

@ THE WINERY

CELLARING WINE

A recent article by *The Big Red Wine Book's* Campbell Mattinson, a well-known wine writer, described his experiences with cellaring wine.

"Fifteen years ago, I started cellaring wine and, ever since, I've been methodically throwing money down the drain. Recently I took out a dozen bottles from my cellar, to find only four had been worth the effort. Of the rest, half were disappointing and half were corked (or oxidised) and undrinkable. That's a rather terrible strike rate.

This isn't unusual. I regularly open a carefully cellared bottle only to discover the wine tastes good, but not as good as it did when I bought it. When you cellar a wine, its flavours usually become softer and more diverse. But if those extra flavours don't excite you - or never develop properly - then all you're left with is a lesser wine.

A well cellared drop can be magical. But if a wine tastes great straight up, don't risk it".

So, where does that leave you? There are some clear lessons in Campbell's experience, and here are some basic guidelines:

Red Wines

Top quality, robust red's can be very worthwhile cellaring for a few years. Things like Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz are good, however don't bother with blends (which have been made that way to

taste at their best right now) or lighter varieties (Pinot Noir, Tempranillo etc).

But how do you know which particular wine will benefit from aging?

- The key is 'top quality'. A mediocre wine will never improve with age. On the other hand, if a wine is big flavoured but quite tannic, imagine what it may be like after settling down for 3 years or so.

- Another indicator is price - if it's a really expensive red, but only one or two years old, then it potentially will be even better after another few years.

- The best way is to read the label. Any wine with cellaring potential should say that on the back label. For example, 'Enjoy now or cellar for up to 5 years'. If there is nothing on the label, then generally forget about cellaring (unless it's a renowned wine, in which case the winemaker just assumes that buyers will already know!).

White Wines

The general rule is that white wines are best enjoyed young. (Ditto for rosé and sparkling wines). There are several exceptions - varieties that are well known for improving with age - such as some Semillon's, Marsanne and Viognier.

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