

Wine punctuates and enhances many of the most important occasions and a wedding reception is no different. Supplying wine for a wedding can save plenty of money, but it pays to research (and taste!) the wines to be served to ensure quality *and* value for money. Sommelier, Jeremy Shiell tells more...

here's cheers



HOW MUCH WINE TO BUY?

Budget on slightly over one bottle per guest, it can always be returned. For a group of 80, around nine cases of wine (108 bottles) will be sufficient. This works out at around a bottle and a third per guest, which will of course rise depending upon how many guests choose not to imbibe, or to stick with the beer. It does pay to consider the group's enthusiasm for fermented juice when deciding on quantities. Discounting is rife in the wine retail business so it pays to shop around and ask for a saving when buying by the case or in large lots.

WHAT WINE TO BUY?

Here's where proceedings get rather tricky, how much and which choice to offer. *SPARKLING WHITE* (or *CHAMPAGNE* if budget allows) chooses itself, and working off a wedding party of eighty guests, at least two cases of *SPARKLING* or *CHAMPAGNE* are required. It's usually the first drink offered on arrival, so it pays to make a good impression. *CHANDON NV* from the Yarra Valley is a stylish Australian sparkling offering approachable stone fruit, nutty characters and great length. The packaging is also rather impressive too. In the less expensive market, *YARRA BURN SPARKLING* does the job, and look out too for *CAVA* (*SPANISH SPARKLING*) which offers excellent value.

Consider skipping *CHARDONNAY*, which can be fairly dire at the lower price points and instead look at *RIESLING*, which offers excellent value for money, as does the ever-popular *SAUVIGNON BLANC* (from NZ) or Australian *SEMILLON/SAUVIGNON BLANC BLENDS*—from either WA or SA. Some quality labels to look out for include *O'LEARY WALKER RIESLING*, *PEWSEY VALE RIESLING* from the Clare and Eden Valleys respectively, *MAVEN SAUVIGNON BLANC* from Marlborough NZ, *GEOFF WEAVER SAUVIGNON BLANC* from the Adelaide Hills, SA. Another option is to have a look at some more obscure varieties like *ROUSSANNE*, *MARSANNE* and *SEMILLON*, which offer excellent drinking at price points closer to ten dollars rather than twenty. And don't forget *ROSÉ*—but make it dry, rather than sweet.

If the wedding date falls in the colder months you can get away with more red than in a baking hot summer. If you're in Australia it's almost a criminal offence to not pour *SHIRAZ*, but consider other reds, like *PINOT NOIR* (although it can be difficult to find impressive examples under the \$20 mark), and emerging varieties like *TEMPRANILLO*, or perhaps *GRENACHE BLENDS*, which are crowd-pleasing and often terrifically cheap to boot. Be wary of alcohol levels, anything above 15% alc/vol packs a tremendous punch and generally isn't particularly food-friendly either. There's a vast array of red table wines out there so don't immediately rule out the big brands, some, like *SEPPELTS*, do over-deliver. Look for wines from *ST JOHN'S ROAD* and *ST HALLETS* from the Barossa, *D'ARENBERG* and *MR RIGGS* in the McLaren Vale, and of course cooler climate examples from Victoria.

Speak to your friendly bottle-shop attendant, ask plenty of questions and don't forget to taste!

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