

Serving Wine

Temperature · Glassware · Decanting · How long it lasts · Service order · kazmicellars.com

How you serve wine is as important as what you pour. The right temperature unlocks aromas locked away by cold or masked by heat. The right glass shapes how aromas reach your nose. Decanting can transform a tight young wine or gently breathe life into an aged bottle. These are not rules — they're tools. Use them to get more out of every glass.

SERVING TEMPERATURE

The single most overlooked factor in wine enjoyment. Too cold = aromas are suppressed and tannins feel harsh. Too warm = alcohol dominates and wine feels flabby. Most people serve red too warm and white too cold.

Style	°C	°F	Examples	Notes
Sparkling / Champagne	6–10°	42–50°	Champagne, Crémant, Cava, Prosecco	Coldest of all — cold preserves bubbles and freshness. Never serve below 6°C or above 10°C.
Dessert & Sweet White	8–10°	46–50°	Sauternes, Tokaji, late harvest Riesling	Cold accentuates sweetness balance. Too warm = cloying.
Dry White (crisp)	8–10°	46–50°	Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio, Riesling, Chablis, Albariño	The range for all fresh, high-acid whites. At this temperature, floral and citrus aromatics open without losing freshness.
Dry White (full)	10–13°	50–55°	Oaked Chardonnay, Viognier, White Burgundy, Alsace	Richer whites need a few more degrees to express their oak, butter, and stone fruit aromas. Still cool but not cold.
Rosé	8–12°	46–54°	Provence rosé, Bandol rosé, Tavel	Treat like a crisp white. Ice bucket for 20 minutes. Take out before it goes too cold.
Light Red	12–14°	54–57°	Beaujolais, Pinot Noir, lighter Grenache, Barbera	These reds actively benefit from being served slightly cool. Try putting Beaujolais in the fridge for 20 minutes.
Medium Red	15–17°	59–63°	Merlot, Sangiovese, Tempranillo, Cab Franc	The classic 'room temperature' zone — but only in a cool European room, not a warm modern house.
Full Red	17–19°	63–66°	Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Nebbiolo, Malbec	Never above 20°C. Warm tannins become harsh and alcohol dominates. If your cellar is 18°C it's perfect.
Fortified (fresh)	12–16°	54–61°	Ruby Port, young Tawny	Slightly cool to preserve fruit freshness.
Fortified (aged)	14–18°	57–64°	20-yr Tawny, Vintage Port, Madeira	Warmer allows the nutty, oxidative complexity to open up fully.

■ The 20-minute rule: If in doubt, put red in the fridge for 20 minutes before serving. Take whites out of the fridge 10 minutes before. Most wine is served too warm in the real world.

GLASSWARE — DOES SHAPE REALLY MATTER?

Yes — and the science is real, not just marketing. Glass shape determines how aromas are concentrated and directed toward your nose. A wider bowl allows more surface area for volatile aromas to evaporate. A tapered rim focuses those aromas upward. The right glass can make a modest wine taste significantly better.

Burgundy / Pinot Noir Glass	Wide, balloon-like bowl with an inward-tapering rim. The wide bowl allows Pinot Noir's delicate, volatile aromatics (red cherry, rose, forest floor) to collect and be directed toward the nose. Also excellent for aged Barolo and white Burgundy.	■ <i>Do not fill more than 1/3 full — the space above the wine is where the aromatics gather.</i>
Bordeaux / Cabernet Glass	Tall, large bowl, slightly narrower than Burgundy. The extra height directs wine to the back of the palate, softening Cabernet's tannin perception. Works for all full-bodied reds.	■ <i>The most common 'universal red' glass. If you own one red glass, this is it.</i>
Standard White Wine Glass	Medium bowl, smaller than a red glass, tapered rim. Smaller bowl keeps whites cooler longer. Works for Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, most everyday whites.	■ <i>For great white Burgundy or Alsace, use a Burgundy glass instead — the aromatics reward the extra space.</i>
Riesling / Aromatic White Glass	Smaller, slender bowl with a tapered top that directs wine to the tip of the tongue, enhancing sweetness perception and balancing Riesling's high acidity. Also good for Grüner Veltliner and Gewurztraminer.	■ <i>The smaller bowl also helps keep these wines cool, which is essential for their freshness.</i>
Champagne Flute	Tall, narrow, preserves carbonation and encourages bubble formation. The narrow shape concentrates the mousse and keeps the wine cold longer.	■ <i>For serious vintage Champagne or prestige cuvées, many sommeliers prefer a white wine glass — the wider bowl reveals more aroma complexity at the expense of some effervescence.</i>
Champagne Coupe	The classic shallow saucer shape — romantic but functionally poor. Aromas disperse immediately, bubbles dissipate quickly. Beautiful for aesthetics, cocktails, and Champagne towers.	■ <i>Not recommended for serious Champagne appreciation — use a flute or white wine glass instead.</i>
Dessert Wine Glass	Smaller glass — you're drinking less of it, and the concentration of a Sauternes or Tokaji means you don't need large pours. Smaller size also helps maintain serving temperature.	■ <i>A standard white wine glass works fine if you don't have dessert wine glasses.</i>
Port / Fortified Glass	Small, tulip-shaped — the small bowl concentrates the intense aromas of Port, Sherry, and Madeira. The smaller pour (2–3oz) is appropriate given the higher alcohol.	■ <i>A small white wine glass is a perfectly acceptable substitute.</i>

DECANTING — WHEN, WHY, AND HOW LONG

Wine Type	Time	Method & Notes
Young, Tannic Reds (Cab Sauv, Barolo, Syrah)	60–120 min	Air softens tannins and opens up tight, closed aromas. Pour aggressively — splash the wine into the decanter to maximize air contact. Taste before and after 45 minutes to observe the transformation.
Mature Fine Reds (Aged Bordeaux, Burgundy 15+ yr)	30–60 min	Decant gently to remove sediment — stand the bottle upright for 24 hours first. Pour slowly with a light source behind the bottle neck. Stop when sediment reaches the neck. Don't over-aerate an old wine — it can fade quickly once exposed to air.

White Wines	15–30 min	Controversial — most whites don't need decanting. But oaked Chardonnay, Viognier, and rich Alsace whites can benefit from 15–30 minutes. Try it with a serious white Burgundy.
Champagne & Sparkling	Never	Don't decant sparkling wine — you'll lose the bubbles. Serve straight from the bottle.
Vintage Port (20+ yr)	2–3 hours	Old Vintage Port has significant sediment and benefits from extended decanting. Stand bottle upright for 48 hours before opening. Decant carefully.
Light Reds (Beaujolais, young Pinot Noir)	15–30 min	Optional. Light reds can benefit from a short decant but over-aeration will strip their delicate aromatics.

HOW LONG DOES AN OPEN BOTTLE LAST?

Sparkling / Champagne:	1–3 days (with a sparkling wine stopper) — CO2 escapes quickly. A proper stopper preserves most bubbles for 1–3 days. Without a stopper: a few hours.
Light whites & dry rosé:	2–3 days (refrigerated, re-corked) — Most vulnerable to oxidation. Drink within 2 days for best quality. Vacuum pumps help marginally.
Full-bodied whites (oaked):	3–5 days (refrigerated) — The oak and higher alcohol provide some protection. Still best within 3 days.
Light reds (Pinot Noir, Beaujolais):	2–3 days (cool, re-corked) — Delicate — fade quickly. Don't leave at room temperature. Refrigerate and bring back to serving temp.
Full-bodied reds:	3–5 days — Tannins and higher alcohol protect the wine. Some (young Barolo) actually improve on day 2–3 as they breathe.
Dessert wines:	1–2 weeks (refrigerated) — High sugar preserves the wine. Sauternes and Tokaji can keep remarkably well.
Fortified (Sherry, Port, Madeira):	1–4 weeks (refrigerated, re-stoppered) — Higher alcohol = excellent shelf life. Vintage Port: 3–5 days once opened. Tawny/Sherry: weeks.

■ *The vacuum pump debate: They work, but not as well as claimed. The best preservation is finishing the bottle. The second best is inert gas (Private Preserve) — replaces oxygen with argon.*

SERVICE ORDER & POUR SIZES

Sparkling before still	Start with Champagne or sparkling — it's an aperitif, sets the palate, and builds anticipation.
White before red	Generally — whites are lighter and don't overpower what follows. Exceptions: a simple red before a grand white.
Lighter before heavier	Within reds: Pinot Noir before Cabernet Sauvignon. Within whites: Sauvignon Blanc before oaked Chardonnay.
Dry before sweet	Sweet wines coat the palate and make dry wines taste harsh if the order is reversed. Dessert wine always last.
Young before old	Generally — older wines are more complex and shouldn't be eclipsed by a younger, fruitier wine.
Standard pour	5oz / 150ml — this is what restaurants pour and what a standard bottle (750ml) serves 5 people.

Tasting pour	1.5–2oz / 45–60ml — used when comparing multiple wines side by side.
Dessert wine pour	2–3oz / 60–90ml — small because they're rich and high in sugar. A little goes a long way.
Port / Fortified	2oz / 60ml — higher alcohol means smaller pours. Traditionally served after dinner.