

9 hacks to help you drink better wine by drinking it better

By **MICHELLE LOCKE**
Associated Press

Aiming for a new and improved you in 2016? That's tough. Improving your wine experience? That's not hard at all.

Because if you want to drink better wine, the first step is drinking wine better. To help you get the job done, we asked the pros for their best wine drinking hacks that will make you a better person (or at least a better drinker).

Learn by degrees

Aim for a middle ground when it comes to temperature. Good reds taste better with a little chill on them and good whites taste better when they're not ice cold, says Joe Campanale, co-owner and beverage director for Epicurean Group, which includes the NYC neighborhood restaurants dell'anima, Anfora and L'Artusi. So if a red wine isn't being pulled from a temperature controlled cellar or wine refrigerator, put the bottle in a refrigerator for 15 to 20 minutes (or until slightly cool to the touch) before serving, says Jessica Pinzon, wine director of the Napa Valley's Miminashi restaurant. "Wine shows more acidity and minerality at a cooler temperature, and more fruit and alcohol at a warmer temperature. Experiencing the transition of (wine) warming up in the glass will enhance your understanding and enjoyment of the wine," she says.

Add a touch of glass

Use clean, clear glasses with a good stem, says Campanale, who hosts the weekly "In the Drink" program on Heritage Radio Network. He uses Bordeaux-shaped glasses (your basic red wine glass) for "pretty much all wine, including Champagne." The stem plays an important role — keeping your fingers from warming the wine.



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

This Jan. 18 photo shows an assortment of red and white wine in Concord, N.H.

Age wisely

Drink most white wines young, says Gordana Kostovski, general manager and sommelier/beverage director of the Volver restaurant in Philadelphia. And these days many red wines are made ready to drink on purchase, too. Big red wines, on the other hand — think French Bordeaux — may need a little more time. Wondering how long? That's a hard question to answer since wines vary. You can ask for clues at the wine shop or sometimes the label or wine website will offer suggestions.

Develop a bubbly personality

"Drink more bubbles," is the advice of Andy Myers, master sommelier and wine director for

Washington, D.C.-based chef Jose Andres' ThinkFoodGroup. His pick, Raventos I Blanc "De Nit" rose from Spain. And skip the flute, says Kosovski. Serve bubbles in a coup or regular wine glass.

Dare to decant

Decanting a wine is good all around. Whether young or old, a wine improves when exposed to a little air (which occurs naturally when pouring the wine from the bottle into a decanter). And careful pouring also means you leave any sediment in the bottle. "Decanters aren't just for somber, candle-lit ceremonies to separate the sediment out of venerable, old bottles," says David Kravitz, certified master sommelier and beverage director of The Smith Restaurants in New

York. "Young, inexpensive wines are often improved with a good, hard splash decanting. Oxygen will open up the fruit and ease the tannins."

Note: If you've got a decanter gathering dust at the back of the cupboard, now's the time to use it. If not, simply pour the wine into a clean pitcher or vase, says Pinzon. And don't limit this to reds, she says. Champagne, white wine or rose can benefit from decanting, too.

Pick savvy storage

Store wine on its side and in contact with its cork, says Kostovski. And if you've got a wine refrigerator, keep it in there at 55 F. If not, look for a spot in a basement or closet that's shaded

from heat and light. Organize your wine and know what you have so you don't forget it and leave it too long. And, says Kostovski, think about investing in a Coravin, the device that allows you to sample wine repeatedly without pulling the cork.

Having friends over for dinner and plan to open a nice, older bottle of wine? Stand the bottle upright (ideally at cellar temperature, or somewhere between 50 F to 64 F) for a couple days before the dinner party, advises Pinzon. This allows any sediment that may have settled in the shoulder of the bottle to settle at the bottom instead, making serving or decanting cleaner and more ideal.

Prime that wine

Drinking two wines at dinner out of one glass? Don't rinse the glass with water to make the change, says Chloe Helfland, sommelier at Bazaar Meat in the SLS Hotel Las Vegas. Once the glass is empty, pour in a little of the second wine, swirl it, dump the rinse and you're ready for a proper pour.

Shop smarter

There's no hacking a really bad wine. Campanale recommends going to a good wine shop to get a head start. If you find a wine you like, make a note of the producer; you'll probably like some of their other wines, too.

Relax

Learning about and developing an appreciation for wine is interesting, but don't make it a chore. "Have fun and enjoy the wine; pair it with food and friends," recommends Kostovski. And while you're swirling and sipping — but not while pouring — try closing your eyes. "Feel the wine through your senses," she says. "Wine is romantic!"



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

Quick and spicy rotisserie chicken and black bean stew.

In a rush? Grab a rotisserie chicken for a flavorful stew

By **MELISSA D'ARABIAN**
Associated Press

Having a trusty fast food strategy is the busy person's key to eating well. When I'm swamped with work, travel, kids' activities (or whatever), I quite simply cannot be trusted to choose the healthy meal over the quick one.

Unless, that is, the healthy one is the quick one. Over the years, I have developed a repertoire of healthier fast food options, dinners I can get on the table in minutes. A standby is, of course, the supermarket rotisserie chicken. Pick up one of those, add a quick spinach salad (by which I mean spinach with red wine vinegar and olive oil sprinkled on it with a handful of almonds and a quick chop of scallions on top), and my family is eating before anyone even has time to ask what's for dinner.

I also always buy two rotisserie chickens (or roast two chickens when I'm bothering to heat up the house with the oven), so I have leftover chicken seasoned and ready to go for another meal a day or two later.

This week's chicken and black bean stew is a meal inspired by one of those weeks. The ingredients are all basic, simple stuff that I have on hand most of the time (and if not, I can find something to substitute). I use canned chipotles in adobo sauce for tons of flavor and some warm heat (buy it canned, then store it in a freezer bag and just lop off a hunk for recipes as you need it).

Don't have or like chipotles? You also can use tomato paste and chili powder or whatever other warm spicy item you have in your cupboard (Sriracha? Red pepper flakes? Chipotle powder? All great!). The secret to this quick stew is that the chicken already has so much flavor that adding just a little spice and a little acid (the lime juice) makes the flavors taste far more complex than the quick and healthy little dinner gem that this dish is.

Quick & spicy rotisserie chicken and black bean stew

Start to finish: 20 minutes

Servings: 4

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons (or more) chipotles in adobo sauce, finely chopped, sauce included (or tomato paste if no spice is desired)
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock, hot
- 1 1/2 cups water, hot
- 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed
- 2 cups shredded chicken from a rotisserie chicken
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1/2 large avocado, cubed
- 1 medium tomato, cubed, seeds removed, or tomato salsa
- 1/2 cup cilantro leaves
- Lime wedges, to garnish

In a large, heavy pot over medium-high, heat the oil. Add the onion, celery and carrots and cook until starting to get tender, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and chipotles, then stir until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the stock, water, beans, corn and chicken and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes.

Stir in the lime juice, then taste and season with salt and pepper. Ladle into 4 serving bowls, then top with avocado, tomato or salsa, and cilantro, and offer lime wedges on the side.

Nutrition information per serving: 320 calories; 90 calories from fat (28 percent of total calories); 10 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 50 mg cholesterol; 480 mg sodium; 37 g carbohydrate; 12 g fiber; 6 g sugar; 22 g protein.

Phoenix Essentials: Dining, hikes, art and sunshine

By **TERRY TANG**
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PHOENIX — With hundreds of golf courses and 300 days of sunshine a year, it's easy to cast metropolitan Phoenix as a retiree's paradise that leaves everyone else out in the cold. But within the desert beats the heart of an actual urban core that has come into its own. There's an emerging restaurant-and-retail scene along with classic attractions like the view from Camelback Mountain, plus newfound treasures like peeking inside a little-known house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

What's new

A house built by Frank Lloyd Wright that dodged the wrecking ball is Phoenix's latest tourist attraction. The David and Gladys Wright House, named for the architect's son and daughter-in-law who lived there, is in the Arcadia neighborhood. There are free public tours daily. The spiral walkway offers a spectacular view of Camelback Mountain. Events on the grounds range from an Easter egg hunt to yoga classes.

Changing Hands Bookstore, about 5 miles north of downtown near a light rail stop, opened in May 2014 but already feels like the place where everybody knows your name. Patrons can grab a book with some beer or wine at the store's First Draft Book Bar. Next door, the Southern Rail restaurant, named for its proximity to the light rail and its "low-country" cuisine, serves tasty Southern and Creole-influenced food like red beans and rice and fried chicken.

Another new hub is DeSoto Central Market in downtown. The property, once a vacant brick building and former car dealership, is now a market with food stalls, bar and patio. It's known for happy hour, live music and swing dance nights. Drool-worthy delicacies include fried chicken-skin po'boys at the larder + the delta.

Classic attractions

The 140-acre Desert Botanical Garden boasts more than 50,000 plants and five trails that illustrate the role desert plants play in the environment. The latest exhibit incorporates eight light-based installations using colorful fiber optics.

With all the sunshine, take a hike. Two popular summits are the 2,704-foot Camelback Mountain and 2,608-foot Piestewa Peak. Both are north of downtown and offer views of the entire metropolitan Phoenix valley. A less crowded alternative is South Mountain Park 10 miles south of downtown, where you'll find ancient petroglyphs.

The Heard Museum is known for art and artifacts showcasing Southwestern tribal culture, including Hopi katsina dolls, Navajo textiles and Zuni jewelry.

Frank Lloyd Wright fans may want to drive 30 minutes to tour his winter home and studio in Scottsdale.

Galleries at the Musical Instrument Museum in north Phoenix are



AP Photo/Matt York, File

In this May 2012 file photo, a cactus wren sits atop a flowering saguaro cactus at the Desert Botanical Gardens in Phoenix.

organized by world regions. Special headphones play music samples when you near the corresponding display. One gallery spotlights instruments and clothes belonging to icons from Elvis Presley to Taylor Swift.

Tips

Phoenix's roughly 23-mile light rail system makes the ideal hop-on-hop-off tour bus with a \$4 all-day pass. Several stops have free park-and-ride areas too. The tracks run through downtown, the college town of Tempe and the suburb of Mesa. In Tempe, stroll around Tempe Town Lake, popular for jogging, fishing and even dragonboat racing. Mill Avenue is lined with shops, restaurants and bars. In Mesa, get off at the Main Street/Sycamore stop and walk five minutes to Mekong Plaza. The shopping center is a smorgasbord of authentic Asian cuisine — dim sum, pho or Taiwanese specialties like simmered pig ear.

Hanging out

Phoenix's artsy Roosevelt Row neighborhood is the best place for quirky people-watching along a seven-block stretch with restaurants, bars, galleries and street art. The first Friday of each month, the neighborhood hosts outdoor musicians, artists and vendors. For a respite from the desert landscape, the 10-acre Farm at South Mountain in south Phoenix feels like a country garden party. Onsite eateries include a breakfast-brunch cafe and fine-dining restaurant serving locally grown produce. You can also grab lunch in a basket and use picnic tables in the farm's pecan tree grove.

Mexican restaurants in Phoenix are like Starbucks: There's practically one on every corner, from the practical taco houses to casual mom-and-pop joints. Barrio Cafe is a local institution known for its collection of some 300 different tequilas and for dishes made from cochinita pibil (slow roasted pork) flavored with sour orange and a blend of spices.