SOMMEASIER’S
GUIDE TO
WINE

ASDA
DID YOU KNOW THAT OVER A THIRD OF THE UK BUY THE SAME BOTTLE OF WINE EVERY TIME THEY VISIT THE SUPERMARKET, EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE HUNDREDS TO CHOOSE FROM?

Research conducted on 1,500 UK respondents by Asda in July 2017
We get it, it can be confusing – with so many colours, grapes and countries, selecting a bottle can be a daunting process...and that’s before we’ve tackled the fancy lingo!

At Asda, we want to simplify the process and ensure you’re clued up, whether your tipple is white, red, rosé or sparkling. With this simple guide we promise you’ll become more confident about wine in no time and will be itching to try something new.

I’m Ed Betts, Asda’s Wine Buying Manager and also the world’s first ‘Sommeasier’. Whilst posh restaurants have wine specialists called Sommeliers, who compile their wine lists and advise diners, we at Asda have a Sommeasier – making it easier for you to understand the quality products available in our stores and lessen the confusion around wine.

We’ve created this guide to help remove the mystery around wine and arm you with the information you need to select a bottle, whatever the occasion. Learn how to read a wine label like a pro and what a wine means when they comment on the crispness of a white. Our Jargon Buster will ensure your knowledge, like a fine connoisseur, improves with age!

Follow these basic principles and you won’t lose your bottle in the wine aisle. (Sorry).
GETTING COLOURFUL WITH WINE

First up, what is wine? The dictionary defines wine as fermented grape juice...not the most appealing description! Fermentation happens when yeast is added to the juice of crushed grapes, which then converts the natural grape sugars into alcohol. But that’s only part of the story.

Now let’s get back to basics – what’s the difference in colours? If you’re one of the 17% of Brits who think red, white and rosé are types of grapes, you’re mistaken – in fact the colours come about in the following ways...
RED WINE
Made from red grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir. The colour comes from the grape skins, and the longer the skins are kept in contact with the juice from the grapes, the deeper the colour of the wine. This also depends on the thickness of the skins being used, so the thinner the skin, the lighter the shade.

WHITE WINE
Generally made from white grape varieties such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling. The grape juice is already pale so unlike red wine, it doesn’t need to be in contact with the grape skins.
ROSÉ WINE

No, this is not a mix of red and white wine! Rosé is made by crushing red grapes and limiting the amount of time the grape skins are in contact with the juice from the grapes to give the wine a softer rosé colour.

SPARKLING WINE

These wines can be made from nearly any grape type, and contain carbon dioxide bubbles to give them that fizziness. Champagne is also a type of sparkling wine.
The world of wine is vast but most UK drinkers only know and buy a couple of wine varieties, even though there’s a whole host of delicious and interesting wines out there. This confusion leads to many buying the same bottle time and time again, so to help you broaden your wine horizons, we’ve put together this handy list of our most popular wines to help you understand the different varieties on offer and embrace trying new ones.
**CABERNET SAUVIGNON**

One of the most recognised red wine grape varieties which is grown in nearly every wine producing country. Classically, Cabernet Sauvignon tends to have a heavier feel in the mouth and is dryer and more sour in taste.

*If you like Cabernet Sauvignon, try Asda’s Extra Special Douro, £5.78 – its aromas are dominated by ripe fruits, blackberries and prunes.*

**CHAMPAGNE**

The world’s first sparkling wines were produced here. Only sparkling wines originating from the Champagne region of France can be called Champagne. If it’s from any other country or region, it’s not a Champagne! Made predominately from a mix of three grape varieties – Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay – the bubbles are produced whilst yeast is reacting to the sugars in the grape juice in the bottle.

*If you like Champagne, try Asda’s Extra Special Champagne Brut, £16 – a refreshing Champagne balancing creamy vanilla flavours with a smooth fruitiness. Goes perfectly with smoked salmon and light chicken dishes.*

**CAVA**

A sparkling wine from Spain, it used to be referred to as Spanish Champagne! Like all sparkling wines Cava starts life as still white wine, but what makes it different is that Cava uses a traditional method of bottle fermentation, which is when the grape juice is turned into alcohol, in a similar way to Champagne.

*If you like Cava, try Asda’s Extra Special Cava Reserva Brut, £7.98 – made from grapes grown in a particularly good year, it has a rich style that partners well with summer salads and fish dishes.*
Malbec
A purple grape variety used in making red wine. Malbec creates a rather inky red colour, and as a result it is commonly used in blends such as with Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

If you like Malbec, try Bullseye Syrah Grenache, £8.98 – a blend of Grenache and Shiraz from Australia, with aromas of violets, red fruits and spice to balance its richer black fruit flavours. Enjoy with rib-eye on the bone.

Chardonnay
Originally grown in the Burgundy region of France, Chardonnay is a green-skinned grape variety used to produce white wine, and is one of the most widely-planted in the world. Its vanilla and butter-like flavours were hugely popular in the late 1980s but in more recent times it has moved to a more elegant style.

If you like Chardonnay, try Etoile De Nuit Viognier, £6.48 – produced in the south of France, where the Mediterranean influence helps give generous fruit flavours.

Merlot
The name Merlot is thought to come from the French name for the blackbird, probably a reference to the colour of the grape that makes red wine. The traditional style involves harvesting it earlier to produce wines which have fresh, red fruit flavours of plums and dark cherries.

If you like Merlot, try Asda’s Extra Special Valpolicella Ripasso, £8.98 – with aromas of black cherry, it has a long and spicy finish.
**PINOT GRIGIO**
A white wine grape variety that varies in colour from a deep golden yellow to copper. Pinot Grigio has ripe tropical fruit flavours of melon and mango and is the second biggest white grape variety, after Sauvignon Blanc.

*If you like Pinot Grigio, try Asda’s Extra Special Gavi, £6.78 – with flavours of juicy pears, it has a crispy, mouth-watery feel.*

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**PINOT NOIR**
Another red wine grape variety whose name derives from the French words for pine and black. Its thin skins lend the grape to producing mostly lightly coloured wines. When young, Pinot Noir tends to have red fruit aromas of cherries, raspberries and strawberries, but as the wine ages, it has the potential to develop more complex barnyard aromas.

*If you like Pinot Noir, try Asda’s Extra Special Fleurie, £8.28 – a floral wine with hints of raspberry, best served with cooked ham in parsley dressing, beef parcels and strawberry profiteroles.*

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**PROSECCO**
Named after the Italian village of Prosecco where it was produced, this is a sparkling wine made from predominately Glera grapes. It is cheaper to make than Champagne as the bubbles are produced in big stainless-steel tanks rather than in the bottle and the process takes just a couple of months as opposed to years with Champagne.

*If you like Prosecco, try Asda’s Extra Special Prosecco, £8.98 – a fresh and gently fruity fizz with citrus and green apple aromas.*
SAUVIGNON BLANC
A green-skinned grape variety that originates from the Bordeaux region of France. Sauvignon Blanc is planted in many of the world’s wine regions, producing a crisp, dry, and refreshing white wine.

If you like Sauvignon Blanc, try Asda’s Wine Atlas Sauvignon Gris, £5.28 – a fresh white wine with wonderful aromas and flavours of ripe stone fruits.

RIOJA
This was the very first Spanish region to be given quality status and is famous for its red wines. Rioja follows strict quality rules and there are several levels depending on how long it needs to age after production.

If you like Rioja, try Asda’s Wine Atlas Negroamaro, £5.48 – a rich red wine from Italy laden with dark berry and chocolate flavours.
Ever wondered where some of your favourite wines come from? We’ve put together a short summary to help improve your geographical knowledge.
BEAUJOLAIS

Just south of Burgundy in France, the region of Beaujolais produces mainly red wines such as Fleurie, Brouilly and Moulin-a-Vent. The wines are lovely and fruity with lots of strawberry flavours, ideal with lamb.

BURGUNDY

This is an area of France where they produce stunning wines from names such as Gigondas, which pairs well with seafood, and Nuits St Georges, which is the perfect accompaniment to roasted and grilled red meats. Famous Chardonnay to Pinot Noir. Not to mention Chablis, which is delicious with a range of cheeses!

BORDEAUX

A top class area of France which produces some of the most expensive wines. The most common grapes that go into Bordeaux wines are a mix of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot for the reds, and Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon for the whites. The region also produces sweet dessert wines, which are made by leaving the grapes on the vine to shrivel up into raisins. The shrivelled grapes become full of sugar, making the wine rich and sticky, perfect with desserts.

CHIANTI

Produced in the Italian region of Tuscany, Chianti is a very old and well established area creating red wines. In the 1970s, the wine came in a rounded bottle with the base covered in a straw basket, and today it is still well regarded (even without the straw basket!). Try it with tomato-based pasta dishes, or light meats like chicken, pork or fish.

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There’s a perception that the world of wine can be rather snobby and 41% find the terminology used to describe wines confusing. This glossary of jargon-busting terms will help you learn your aromas from your tannins and increase your knowledge of words that, if we’re being completely honest, can sometimes sound better suited to describing building materials than our favourite tipple.
ACIDITY
Tasting acidity in wine is like tasting the sourness. If you suck on a lemon, your mouth starts to water, therefore the higher the acidity in a wine the more your mouth waters. Simple!

AROMA
This is all of the smells that you get from the wine. It might seem a bit showy but the best way to release all the aromas is to pour a small amount into a glass and swish it around before taking a deep breath.

BLEND
A blend is a wine made up of a few different types of grape. Champagne and Chateauneuf du Pape are famous types of blended wines.

BODY
This is how the wine feels in the mouth and is usually described as light, medium or full-bodied. You could compare it to skimmed, full fat and double cream milk, which have a different weight and texture.

BRIGHT
Often linked to the clearness of a wine, you would describe it as being ‘clear and bright’.

CLEAR
If you can see through the glass and through the wine, then the wine is said to be clear. This is more often a reference to white wines, but is also a description for reds.

CORKED
No, this doesn’t mean that the wine bottle has pieces of cork floating around in it! A corked wine is a fault that can taint some wines with a cardboardy, musty smell and taste. It occurs when natural fungi in the cork comes into contact with certain winery sterilisation products. Don’t worry, it’s not harmful but does spoil the taste.

CRISP
Wines that are crisp are usually high in acidity.
DENSE
Dense wines are highly concentrated in flavour and aromas – a real positive!

DRY
A wine that has little sweetness to it is said to be dry.

ELEGANT
Used to describe wines that are not full of flavour or fruity by nature. Elegant wines tend to age better so it’s best to wait before popping that cork.

FERMENTATION
This is the process of turning grape juice into an alcoholic drink. Generally, yeast is added to the juice to transform sugars already found in the grapes into ethanol (alcohol) and carbon dioxide. This process often takes between 1-2 weeks.

FLORAL BOUQUET
Often used to describe white wines, floral scents such as jasmine, honeysuckle and geranium are usually detected in the aroma rather than the actual taste.

FRUITY
A wine is often described as being fruity and having different flavours, such as of peaches or grapefruit. This doesn’t necessarily mean that those fruits were used to produce it, just that it smells or tastes of those particular fruits.

LENGTH
This shows the difference between a good wine and a really good wine. If a wine’s flavour disappears almost immediately it is considered short on the palate, whilst a really good wine will leave a lasting taste. This is what’s known as length.

NEW WORLD
Wines from countries or regions where winemaking was imported during and after the age of exploration, such as Australia. New World wines are often described as tasting riper and fruitier, having higher alcohol and less acidity.
OAKED
When some wines are produced they are kept in stainless steel tanks to ferment and turn the grape juice into alcohol, but some are put into oak barrels and as a result, some of the oak flavour is transferred to the wine.

OLD WORLD
Wines from countries or regions where winemaking first originated, traditionally in Europe. Old World wines were generally developed to complement local cuisine and as a result, match with food better.

SOFT
We often describe a wine as soft when it is very smooth in the mouth and doesn’t tend to coat the teeth and tongue.

TANNINS
Tannins are found in all wines, whether red or white, and are what makes a wine taste dry. The more tannin in a wine the dryer it is and it tends to coat the mouth. You can get the same sensation from drinking tea without milk.

VARIETAL
A varietal is a wine made from a single grape. Examples of grape varieties would be Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir, amongst others.

VELVETY
This is often used to describe wines that are silky and smooth in texture.

VINTAGE
Refers to a particular year the grapes of a wine are grown in and picked.

YOUNG
A wine can be described as young when it is not quite ready to drink yet or when it has a current vintage on the label, such as 2016.
DECODING THE WINE LABEL

Not only can the terms used to describe wines be intimidating, but also wine labels can bamboozle the best of us, so we’ve put together an easy guide of what to look out for on supermarket shelves.

There are five basic parts to a wine label; the name, the region, the grape variety, the vintage and alcohol content.

The name of a wine is pretty obvious, whilst the region indicates from where the grapes are sourced. The grape variety refers to the grapes used in making the wine, although not all wine labels will state this, whilst the vintage is the year that the grapes were harvested. Finally, alcohol content (also known as ABV) reflects the strength of a wine. Generally, higher alcohol wines tend to be made from riper grapes and have more fruity flavours.
TOP TIPS TO BECOME A WINE PRO

The best way to refine your palate is to try lots of different wines. Follow these five steps and you’ll be well on your way to developing your wine skills.
TASTING THE WINE
We could write a whole guide alone just on this subject, but to keep it simple just remember to swill, sniff and then sip. 50% of taste comes from the smell (strange, I know!), so by swirling the wine before you taste it, you release some of its aromas. Then leave the wine in your mouth for 8-10 seconds when you sip it so you can really absorb the flavours.

TEMPERATURE
Contrary to popular belief, reds can be put in the fridge. If you pop it in 20 mins before serving it encourages the fruit flavours to come through. Whites however, should always be kept in the fridge and taken out 20 mins before serving. For fizz, keep it chilled ‘til you pop that cork.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GLASS
Thin and tapered glasses keep your white wine chilled for longer, whilst large and round glasses allow the flavour and aroma of your red to shine through. For Champagne and sparkling wines, select a tall flute to keep the bubbles from disappearing too quickly.

DECANTING
Otherwise known as pouring wine from the bottle into another container before serving. This helps to separate the wine from the sediment, which is the little dark specs you sometimes get in a red wine. If you’re serving red, look out for these at the bottom of the bottle and if they’re there, decant one hour before serving.

POURING
To encourage the release of a wine’s delicious aroma, never fill higher than the widest part of the glass, no matter what colour. Finish with a little twist of the wrist to avoid stray drops!
SO NOW YOU SHOULD KNOW YOUR RIOJAS FROM YOUR ROSES!

You can dazzle your friends at dinner parties, choose the perfect red in a restaurant or whip out the crispest white at the summer BBQ! With your newly-found knowledge the world of wine is indeed your oyster.

At Asda our selection includes over 600 carefully selected, quality wines from all over the world, ensuring there’s something for every taste and occasion.

Cheers!

Ed Betts, Asda Wine Buying Manager & Sommeasier