



# The Complete Guide to Serving Wine

# The Complete Guide to Serving Wine

*Easy Tips for Enjoying Wine at Home*

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## THE WINE BUYING GUIDE

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THE WATCH INDEX 

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# The Complete Guide to Serving Wine

Dear Wine Enthusiasts,

Serving wine doesn't have to be complicated.

With this easy-to-follow guide, you can easily reference all of the knowledge you need to serve wine properly every time. This free eBook is your guide to:

- ◆ Choosing the right wine glasses
- ◆ Serving wine at the right temperature
- ◆ Opening wine
- ◆ Decanting wine
- ◆ Wine serving etiquette
- ◆ Saving leftover wine

These helpful tips ensure that you'll serve wine like a pro in your own home. You and your guests will appreciate this knowledge for years to come. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

*The Editors of [TheWineBuyingGuide.com](http://TheWineBuyingGuide.com)*

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# CONTENTS





# Start With Stemware

Have you ever had to improvise, when it comes to wine glasses? It happens to the best of us. You may have enjoyed the novelty of sipping wine from water glasses, coffee mugs, or even plastic cups. While your overall experience may have been good, did you know that those plastic cups affected the taste of the wine?

While it may surprise you, the material, shape, and even size of the glass changes how you experience the wine's aroma and flavor. Because of this, your experience in tasting wine can be improved with the right stemware.

How does the shape of your stemware affect your evening Cab? It can make a difference in:

**Temperature**  
**Aroma**  
**Taste**

Because of this, you should enjoy different types of wine in different styles of wine glass.

# Why Wine Glass Shape Matters

## TEMPERATURE

The size and shape of a wine glass affects the temperature of the wine. If you want to keep your wine cool, then a smaller bowl is best. A small bowl exposes less area on the surface of the wine, preventing the wine from warming to room temperature.

Because **white wine** tastes better when cool, white wine should be served in a glass with a smaller bowl. **Red wine** is usually served close to room temperature, and so a wider bowl is fine for glass that holds red wine.

## ANATOMY OF A WINE GLASS

RIM

BOWL

STEM

FOOT

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# Why Wine Glass Shape Matters

## AROMA

The size and shape of a wine glass affects how aromas travel to the nose. In other words, it affects how the wine smells.

A large, wide bowl allows bold aromas to come into contact with air before reaching the nose. This increases the nuance of the aromas, while allowing strong ethanol aromas to dissipate. For these reasons, **red wine is often served in glasses with wide, large bowls.** The bold aromas will be more enjoyable, and the alcohol smell will be subtler.

A **smaller bowl is beneficial for white wines** for opposing reasons. A smaller bowl brings delicate floral aromas closer to the drinker's nose so that they can be appreciated. Also, because the cool temperature of the white wine mutes the aromas of the wine, it's better to bring the surface of the wine a little closer to the nose.

### TIP

Gripping the wine glass by the stem, rather than the bowl, keeps the wine temperature from rising from the heat of your hands.



# Why Wine Glass Shape Matters

## TASTE

This is the one you were waiting for, right? For **red wines**, a larger bowl and wider opening help mitigate overwhelming tannins when tasting wine. This usually produces a smoother taste for red wines. For the taste of **white wines**, the temperature of the wine has a big impact. The smaller bowl of a white wine glass keeps the white wine cool and tasting its best.

Many varieties of wine actually have their own distinct glass shape, which are available for purchase. However, simply having a set of red wine glasses and a set of white wine glasses is a great start!

**Print our infographic on the next page for an easy visual of red, white, and dessert wine glasses!**





# WINE GLASS SHAPES



RED WINE



WHITE WINE



SPARKLING WINE



DESSERT WINE



# Get the Temperature Right

The serving temperature of wine has a big impact on how the wine tastes.

If you haven't experienced this with wine, think about how great an ice cold glass of Coca-Cola tastes.

Now think about how disappointing that same Coke tastes warm.

It's the same idea with wine. In addition, the nuanced flavors and aromas of a great bottle of wine will be at their best when the wine is served at the proper temperature.

**Different types of wine taste best served at different temperatures.** As we mentioned in the previous section, white wine tastes best when it is served cold. Red wine tastes best when it is served slightly below room temperature.

You may also change the temperature depending on the quality of the wine. A cooler temperature can help mask funky flavors in an inexpensive bottle.



# Temperature for Red Wine

In general, **serve red wine slightly below room temperature**, or at about 60 degrees F.

However, different varietals can benefit from slightly different serving temperatures.

Type of Wine	Serving Temperature
Pinot Noir, Beaujolais (Gamay)	55 degrees F / 13 degrees C
Côtes du Rhône, Sangiovese, Merlot	60 degrees F / 16 degrees C
Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Malbec, Petite Sirah	65 degrees F / 18 degrees C

To achieve this temperature (if you don't have a wine refrigerator), simply put your bottle of red wine in the refrigerator for about 45 minutes before serving.





# Temperature for White Wine

In general, **serve white wine chilled**, at about 45 degrees F.

As with red wine, different types of white wine can benefit from different temperatures.

Type of Wine	Serving Temperature
Vinho Verde, Soave, Moscato	43 degrees F / 5 degrees C
Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Grigio	45 degrees F / 7 degrees C
Riesling, Gewürztraminer	48 degrees F / 9 degrees C
Chardonnay, Viognier, White Burgundy	52 degrees F / 11 degrees C

To get your wine to these temperatures quickly, place the white wine in the refrigerator for several hours or in the freezer for about 30 minutes.



# Temperature for Rosé and Sparkling Wine

Rosé wine and sparkling wine also benefit from being served at the correct temperature!

Serve both well chilled, unless you have a high quality sparkling wine. Then let it warm up just slightly.

Type of Wine	Serving Temperature
Affordable sparkling wine, rosé wine	43 degrees F / 5 degrees C
High quality sparkling wine	48 degrees F / 9 degrees C

Place your wine in the refrigerator for several hours, the freezer for 30 minutes, or an ice bucket for about 15 minutes.



# How to Open a Bottle of Wine

Anyone who has ever shredded a cork using the “waiter’s friend” can attest to how *unfriendly* some wine openers can seem!

However, in reality there are many ways to open a bottle of wine. And almost all of them are easy to do, once you get the hang of it.

Here we have some tips for opening a bottle of wine with ease, using a few different types of corkscrews.

**The Waiter’s Friend**  
**The Winged Corkscrew**  
**The Rabbit or Lever Corkscrew**

All of these will have your bottle of wine open and ready for enjoyment in no time.

**What do you do if you forgot a corkscrew?** Well, [we have some tips for that here](#).



# The Waiter's Friend

What is the waiter's corkscrew?

The waiter's corkscrew is a simple, affordable wine bottle opener. It's widely used in restaurants and in homes and is nice and portable. It's also called a **wine key** or **waiter's friend**.

Although it may seem tricky to use at first, with a little practice it is actually a great way to open a bottle of wine.

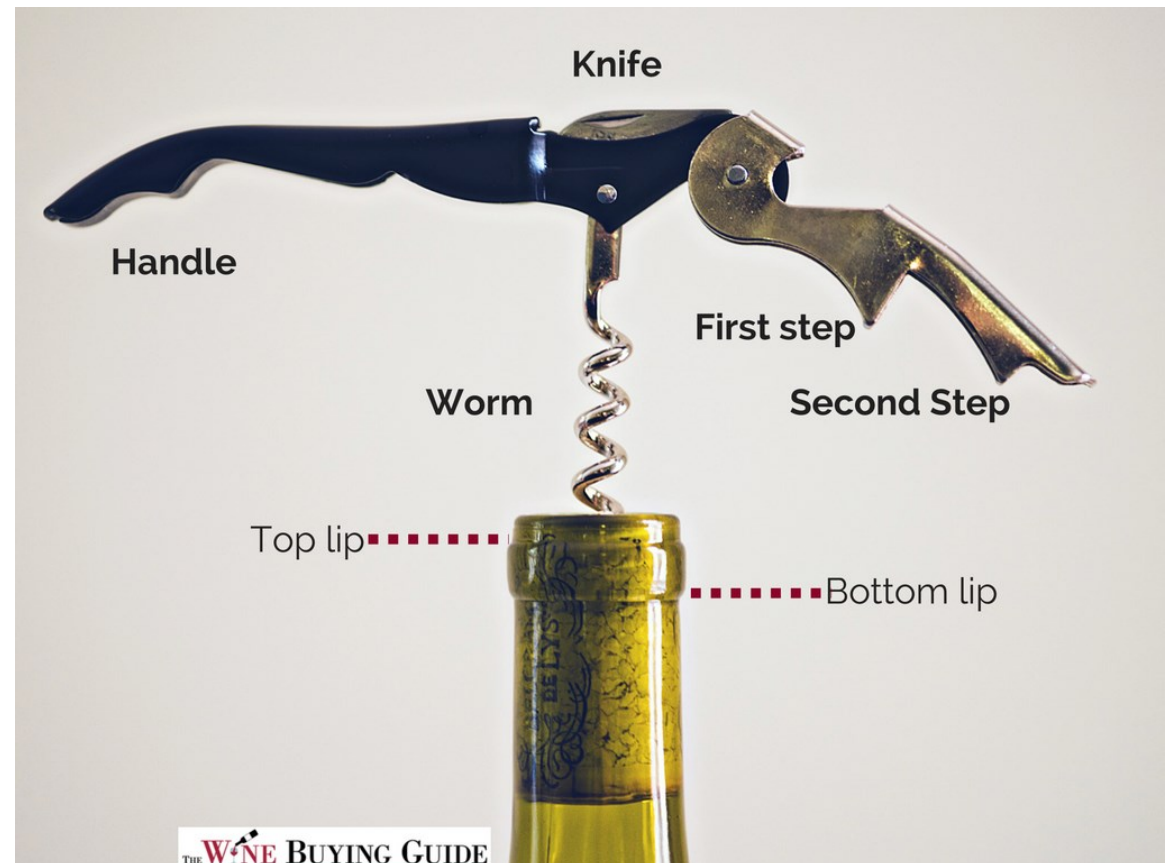
Here is a diagram of the parts of the waiter's friend.



# The Waiter's Friend

## TO USE THE WAITER'S FRIEND

1. Cut the foil using the small serrated knife on the waiter's corkscrew. Cut the foil at the top lip or the bottom lip, or peel it off entirely.
2. Open the corkscrew as shown. Hold the wine bottle stationary and insert the worm (the screw) into the center of the cork.
3. Twist the worm into the cork until about 1 curl remains above the cork.

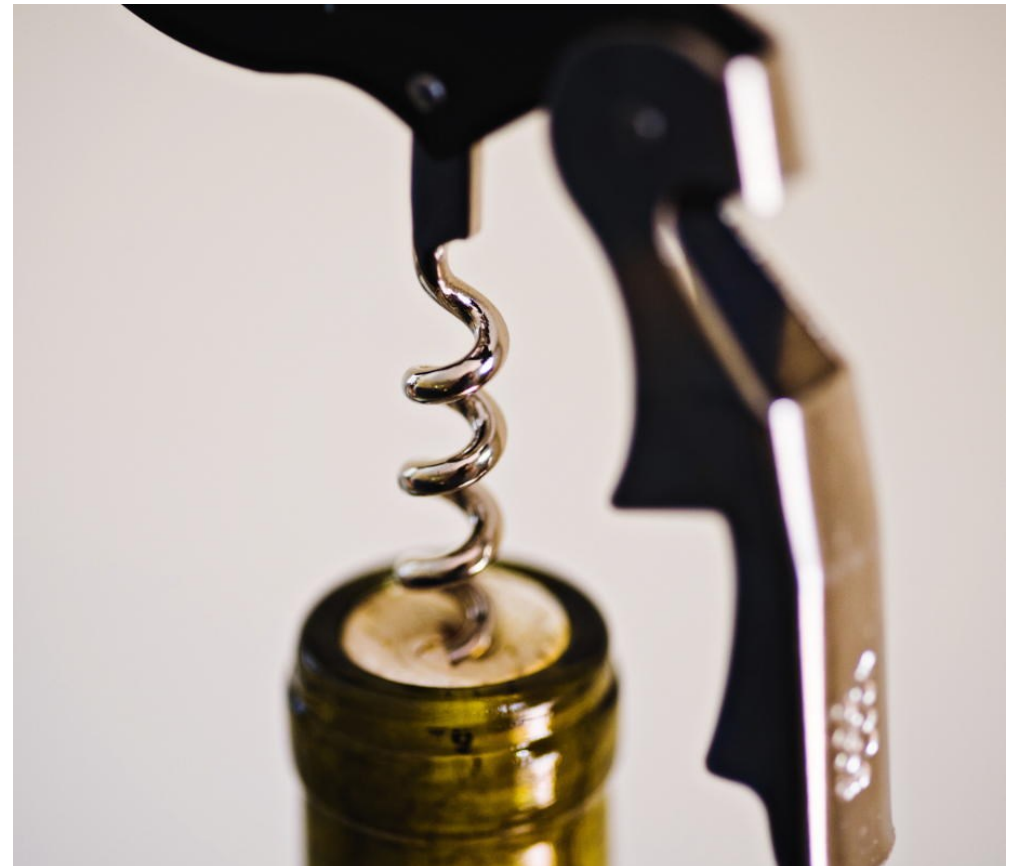




# The Waiter's Friend

## TO USE THE WAITER'S FRIEND (continued)

4. Tilt the handle of the waiter's friend down so that the first step sits on the lip of the wine bottle.
5. Use the first step as leverage, and pull up on the handle. This will pull the cork up.
6. When you can't pull up anymore, set the second step on the lip of the wine bottle.
7. Use the second step as leverage and pull up on the handle again.
8. The cork should now be mostly free. Tug gently to finish removing it from the bottle.







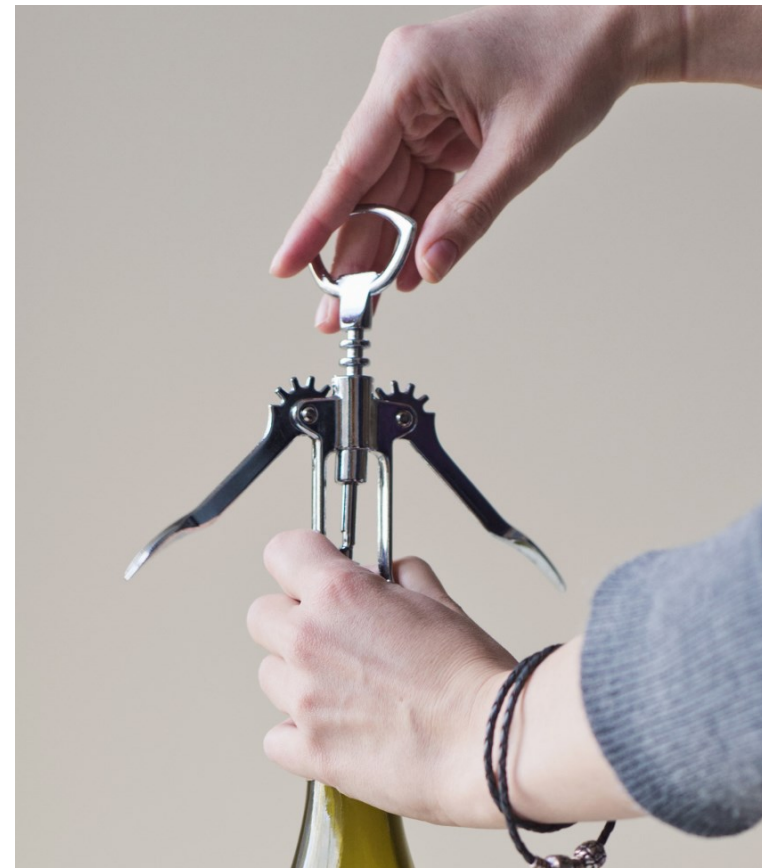
# The Winged Corkscrew

The winged corkscrew is the wine opener that most people probably have in their kitchen. It's inexpensive and easier to use (at least at first) than the waiter's friend.

The downside is that they can sometimes jam or be flimsy.

## **TO USE THE WINGED CORKSCREW**

1. Remove the foil from your wine bottle.
2. Place the round bottom part of the corkscrew on top of the wine bottle. The 2 wings should be down.
3. Twist the handle until the wings come all the way up and the worm is twisted all the way into the cork. The wings will rise until they're perpendicular with the handle, and they may even rise slightly higher.
4. Carefully press down on both wings at the same time. This will raise the cork up and out of the bottle.





# The Rabbit or Lever Corkscrew

You may be less familiar with the rabbit or lever corkscrew, but it is actually one of the most fool-proof ways to open a bottle of wine.

This corkscrew is easy to use, is sturdy and reliable, and takes almost no practice perfect. The downside is that they're a little more expensive (usually \$40+).

## **TO USE THE RABBIT CORKSCREW**

1. Remove the foil from your wine bottle.
2. Lift the big lever on top up and all the way around the back. This will bring the worm up into the starting position.







# The Rabbit or Lever Corkscrew

## TO USE THE RABBIT CORKSCREW (continued)

3. If you have 2 handles, squeeze them firmly together with one hand to hold the wine bottle in place. In other designs, place the bottom handle against the neck of the bottle and hold it there firmly. The idea is that you need to keep the wine bottle from moving while the lever removes the cork.
4. Pull the big lever up and over the wine bottle and push it down, driving the worm into the cork.
5. Push the lever back up firmly to pull the cork out.







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# To Decant or Not to Decant?

Decanting can seem like something only “wine pros” do.

But, it's actually very easy to do. It can even improve cheap wine!

## So, what does it mean to decant wine?

Decanting wine is simply pouring wine into a container called a wine decanter (shown right). Then you let the wine sit in the decanter for a certain amount of time, usually 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Decanting wine exposes the wine to oxygen, which can improve the flavor of some wines.

You also get the opportunity to filter out naturally occurring sediment in some bottles of red wine.





# Which wines need to be decanted?

Red wines and some rich white wines benefit from decanting.

Oxygen brings out more flavors in full-bodied, young red wines. It also allows some of the strong “hot” alcohol flavor to mellow. Cheap red wines can also benefit from decanting, as oxygen allows any funky flavors to dissipate.

The chart below shows which wines should be decanted and for how long:

Type of Wine	How to Decant
Young, inexpensive red wine	Decant for about 30 minutes to let any funky flavors dissipate.
Young, full-bodied red wine	Decant for 1 hour and taste. If tannins and alcohol still seem harsh, let it sit for 30 more minutes. Repeat as needed.
Young, light-bodied or medium-bodied red wine of good quality, Rich white wines	Decant for 30 minutes to bring out the best fruity, savory, and earthy flavors of the wine.
Aged red wine, like an old Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon, or similar	Decant to remove sediment only. Exposing this wine to air for even a short period of time will diminish its carefully aged flavors.



# Which wines should not be decanted?

Don't worry about decanting crisp, young white wines or rosé wines.

Most bottles of Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, Moscato, Riesling, Chenin Blanc, and other young white blends do not need to be decanted.

Very old red wines should only be decanted to remove sediment. They've been exposed to oxygen in very small amounts as they've aged, and so they don't need to breathe in a decanter.





# Wine Etiquette

You know *that person* who is always a class act, in every situation? He or she always knows the right thing to say, the right gift to bring, or the right moment to rescue you from an overly talkative relative.

That person also knows exactly what to do about wine at a dinner party. They bring the right wine, they know how to open it, and they're always gracious about sharing. Are you wishing you were this person yet?

We wish we were, too! Luckily, we can help you become a gem when it comes to wine.

**Wine drinking etiquette for parties can be learned with a few simple tips.** It's important to be gracious to your host and fellow guests, which we all want to be. Wine serving etiquette is the same.

With a few clever ideas, you can be a gracious host and provide a great evening for your guests.





# Wine Etiquette for Guests

## **HOSTESS GIFT ETIQUETTE**

Coming to a party with wine in hand is always a good idea. However, don't expect your host to always open the bottle you bring.

They may have carefully chosen wine pairings for the evening, and so they'll enjoy your wine at another time. Your wine is a *gift*, and it doesn't have to be shared with you.

## **BEST WINE TO BRING TO A DINNER PARTY**

If your host asks you to bring wine (in more of a potluck situation), then you can ask for the dinner menu so you can pair something. You can also bring a wine that is versatile and easy to match with almost anything. Merlot, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Dry Riesling are all excellent and versatile food pairing wines. Sparkling wines are also always a hit.

Base your price per bottle on how much you guess that your host is spending on you. If you're going over for takeout and a movie, then \$10 per bottle is fine. If it's a five course meal, then \$20 or more is considerate. Bring a second bottle if you have a guest.





# Wine Etiquette for Hosts

## WINE SERVING ETIQUETTE

As the host, your goal is to make sure that all of the wine is served properly. Follow our instructions in this guide!

What do you do with the wine that someone brings to the party? As stated previously, you can do whatever is best for you and the party. If your dinner party is casual, then open the wine so that everyone can enjoy it. If you are providing wine pairings for each course, then don't feel obligated to change things up by opening a guest's wine.







# Wine Etiquette for Hosts and Guests

## OPENING AND POURING WINE

Open the wine (use the previous section of this guide for pointers, if you want them!). You can cut the foil at the top or bottom lip or remove it entirely.

When you pour wine, serve others before serving yourself. Hold the wine bottle toward the base, and as you stop pouring turn the bottle toward you slightly. This prevents dripping.

Pour a standard serving of wine, which is about 5-6 oz.

A good rule of thumb is to **pour to about the middle of the roundest part of the glass**. If you have wine glasses that are very small or very large, adjust accordingly.

If you are about to finish off a bottle of wine, offer the people around you the chance to split the last pour with you (especially if it's a fancier bottle). If they decline, then enjoy it for yourself!



# What to do with Leftover Wine

What's *leftover* wine?

We know. We know.

Many of us don't have any problem finishing a bottle of wine the same night it's opened!

Especially if you have at least one person to share it with, a bottle of wine (which only has 4-5 servings) can easily be finished in one evening.

However, there are times when you might actually want to store a bottle of wine. Maybe you had a party and have a few half-finished bottles, or you really just wanted one glass with dinner and that's all.

Whatever the case may be, you have a few options for storing that leftover wine! You can:

**Store it and drink it later**

**Cook with it**

**Freeze it**





# Store it and Drink it Later

How long a wine will stay fresh depends on the type of wine and how it is stored.

Robust red wines and full-bodied white wines will stay fresh the longest. A higher quality wine also has the best chance of keeping well. These types of wines will stay fresh for up to 1 week when stored properly.

Crisp white wines and rose wines will usually stay fresh for 2-4 days. After that they will turn sour and essentially turn to vinegar.

Sparkling wines will stay fresh for 1-3 days, but their bubbles will “fizz out” before that. It's best to drink sparkling wine soon after it's opened.

Dessert wines and fortified wines like Port or Sherry can last for up to a month in a cool, dark place. These types of wines are made using a different method than most table wines, which preserves them for longer.



# Wine Storage Tips

**Seal it well and store it in the refrigerator.** If it's a red wine that you want to drink at a warmer temperature, set it on the counter for an hour before drinking.

The enemy of fresh wine is oxygen, so it's important to minimize exposure to air. This is why boxed wines stay fresh for so long: the wine is exposed to almost no air.

You can use products like the VacuVin to vacuum the air out of the wine bottle. You can also pour leftover wine into a Mason jar that is about the same volume as the wine. The smaller container will expose the wine to less oxygen.

In any case, be sure to seal the wine tightly (put a cork in it!) while you store it.

## Can spoiled wine make you sick?

No. Spoiled wine tastes gross, but it's safe to drink. Obviously don't drink wine that looks especially gross or has been in your refrigerator for a very long time.





# Cook with it

You can always use leftover wine to make a great meal.

The best part about using leftover wine for cooking is that you don't have to use it right away!

You can cook with wine that you wouldn't drink any more, and it will still be great in a recipe.

Has that bottle of Merlot been in your refrigerator for two weeks? No problem. It will still make a great red wine reduction sauce.

Just use the leftover wine like you would any other wine in a recipe, and enjoy!

Try it out for yourself with our [Easy Red Wine Reduction Sauce recipe!](#)





# Freeze it

Freezing wine is great for a few reasons.

First, it frees up space in your refrigerator (or is freezer space harder to come by for you? You'll have to make the call).

Second, you can use it in a variety of ways.

You can use the frozen wine as "ice cubes" to cool down a glass of room temperature white wine. You can blend the frozen wine in a very trendy wine slushie.

Try our [Deluxe Strawberry Frosé recipe](#) with frozen wine!

You can also use the frozen wine for cooking! If you plan to do this, try measuring out the wine when it's a liquid into  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup portions. This way you'll know how much of your frozen wine to use in your recipe.







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