decanting a wine isn't the mere act of shifting the liquid from one vessel to another.

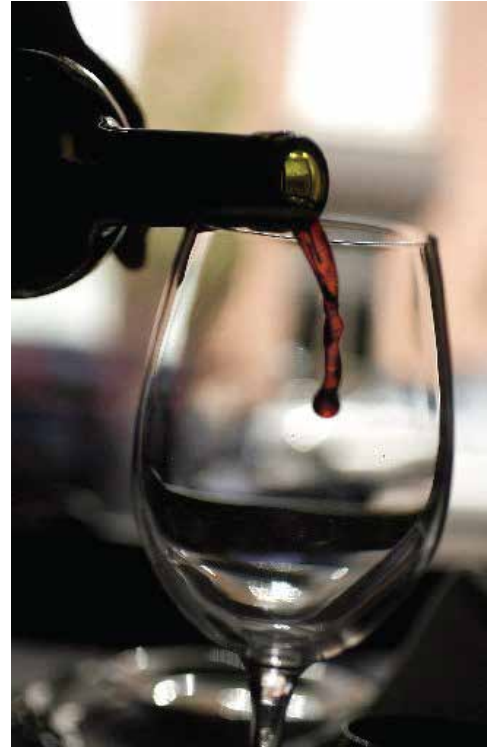
Decanting a young wine is easy. With little or no sediment, you may simply pour the wine into the decanter. Let it sit for about twenty minutes before serving, and the guest will notice a dramatic increase in subtlety and complexity of the wine. It will keep evolving and improving over the course of several hours.

Decanting older wines with sediment requires finesse. Because the wine is older, it has aged a great deal on its own, so doesn't need the artificial boost. You may even overexpose the wine to oxygen before serving, so older wines should be decanted immediately before serving.

First, gather your tools. You will need a light source, often a short candle, the bottle of wine, and a cradle or basket. Lay the bottle, label side up, in the cradle, and follow appropriate steps to open the bottle without removing it from the cradle. With long necked bottles, this is quite simple, though deceiving. As long as the bottle's mouth remains above the level of liquid, a spill won't occur. Next, after cleaning the bottle's neck with your service linen. Begin rotating the cradle slowly to pour the wine into the decanter. Position the bottle so that the light source can be seen through the neck of the bottle, and you can slow or stop pouring as sediment enters the neck.

The wine you've just decanted should be clean and relatively clear, with a beautiful bouquet and no remaining sediment.

Occasionally, you'll come across a young wine with sediment (well-made, California Zinfandels, for example, often exhibit this trait). If this happens, follow the procedures for decanting older wines, but also allow extra time for the wine to breathe and develop.



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## OPENING SPARKLING WINES

Sparkling wines follow all the bottle service instructions. However, the physicality of opening a bottle of sparkling wine or Champagne is somewhat different. Contrary to popular belief, the “POP” of the cork is not the ultimate achievement. A novice measures the skill with the sound. A veteran server or Champagne aficionado always prefers the sweet sound of air slowly escaping the bottle. Just as with a perfect swan dive, the less vulgar splash or noise achieved, the better.

First, remove the foil and discard into your pocket or apron. Loosen the wire cage. Flipping down the small wire ‘key’ that is pressed against the neck of the bottle, turn it until the cage is loosened. Remove and discard the cage. Drape your service linen over the cork. Hold the cork steady through the linen, and twist the bottom—the bottle—until the cork eases out. Keeping the bottle pointed in a safe direction (away from yourself and others), grip the wine bottle and ease the twisting until the cork “pops”. To avoid foamy overflow, pour only about an inch of wine into each flute glass first, wait a few seconds, then continue the pour.

## TEMPERATURE

Serving wines at the following temperatures will maximize bouquet and flavor, and enhance the wine experience for the guest.

Champagne, sparkling, or dessert wine	40 degrees F
Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, etc.	45-48 degrees F
Chardonnay, Chablis	48-52 degrees F
Pinot Noir	60-64 degrees F
Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz	64-66 degrees F

Though wine storage temperatures (53-57 degrees Fahrenheit) are important, it’s just as important to take note of the temperature at which you enjoy your wine, its service temperature. White wines should be chilled before drinking while red wines should be allowed to come up in temperature. Ideally, whites should be between refrigerator temperature (40 degrees F) and storage temperature, and reds should be somewhere between storage and room temperature.

Sizes of Wine Bottles-

Wines come in three main serving sizes, 750ml, 375ml (split) and 187ml (single serving).

Milliliters	Ounces	Number of Glasses
750ml	25.4	4
375ml	12.7	2
187ml	6.33	1

## GLASSWARE

Does the glass make a difference? You bet it does.

A wine glass may seem like just another drinking glass to some, but to others, it can make all the difference. The shape of the glass affects the bouquet, color of the liquid, temperature, and even effervescence. The glass also positions body parts, such as the fingers and tongue in correct spots to best enjoy the particular varietal. According to Wine Cellar Secrets, wine glass maker Riedel has more than 20 types of wine glasses to cover all possible varieties of the beverage.

Three main types of wine glasses exist. The best are roughly 8-10 inches tall and are made of thin glass. A red wine glass features a spherical shape, intended to allow a swirling motion to best aerate for the particular varietal. White wine glasses may be more narrow, but most importantly offer a shallower base. Champagne flutes are narrow and straight, serving to direct the bubbles upward in a visually appealing manner, as well as keep more carbon dioxide in the product to deter flattening.

Riedel Glassware offers the following interactive sight ([www.wineglassguide.com](http://www.wineglassguide.com)), where the most conducive glassware can be viewed by varietal selection. But overall, the following are the best glasses for the largest contingent of grapes.