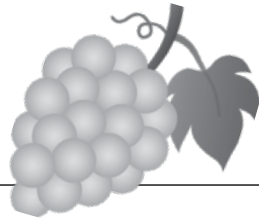


GRAPE TALK

Wineglasses make a difference



BY DEBBIE TOLLEFSON

The holiday season is just around the corner, and I always love entertaining when the house is decorated and so festive. My holiday parties always include wine. What to serve the wine in always presents a dilemma depending on the size of the gathering. I may or may not have sufficient wineglasses to serve all my nice local wines. I try to serve wines in stemware, but often wonder if a plastic cup from Costco would really destroy the taste of a good wine and do I really need both red and white wineglasses along with champagne flutes?

The subject of glassware and its effect on wine was the main topic of a class I attended in August at the Oregon Wine Experience Wine University at Bigham Knoll in Jacksonville. The premise that every wine has a perfect glass seemed like a marketing ploy, but I was open to the discussion.

The class was put on by Riedel, a tenth-generation glass company based in Austria. Riedel (pronounced ree-dle; rhymes with needle) has worked for

decades to create engineered glassware that optimizes the taste of each particular wine. Georg Riedel first brought his glassware to North America in the 1970s in response to requests by Napa Valley wine makers.

At the beginning of the class, participants tasted water in a plastic cup and then in a white wineglass. This process continued with a variety of wines and their appropriate style stemware from Riedel's Veritas collection. The instructor talked in terms of glassware being physics, wine being chemistry, and their interaction being science.

After tasting a number of wines from plastic cups and from glasses correctly and not correctly engineered, I was somewhat amazed by the differences in aroma and taste. The final class experiment was to taste Coca-Cola in a plastic cup and then in a glass developed by Riedel especially for Coca-Cola. In the Riedel glass, I picked up notes of orange and vanilla aromas that I had never experienced before from

one of my "guilty pleasures." To me it seemed like the size of the opening and the size of the bowl made a big difference in the "nose" of Coca-Cola and the different wines by concentrating aromas for maximum impact.

A study done in Tokyo, Japan, found that changes in the amount of ethanol vaporizing from a glass and the vapor pattern of the ethanol interfered with the fruitier notes of the wine when sampled from an open cocktail glass or a straight glass. A camera recorded less vaporization of ethanol from a wineglass with a smaller opening than that of the bowl. In a wineglass, "The ring-shaped [vapor] pattern allows drinkers to appreciate the wine without the smell of ethanol—which is likened to the smell of vodka—interfering."

The shape of the glass also determines where the wine hits your palette, and the architecture of the glass controls the air flow around the wine. The architecture of a champagne flute, for example, helps hold the bubbles in the flute glass, which is now used much more often than the open champagne glass, which allows the bubbles to dissipate quickly.

Stemless glasses came into vogue a decade ago, but many wine purists believe they are a terrible idea. The lack of a stem to keep the hand from heating up the wine and the difficulty in swirling

the wine in a glass with no stem are the major reasons many wine aficionados don't drink from a stemless glass.

Wineglasses are a great holiday gift for any wine aficionado, whether it be a well-engineered glass or a piece of beautiful artist-created, handblown or decorated stemware. I love to create baskets with a nice bottle of local wine and some pretty glasses as last-minute holiday gifts.

Put wineglasses on your holiday gift list for your wine-loving friends. Some wineries in the valley have wineglasses available for purchase (see below).

A special wineglass doesn't make a bad wine good, but it certainly enhances the tasting experience and may make a good wine better.

Debbie Tollefson
debbie.avrealty@gmail.com



Debbie Tollefson



Quady North sells these logo wineglasses for \$6 each at their tasting room at 255 E. California Street, Jacksonville.



Special holiday wineglasses are available at Tron Vineyards, 1475 Kubli Road, Grants Pass.



Examples of wineglasses by Riedel: red wine (left) and white wine (right). More information about Riedel glasses can be found online at riedel.com.

Where to find wineglasses

- Goodwill locations in Jackson and Josephine County
- HomeGoods, 271 Rossanley Drive, Medford
- Quady North, \$6 each
- Tron, \$24.95 each or two for \$40
- Wild Wines, 4550 Little Applegate Road, Jacksonville, \$3 each

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