

FOOD & DRINK



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. Be sure to include your full name, city and state.

PICKING THE RIGHT GLASS

I want to buy good wine glasses and was going to get Riedel; please let me know if you have another suggestion. I'm not sure what type of glasses to get. We mostly drink Cabernet, Pinot Noir and Shiraz. Is one glass suitable for all three reds, with a different one for whites?

—Andy Schiffer,
Demarest, N.J.

You certainly can't go wrong with glasses from Riedel (rhymes with needle). And, as you progress down the path of your wine journey, it is fun to have different glasses for reds, whites, dessert wines and sparklers. You might even decide at some point that you prefer older reds in a somewhat smaller glass than younger reds (because the younger wines need more room to breathe and open up). All that said, however, the first order of business is to get a nice, everyday glass that you can simply use without thinking about it. We don't know about you, but after a day at work, we've made enough decisions and we don't want to ponder our choice of wine glass. We want a glass that will help both reds and whites show their best and that will be special enough to say "Welcome home," but that's not so expensive that we'll cry if we break it. Our everyday glass is Spiegelau Vino Grande Burgundy, which is available at wineenthusiast.com for \$49.95 for a set of six; it's widely available elsewhere for a little more and a little less. (Riedel owns

Spiegelau.) Whatever

glass you use, here are some things to look for, in short form: a minimum capacity of 20 ounces (so there is plenty of room for the wine to breathe, so you can swirl to your heart's content and because a larger glass feels more generous); clear glass; a slight inward curve at the top to focus the smells; a stem that's long enough to hold comfortably; and thin glass (so you taste wine, not glass).

DECODING CHAMPAGNE

While discussing Champagne in one of your columns, you explained what the "NM" and "RM" code numbers on the label indicated. Could you repeat what you had written? Also, if Champagne is to be stored for six months or more, should it be stored cork down, cork up or on its side?

—Peter Weiner,
Ventura, Calif.

Bottles of real Champagne, from the Champagne district of France, have a tiny code on the front label. It's worth looking for. Most of the time it starts with NM, meaning it's a négociant wine, made by a big producer. RM means it's a grower's own wine, and these can be excellent, filled with personality, and they are often good deals because most people have never heard of the producer. You might also sometimes see CM, which means it's a cooperative's wine. We store Champagne on its side like other wines, for the same reason: to keep the cork moist and therefore the seal intact.

—Melanie Grayce West
contributed to this column.

