



## WINE NOTES

By Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher

**I**N THE YEARS we have been writing our *Tastings* column, which appears on Fridays, we have received thousands of questions about wine from readers. In this column, we answer some questions that touch on common themes. We have edited the questions for space. If you have a question, drop us a note at [wine@wsj.com](mailto:wine@wsj.com). Be sure to include your full name, city and state.

### GETTING A LEG UP

Could you enlighten us about legs? A real visual pleasure for us is seeing those glistening rivulets coasting in parallel down the glass. Are they a function of the wine or the glass? Inevitably when the wine has legs, we enjoy it, and when it doesn't the enjoyment is diminished.

—Mairead and Malo Forde, Kensington, Conn.

The complete answer is long and complicated, but the best, most concise response comes from Karen MacNeil in "The Wine Bible," who writes that legs, which are sometimes called tears, "are a complex phenomenon related to the rate at which liquids evaporate and the differences in surface tension between water and the wine's alcohol content. Legs have nothing to do with greatness. With wine, as with women, there is very little meaningful information one can deduce by looking at the legs." John would add, however, that one can certainly still enjoy looking.



### SMALLER BOTTLE, FASTER AGING?

I have a wine cellar with several hundred bottles. Some of these are in "splits." As a general rule of thumb, do half bottles age more quickly than regular bottles and con-

versely do magnums and larger bottles age more slowly?

—Wayne Letwink Jr., Chester, N.J.

As a general rule of thumb, yes. It's generally believed that this is, at least partly, because there's relatively more air (under the cork) in the smaller bottle. While this, like everything else in wine, is sometimes debated, wine collectors over many centuries attest to the longer aging potential of larger bottles of fine wine.

### HANDS OFF

I have some wine in a rack in a small, closed-off room in the basement with a moderate temperature. Is it important to rotate or turn the bottles periodically as they lay on their sides in the rack to help keep the wine in better condition?

—Karen Shull, Kansas City, Mo.

No. Fine wines really prefer not to be handled. It's better for the wine, which likes to age gently, and it's better for you, because if the wine throws some sediment, it will all be collected on the bottom side of the bottle, making decanting easier.

Melanie Grayce West contributed to this column.