

# James Dunne

**Q** *What steps do you go through when trying a new wine?*

I look at the label. I'm looking for terminology that will give me hints as to what's in the bottle. For example, the alcohol content — usually if it's higher in alcohol, it will be a drier and more full-bodied wine. I also select wine based on the occasion. If it's for dinner, I might want a chardonnay or meritage; if it's to sip casually, then I'd want something lighter like a riesling or pinot noir.

**Q** *Is there anything on the label that tells you this might be a great wine?*

Not specifically, but there are hints and part of that is geography. If it's French, there are designations such as Premier Cru, meaning a governmental agency acknowledges it as wine of distinction.

**Q** *What is an up-and-coming wine district?*

Long Island. I love the wines and am proud to be part of the industry here. Long Island is ideal for growing grapes. The region is only 30 years old. The fact they're putting out world-class wines at such a young age tells me that there are even greater things to come.

**Q** *What wines are best for a novice to try?*

Buy six different grape varietals. For red, buy a pinot noir, a merlot and a cabernet sauvignon. For white, buy riesling, a sauvignon blanc and a chardonnay. Stick with the name brands; they are of a consistent quality and representative for someone just starting out. Try the three whites together and the three reds together. Do comparisons and taste them in the order stated, from light to full-bodied. At any tasting, always try



“I’m trying to teach people to judge with their taste buds and not with their wallets,” says James Dunne, the founder and president of VinoU™, a new wine education program on Long Island. Dunne deflates wine-pretension through his eight-week tasting and education course, held at the Marriott in Uniondale. In a relaxed and friendly environment he dispenses useful information such as what to look for when tasting wine, principles of wine and food pairing, how to interpret a wine label and understanding a wine list. During each two-hour class he also touches on wine history and geography. Students get to sample more than 90 wines.

Dunne has worked in and around restaurants since age 12. In addition to degrees in restaurant, hotel and food service management, he holds a BA in psychology and a Juris Doctor — all are useful, he says, in his current work. The psych degree helps him to understand what motivates and satisfies the dining public, while the law degree is useful in his consulting work and the courses he teaches in management for culinary arts and hospitality students at NYIT.

Dunne is the author of *Service Dynamics - Profitable Hospitality for the New Millennium*. The book is used in culinary and hospitality programs nationwide and as a guide and resource for service, beer, wine and spirits by restaurateurs, managers, bartenders and servers.

lighter wines first.

**Q** *What's your take on red wine with meat, white with fish?*

I don't believe in it. Ultimately you drink what you like and you have to let your taste buds do the talking.

## WINE WISDOM

by Lyn Dobrin

**Q** *Does wine go with all kinds of foods and all cuisines?*

Yes, but I do have a passion for spirits and beer as well. Wine can be enjoyed at any meal. My goal is to reduce the anxiety and pretension to make it accessible for any occasion.

**Q** *Does it matter what kind of glass a particular wine is served in?*

Part of that is tradition but ultimately it does matter. The shape of the bowl impacts how the scent of the wine will rise. For example, you would use a more narrow glass for a tart and acidic wine such as a sauvignon blanc. That shape will direct the wine to the center of your mouth where you'll get the fruit flavor rather than being overwhelmed by the acidity sensed by the sides of your tongue.

**Q** *Plastic, screw-top or cork?*

Old-fashioned cork is traditional and as much as I don't hold on to tradition, I prefer cork. There's something about the showmanship of the cork: it sells the experience. That said, learn to embrace plastic and screw-tops because they're here to stay. And they are much more reliable. Cork by its nature has upwards of a 10 percent failure rate. It dries and hardens. It's a porous substance. Plastic's success rate is over 99 percent.

**Q** *You're going to a desert island and can only take four wines; what would you take?*

That's not a fair question. The answer depends upon what I'll be eating on the island! 🍷

*Lyn Dobrin enjoys writing about food, chefs, travel and gardens.*