



DECANTING

“Decanting is the final brush stroke on the canvas of a fine wine. The art of decanting allows the artistic nuances to appear.”

Jess Jackson & Barbara Banke

By Lauren Maines, What's Wine Is Yours

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I have always been intrigued with the history, majesty and mystique of wine. Every “pop” of a bottle and sip from a glass affords us the esteemed honor of participating in preserved traditions. Perhaps the most ceremonial, yet simple of those time-honored traditions is the art of decanting.

Sandra Jordan, Creative Director of Jordan Vineyards & Winery, describes decanting as, “the magic that happens between the bottle and the glass.” More specifically, decanting is the act of pouring wine from a bottle into another large vessel, prior to reaching its final destination - your wine glass.

Why Decant?

- Decanting a wine allows for the harmonious combination of oxygen and wine.

How does oxygen benefit wine during the decanting process? Allow me to share an analogy. Imagine being a passenger on a transatlantic flight. You are confined to a limited space for an extended period of time, all the while inhaling recirculated air. Your joints & muscles become tight and you don't feel like your normal self. Now, imagine the feeling when you finally arrive at your highly anticipated destination. Your muscles begin to loosen up as you become more mobile and your lungs are filled with fresh air. You finally relax and slowly begin to feel more like yourself.

When wine is confined to a bottle and stripped of oxygen, it becomes tight and restricted. However, when wine is poured into the decanter and feels the rush of oxygen, it becomes more relaxed and its natural beauty begins to shine. Oxygen allows the subtle nuances of a wine to unravel. It allows the wine to “open up” and evolve.

Decanting contributes to the beauty, elegance, and sensory fulfillment of each sip of wine.

- The act of decanting separates the wine from any sediment that may be present in the bottle.

Sediment is the solid material most often found in bottles of red wines that have been aged (typically 10+ years.) Sediment is the byproduct of yeast cells, residual grape stems, seeds, skin, and/or tartrate crystals. Decanting can help ensure that sediment will not make its way into your glass.

How to Decant:

The process of decanting is quite simple and can be accomplished with the following steps:

- Examine the bottle to determine if sediment is present. If you notice a gritty material resting inside the confounds of the bottle, you must first stand the bottle upright to ensure that the sediment falls to the bottom of the bottle. If there is no evidence of sediment, you may proceed.
- Remove the capsule and cork from the wine bottle and wipe the lip with a cloth.
- Slowly pour the wine into a decanter, ensuring that the wine gracefully runs down the inside of the decanter. Not only does this provide a visually stunning display, it also ensures that the wine will not splash out of the decanter and decrease the sensory enjoyment of the wine.

If you have determined that sediment is present, it is helpful to use a candle (traditional method) or flashlight (modern method) during the decanting process. While pouring the wine into the decanter, position the candle or flashlight beneath the neck of the bottle. Watch through the neck as the wine pours gracefully into the decanter. Once you see evidence of sediment in the neck of the bottle, cease pouring.

What and When to Decant?

Decanting may help soften the flavors of powerful young wines and boost the subtle nuances of mature wines. Wines that can benefit from decanting include: wines with age, young & high tannic red wines, Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon, Vintage Port, and Syrah, just to name a few. The time frame for decanting is not an exact science. Generally speaking, young red wine (1-5 years old) can be decanted 1-3 hours prior to serving to assist in mellowing the flavors. A moderately aged red wine (6-8 years old) can benefit from 30 minutes to 1 hour in the decanter.

However, the topic of decanting aged/library wines has been the topic of intense debates...

The Great Decanting Debate...

Although decanting has proven beneficial to increasing the sensory enjoyment of a wine, there are risks involved when dealing with aged or library wines (10+ years old.) Some industry professionals argue that decanting aged wines can ultimately steal the precious characteristics that define a mature vintage wine. As discussed, oxygen and wine can be a beneficial combination, but too much oxygen can be detrimental to a wine. The best advice that I have personally received is to decant a bottle of mature wine at the table and enjoy it immediately.

There is also debate whether to decant red wines from Burgundy. A main concern is that this particular wine is too delicate, and the decanting process will diminish the intricacies of the wine. My best advice? Ensure that you are serving the fine Burgundy in a proper glass and allow the wine to take you on a journey as it evolves before your very eyes.

The art of decanting grants us the opportunity to experience a ceremonial aspect of wine. I encourage you to personally experiment with the tradition of decanting. Pay a visit to your local wine purveyor and purchase 2 of the same red wines. Enjoy a glass that has been poured directly from the bottle and another glass from a bottle that has been decanted. You be the judge! I believe Sandra Jordan says it best, "Perhaps the most treasured moment of a feast is this, the moment just after decanting. Before the sip is taken, before a morsel is tasted, it is wonderful to stand before a table full of friends, with the promise of a fine, entertaining meal ahead."

What's In My Glass

The sun is beginning to set over the Rocky Mountains, and I am enjoying the peace and tranquility of this beautiful winter evening. It's moments like this that allow me to meditate on the wine in my glass and enjoy the intricacies that define its personality. Tonight, I am enjoying [Veglio Michelino e Figlio, Barbaresco, 2013](#). This wine is grown and produced in the Piedmont region of Italy and is comprised of 100% Nebbiolo grapes. As I sip on this wine I begin to crave a hearty Braised Beef Stew featuring the precious herbs from the region. This nose is quite intense and the palate follows with spice and fruit.