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Know the wine by the bottle.



An excellent use for glass.

History

According to archaeologists, the Sumerians began drinking wine around 6000 B.C, around the Caspian Sea, made from grapes and dates. Wine was originally stored in large pottery containers known as amphorae that had spouts sealed with leather, cork or clay. The pottery jugs were marked to indicate the year, maker and source of the vineyard.

The Romans were the first to store wine in barrels, which they used for exporting the drink, and in glass bottles, which changed the way wine was stored and the length of time it could be aged. Though glass was first developed around 3000 BC, the Romans were the first to blow the substance into bottles, around 100 BC. By placing a lump of molten glass at the end of a long, hollow pole, they could blow air through the tube and create a bubble that could be shaped with tools. The technique used less glass and was a quick way to make bottles.

Because there was little uniformity in the size and shape of the bottles, people purchasing wine often didn't know how much they were getting. At one point in the Roman empire, people would bring their own bottles in and just pay for the amount measured and poured into their bottles.

As the Romans advanced their technologies, they eventually discovered that the easy-to-blow onion-shape bottles they typically created weren't ideal for storing wine on its side, which helped it age and wet the cork. Thus, they began making longer, flatter bottles that were easier to carry and contained a standard amount – between .70 and .80 liters. This also helped standardize the amount of wine people purchased, though it wasn't until the 1800s that glass blowers exacted this technique. In the late 20th century both the United States and the European Union set requirements that all bottles hold exactly .75 liters (750ml).

Sizes

There are almost two dozen sizes of wine bottles, many of which are named after kings from as far back as biblical times. Some of them include:

The Piccolo, which means "small" in Italian, and holds .1875 liters

The Demi, which means "half" in French, and holds .375 liters

The Fifth, which comes from "one-fifth" of the U.S. gallon, and holds .757 liters

The Magnum, which contains 1.5 liters.

The Marie Jeanne, which holds 2.25 liters.

The Jeroboam was named after the biblical first king of the Northern kingdom. It holds between 3 and 4.5 liters (the equivalent of 4 to 6 bottles).

The Salmanazar was named after a biblical king and holds about 9 liters.

The Solomon, named after the biblical king of Israel, holds about 20 liters.

Types and Shapes

Wines come in various shapes that wine connoisseurs use to identify the types of wine inside. The shape also relates to the wine's properties. Here are a few examples:

Burgundy often hold pinot noir, chardonnay and Chablis varieties of wine. The Burgundy bottle is characterized by shoulders that slope into the body of the bottle. The span of the neck and shoulders of the Burgundy often equal the length of the body. The bottles are typically green, sturdier than other bottles, and they have a wider girth, sloped shoulders and a smaller punt (the deep indentation on the underside of the bottle).

Rhones are similar bottles and are slighter thinner. It is also referred to as the Hock shape, which comes from the village of Hockheim in Germany. The Rhine bottle is also the same shape and type as the Alsace or Mosel bottle. Some have a coat of arms on the neck.

Alsace, Rhine and Mosel bottles are narrower, taller, no noticeable shoulder and have almost no punt. They contain gewürztraminer, Riesling, and Muller-thurgau wines and are often brown or dark green.

Champagne bottles have thick walls, a wide girth and a deep punt because the pressure inside the bottle is more significant than with other wine bottles. The pressure of champagne or sparkling wine can exceed 90 pounds per square inch (psi).

Bordeaux bottles generally have straight sides and tall shoulders and can be clear for white wines or dark green for reds. Bordeaux is the most common type of wine bottle and is primarily used for merlot, cabernet sauvignon, Malbec, Bordeaux, meritage, sauvignon blanc and semillon wines. The shape of the Bordeaux, also referred to as the Claret style, and is classified by the short neck, tall shoulders and the distinct punt in the bottom. The steep shoulders of the bottle are designed to help trap sediment upon decanting. Red wines in the Bordeaux bottle usually have dark green glass, while the glass for white wines will be a lighter shade of green. Dessert wines most often come in clear glass. Sherry, port and other fortified wine bottles are Bordeaux bottles, but thicker. They also often have a bulging neck, which helps the sediment settle as the wine is decanted.

Final Note

Consider recycling your glass wine bottles. Glass can be recycled indefinitely and in the U.S. alone, one ton of resources is saved for every ton of recycled glass. Recycling reduces air pollution and saves energy used to make new glass.