



# Vino 101

by James Dunne

You research every fund, monitor industry regulations, hone your sales and presentation skills and consistently

strive to further your knowledge of the financial world.

Yet when it comes to choosing the right wine for the moment – whether it be dining with a client or purchasing a bottle as a gift – you feel downright clueless. Moments like these are more critical than you might think; you're setting a tone and making a statement to a current or potential client.

This is the first in a series of articles to enrich your knowledge of wine, beer and spirits.

### Let's start with the basics:

#### *Know thy grape.*

To understand wine, you must do it in small steps. More importantly, it is vital to practice. This is the easy part. Once you learn something about a grape, go out and buy a couple of bottles of that style of wine and taste for yourself. I suggest at least two different brands of any particular grape so that you can make some comparisons. This way, you are better able to understand a flavor when you sample two side by side.

You'll have leftovers of both (though some of you may not), but if re-corked and kept in the fridge, they should be fine for a while. You will be able to taste them for about 5 days.

For this article, we'll focus on wines derived from the Chardonnay grape. If the bottle says Chardonnay, the wine likely came from California, Long Island, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina or South Africa.

If the bottle is filled with white wine and says Burgundy, the wine is from France and is made from the Chardonnay grape. Look for bottles that say Chablis, Meursault, Montrachet or Pouilly-Fuisse`

The Chardonnay grape is a classic white wine grape grown all around the world. Its fame stems from its success in the Burgundy and Champagne regions of France. (Chardonnay is a primary grape in Champagne). White Burgundy wines are made from the Chardonnay grape (with only a few exceptions that you will not likely come across) and red Burgundy wines are made from the Pinot Noir grape. Remember this and you are already ahead of most when it comes to understanding wine.

Chardonnay is traditionally fermented or aged in oak barrels. This may produce hints of vanilla in its aromas and flavor. The darker the color, the more time it likely spent in oak.

What does this mean? When you see a darker-colored white wine, expect oak. How does this affect your meal? An oak-laden wine will go better with richer flavors and meats. Also, think of wood and its relation to fire. Oak wines go well with meals cooked over a flame or with a smokey character (grilled chicken, veal or pork; smoked meats; strong cheeses; etc.).

Chardonnay also tends to go well with dishes served with butter or a cream sauce.

Steer clear of red sauces, garlic and oil, salads, and lighter meals when drinking a Chardonnay.

Chardonnay also ages well in the bottle, (especially those that have more oak character) though it will not age as long as many red wines. It often has less acidity than Sauvignon Blanc. Acidity is the tartness you feel on the sides of your



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tongue when you taste wines such as Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and other light whites. It's similar to biting into a lemon or green apple. Acidic wines are better with seafood and lighter cuisine.

While some Chardonnays are great with seafood, it is usually best to avoid a seafood dish when you are drinking this style of wine and instead opt for a more acidic selection. But if you are planning on Chardonnay with your seafood, it is best with lobster, grilled shrimp and grilled steaks like tuna or swordfish.

The best Chardonnays come from cooler climates, though warmer climates produce some great ones as well. That said, when looking at the geographic origin of the wine, you want to seek out wines produced in the cooler areas of a particular region. Chardonnay produces medium-to-full-bodied wines traditionally with rich apple, citrus, and tropical fruit aromas and flavors.

*Cheers!*