



ALSA Video Handout Aging and Cellaring Wine

This handout should accompany the same titled video. Use this handout as a reference. Please photocopy and put in a binder.

Objective: To understand the reasons for cellaring and how to cellar effectively.

Cellaring Wine

The idea of cellaring wine came about when glass bottles were invented. Glass is a safe neutral vessel to store wine in. Corks and wax completed the duty of keeping wine safe. Wine will change when laid down and it was curious minds that went about cellaring and storing wine. These people would have been kings, aristocrats, monks and winery owners. Wine to cellar would have been a great luxury, not optional for the average folk.

Over the centuries a great deal has been learned about cellaring and aging wines.

What Can Be Cellared?

There are specific wines that are made to cellar well. The wines must have high alcohol, acidity and tannins, which are preservatives in wine. The wine must have enough fruit flavour to stand up to the strong effect of the other components. The winemaker creates a PH level to help the aging process. Some wines advise the aging potential on the back label. You can look up information on the wines web site, Wine Spectator or Wine Access magazine. The other decent clue has to be pricing. Economical, price conscious wines are to be consumed right away or within a year or two maximum. Our mid priced wines are made with more dedication and can last up to five years. These prices would fall in the \$30.00 to \$50.00 range.

White wines are risky to cellar unless you know the wine has success in the cellar. Sauvignon Blanc is too acidic to age and Viogner is not acidic enough! Well made, expensive German Riesling can be cellared. When aged, there is an odd petrol smell, but the taste is all honey and apples.

Red wines can stand the test of time better than white wines. The best wines to age are ones made with Cabernet Sauvignon. Famous wines from Bordeaux, France are made with a large percentage of this grape that has high tannins.

Pinot Noir from Burgundy France has great aging potential, but beware this from other producers in the world. Pinot Noir is a tough grape to age and should be consumed within two to five years from purchase in most cases.

The vintage can have some influence in how the wine will age, but I have a large note on this subject. It is the pride of a winemaker to produce a good wine regardless of the vintage. If the weather was not good and the grapes struggled, the winemaker will cut production and only use grapes that make the grade. Good wine estates will not put out mediocre wine. It is not good for their reputation or business.

Cellaring Conditions

There are four factors that create a working cellar. Heat must be set at between 16 C and 18C. Humidity should be at 60% to 70%. Light should be low to darkness. There should be no vibration, so under the stairs is not a good idea! Serious cellars will be on lock down from humans. We change the atmosphere therefore disturbing the environment needed for bottles to last years.

What to Expect

Cellaring can be a gamble with winners and losers. Be prepared to be thrilled and disappointed. Corks can be bad and wines may disappoint. Try buying six bottles and start opening one at a time starting at year three. Do not hoard wine! It is meant

to enjoy and drink, not become a museum piece. Aged wines mellow and change flavour. Experiencing an aged wine is fun and rewarding.

Some Worthy Wines to Cellar

If your store is keen to have a section of wines for cellaring and aging there are a few to consider.

White wines to Cellar

White Burgundy. Chablis Premier Cru or Grand Cru are better after five to eight years.

German Riesling. As mentioned previously, this wine ages well and changes quite a bit from its original style.

Loire, France, Chenin Blanc. The high acidity creates good aging potential. The wine calms and gets a funny wet wool smell.

Red Wines to Cellar

Italian Barolo - The wine of kings and the king of wines needs to lay down for three to five years. The grape used is Nebbiolo. More Barolos are made to drink closer to their release date, but a few years in the cellar would be a smart idea.

Bordeaux, France - Famous wines include Chateau Mouton Rothschild, Chateau Lafite, Chateau Margaux and Haut Brion to mention just a few. These are top priced wines but there are many other wines with cellaring potential. Here is where research is important.

Vintage Port - This fortified wine can age seemingly forever. Instead of giving a bottle of wine to a couple on their wedding date, choose Vintage Port. It will last for ten, twenty to thirty years or more!

Australian Red - Grange is the most famous wine with aging capabilities reaching decades. Look around for expensive Shiraz or Cabernet Sauvignon. Give these seven to eight years.

In the store you will want to rotate your wines if some are standing up so they are all getting a chance to lie down and have moisture on the cork. Keep these bottles out of light and temperature swings. This is somewhat difficult to do in a store environment, so if you are considering an aging and cellaring section, you should create the correct environment.

Review Quiz

1. What four components does wine need to age well.
2. What is a common white wine sold in stores that cannot age?
3. What red grape is good for making wines to age and cellar?
4. What factors do you need to create good cellaring conditions?
5. Do all wines that age and cellar end up tasting good?
6. What is a factor for wine not aging well?
7. Name a white wine that can age.
8. Name a red wine that can age.
9. Find wines in the store that can age and make a note of them.
10. What would you say to a customer looking for a wine to cellar and age? Come up with a small speech that will explain aging and cellaring.