

Wine tastings - helpful notes from Phil Handford

Tastings involve many more wines than you will have time or capacity to taste. To get the best value out of a tasting it is best to arrive with a plan of what you want to taste and try and keep with the plan.

Some tips

- It is a tasting not a drinking session. You will learn more at a tasting than a drinking session.
- Tasting the first 20 wines is very different from the second 20 wines. Taste the wines you really want to taste early not later. Better to come back and re-taste a wine later you really liked than keeping tasting new wines for the sake of it.
- 50 ml is a good tasting volume. Learn what 50 ml looks and feels like. Measure it into a wine class at home. See what 50 ml feels like in your mouth and feel what it is like to spit it out. Try spitting it out.
- Spitting. If you are going to make any sense of a tasting over a couple of hours, you need to spit wine out and not swallow it. 15 glasses at 50 ml each is a bottle of wine! If a winery pours you more than 50 ml, tip it out once you have tasted it. They shouldn't have poured too much and are not offended when wine is tipped out.
- HAVE FUN and a smile, wine is not all serious.

Plan a tasting

- Research which wineries and wines will be at the tasting.
- Each event will have its own theme so build a plan around the theme.
- If you plan to taste all the white wine, then all the red wines, you will miss the wines you really wanted to taste.
- Keeping with a plan is difficult in a group so make sure you prioritise wines to taste.
- Here are some examples based on events we are involved in:
 - **Fine Wines of NZ Tastings** – up to 80 wines. NZ wines only and all varieties. You could focus on:
 - Wineries you have never tasted before
 - Just one variety – eg taste all pinot noir or all chardonnay
 - Just one region eg Central Otago
 - Comparing two regions.
 - Make a list before the tasting
 - **Pinot Palooza**. All pinot noir from New Zealand and Australia. 100+ pinots. You could focus on:
 - Pinot from specific regions
 - Wineries you have not tasted before
 - Vintage year
 - **Negociants Australia and Samuel Smith & Son Portfolio tasting**. Over 600 wines, so a good plan is needed for the 2 hours. Focus on:
 - Specific wineries
 - Specific regions of the world
 - Specific varieties or styles