



Washington State Liquor Control Board

Red Wine



5 Things You Need To Know

Basics

Red wine is a category that includes grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and names such as Bordeaux, Chianti and Burgundy – named after the regions where the wine is produced. It can be confusing matching domestic grape variety names with their European counterparts – confusing but not impossible. Red wine is not only made in the U.S. and Europe, but Australia and South America as well as other regions around the world. For this training component, the focus will mainly be on domestic reds, mostly from Washington and California where a majority of wine produced in the United States is made.

What does it taste like?

Red wine for the most part (unless it is port) is considered dry wine. Dry wine simply means there is little or no residual sugar left after fermenting the grapes and the wine's taste is not considered even slightly sweet. However, a customer may be looking for a red that while considered dry still shows some fruity quality. It may seem confusing but with some practice and tasting, should you be so inclined, will become more easily understood.

What does it go with? The tradition of red wine with heavy dishes, beef, stews or strong cheeses is relevant still. Red wines do go well with a hearty steak or tomato based sauces, but the consumer today may choose to have white wine with fish or red wine with seafood. The choices are limitless but a few rules of thumb are good to know.

1. Red wine (Cabernet, Syrah, Merlot) with heartier foods (beef, lamb and red fish such as salmon) is always a safe choice.
2. Red wine is also wonderful with rich cheeses such as bleu or sharp cheddar.
3. Red wine is heavy and often higher in alcohol than some whites. They are often referred to as "big".

Red Wine in WSLCB Stores: By the numbers

- Red wines available in the 750 ml size number nearly 200 (depending on the size of the store). By far the biggest sub categories are Washington and California Cabernet Sauvignons and Merlots, with nearly 94 offerings between them.
- Red wines in most state stores are merchandised by region, variety and price. The more expensive selections are near the top of the shelf and the economy brands at or near the bottom.

Category Leaders

In Washington the leaders in Red Wines by major sub category are:

Cabernet Sauvignon

California

1. BV Coastal
2. Robert Mondavi Private Selection
3. Pepperwood Grove

Washington

1. Hogue Genesis
2. Columbia Crest Two Vines
3. Red Diamond
4. Chateau Ste Michelle

Merlot

1. Columbia Crest Grand Estate –WA
2. Red Diamond –WA
3. Columbia Crest Two Vines –WA

Syrah – a category that is dominated by Australia

1. Yellow Tail Shiraz –Australia
2. Jacobs Creek Shiraz –Australia
3. Columbia Crest Two Vines –WA
4. Chateau Ste Michelle –WA

Price ranges for red wines average from \$6 to over \$40 with many below \$20.

What the future holds

Red wine sales continue to grow in Washington State. Considering that there are now over 500 wineries in the state, the trend should remain for the foreseeable future. The ever-increasing knowledge of Washington as a major wine-producing region will ensure more availability of quality and affordable wines for the consumer. Health conscious individuals continue to seek out red wine for its benefits while the collectors and savvy wine drinkers shop for best buys and wines that attain high ratings by Wine Spectator and other wine periodicals.