

# Even novice drinkers can enjoy good wines

By Roger Knee  
Staff Reporter

Valentine's day is a time for a loaf of bread, a bottle of wine and a loved one. The loaf of bread is easy enough, and the loved one is your own business, but what about that bottle of wine?

Some people create a mystique about wine, implying that unless you're a full-fledged connoisseur you can't possibly enjoy it. This is completely false.

The more you learn about the subject, the more you can appreciate the finer nuances of great wines, but the only prerequisites for enjoying a good bottle of wine are a mouth and a glass, and for some people even the glass is optional.

There are as many different tastes in wine as there are people who drink it. Even if wine is touted as one of the finest in the world, there is no guarantee that any one person will find the taste appealing.

How, then, are neophytes to learn what their tastes are? Buying bottles at random becomes expensive and tedious. With a minimal amount of information, though, anyone can quickly begin to categorize different wines, and that big shelf full of bottles with foreign words on the labels soon becomes less imposing.

There are two ways to approach wine systematically: by region or by grape variety. The best way for the beginner is by region.

Pick a wine-producing area, or even a whole country, and try several of the major grape varieties grown there. You will soon begin to get a feel for the kinds of wine you most enjoy, and you will have a few varieties "under your belt" as points of reference when you move on to other regions or countries.

Some countries, notably France, Germany and Italy, have established systems for quality rating their wines to protect both producer and consumer. These quality ratings must be viewed with a grain of salt, however, since a high rating does not guarantee good wine, and a lower rating does not necessarily mean poor wine.

**In France:**  
**AC** — "Appellation controlee" — France's highest rating. This wine has been subjected to strict standards governing both viticultural (grape growing) and vinification (wine making) processes.

**VDQS** — Rules resemble AC, but are less strict.

**Vin de Table** — includes "vin ordinaire" and "vin de pays."

Some other words you may find on French labels include: Blanc-white, Cepage-grape type, Chateau-estate, Com-

mune-village, Doux-sweet, Mise en bouteilles au chateau — estate-bottled, Mousseux-sparkling, Rouge-red and Sec-dry.

**In Germany**  
**QbA** — A quality wine from a specified region.

**QmP** — "Quality Wine with distinction." This top category is broken down into different harvests, which generally denote varying degrees of sweetness. These words are prominent on the label.

**Vorlese** — early harvest.

**Hauptlese** — general harvest.

**Spatlese** — late harvest; enhanced sugar content.

Other German label words include **Echt** — genuine, **Edel** — noble, **Rotwein** — red wine, **Trocken** — dry wine, **Weisswein** — white wine.

The Italian rating system is roughly patterned after the French AC system. Italian quality wines are designated **DOC** — similar to AC, and **Vino da Tavola** — same as Vin de Table.

Wine merchants interviewed in Lincoln all said their best selling wines were the German whites. The light, semi-sweet Spatlese and Auslese are especially popular, as many are reasonably priced in the \$6 to \$8 range.

In French wines, Lincolnites seem to prefer Chablis Grand Cru and Premier Cru, Pouilly-Fuisse and anything that claims to be from Bordeaux.

The overwhelming American favorites are the California Rieslings and the Italian wines. The Italian wines are so diverse that there is no apparent frontrunner.

Several wine dealers in Lincoln have fine selections, the two most prominent being The Cellar, 6913 "O" St., and Meier's Cork N Bottle, 13th and South streets.

The Cellar has an expansive, well-balanced selection of French, German, Italian, American and other wines. Their offerings range from the inexpensive, brand-name wines to the finest Bordeaux. The Cellar has wine consultants on duty, and they sponsor wine tastings frequently in the adjoining lounge.

Meier's Cork N Bottle stocks the best German selection in town. Their French list leans heavily toward Burgundies and away from Bordeaux. If you're looking for a specific top-notch bottle, Meier's is the first stop. They also anticipate wine tastings in the future.

Wine consultants, tastings and classes also are available from The House of Wines, 3411 Fox Hollow Circle, and the Husker Bottle Shop, 330 N. 48th St.

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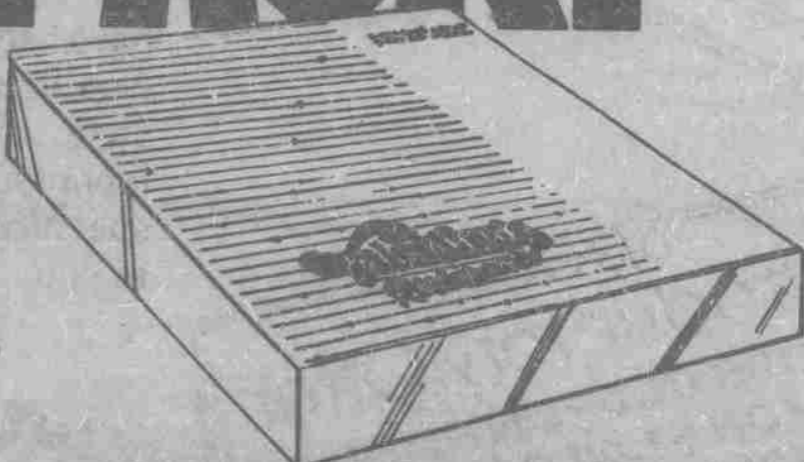
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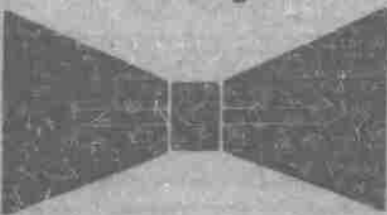
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