

# your LIFE

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Riverside Wine and Imports in Kent stocks 1,800 wines by the bottle, such as this rack of reds. To read more about what Riverside offers, read the Web-exclusive sidebar at [StaterOnline.com](http://StaterOnline.com).

PHOTOS BY LESLIE CUSANO

# Wine 101

## With a little patience and a little practice, anyone can become a wine connoisseur



**Meranda Watling**  
*Daily Kent Stater*

Big band music floats over the stereo system and drowns out the buzz of coolers overflowing with specialty beers.

Dim track lighting and a few low-light sconces illuminate the shelves stacked nearly floor to ceiling with bottles of wine.

At the bar, two older men sit drinking \$5-per-glass beer and asking questions about this place.

This is the scene at Riverside Wine and Imports in Kent on a typical Saturday afternoon. On a week-end night, the place is packed. Still, it's not a place you're likely to find most Kent State students, says Riverside owner Robert Morson.

"We get more professional people or grad students," he said. "More older, more the 30 and above crowd."

The store has several flat-screen televisions and frequently hosts live entertainment. There are 350 beers by the bottle, 6 beers on tap and 90 wines by the glass available for the adventurous, more sophisticated crowd Morson says make up the majority of his customers.

### Intimidation factor

Age isn't the only thing that keeps young adults from enjoying wine, said Frank Erickson, who teaches several wine pairing and tasting courses at Kent State. It's mostly intimidation.

### A Wine Primer

Looking at a wine menu or staring at a row of shelves can be intimidating and overwhelming. Use this quick guide to save face when ordering and to help pick something you think you'd like.

If you're not sure you'll like a wine, don't spring for the expensive bottle. There are plenty of good wines in the \$10 to \$15 range.

If new to wine, here's a quick tip: Red wines tend to be dryer than white wines, which tend to run sweeter. A good wine for the beginners is a Riesling.

"Riesling is the sweetest of white grapes," said Robert Morson, owner of Riverside Wine and Imports.

*I didn't have any experience with wine. I was freaking out every time I had to take a sip. But now I realize it's an acquired taste . . . I found out it's not just something old people do.*

Jeanette Nachman | Fourth year special education major

In other cultures, he said, wine appreciation is taught from a young age, and children grow up with wine on the table at meals. That doesn't happen here.

"You need to know a little before drinking wine," he said. "Ours is not a wine-drinking culture. We make wine complicated."

Another cultural factor is that our food and wine didn't evolve together as it did in most other places, he said.

"We have a diversity of wines and a diversity of food," he said. "So, you need to learn what goes together."

### It takes time

Everyone's palate is different; what one person dislikes another may enjoy. But finding an enjoyable wine — one that fits taste and price range — is possible for those willing to take the time.

The best way to learn about wine is to taste a lot of wine, said Tony Carlucci, a wine consultant who teaches with Erickson. He suggests attending tastings and sampling wines side by side.

"Structured tasting is an important way to find out what you like," Carlucci said. "For a whole lot less than you'd spend for a bottle, you can try five different chardonnays and have someone guide you as you taste it."

In addition to occasional tasting events, Riverside also has 16 flights on its menu, including one specifically designed for beginners. A flight

is a taste of three or four wines related by grape variety, region or style. The prices hover around \$10 per flight.

The wine tasting courses taught by Erickson and Carlucci allow students to try several wines and visit wineries throughout the region.

"Students say they love it," Erickson said. "It's important to them, important to learn for business and professional life. A lot of students say, 'I took the class because I heard it was fun, but I didn't expect to learn so much.'"

Former students' recommendations were what led Jeanette Nachman, fourth year special education major, to take the Wines of NE Ohio course.

"I didn't have any experience with wine," she said. "I was freaking out every time I had to take a sip. But now I realize it's an acquired taste . . . I found out it's not just something old people do."

### Going beyond the tasting

Reading about wine is another way to learn about it, Carlucci and Erickson suggested.

They recommended the book "Wine for Dummies," which Carlucci said is authoritative but easy to understand. His Web site, [www.ncweb.com/~wineclass](http://www.ncweb.com/~wineclass), also has information available.

Aside from reading, Erickson suggested establishing a relationship with a local wine seller.

In Ohio, wine prices are set by the winery. The only difference between buying at a specialty store instead of a supermarket is the service. Several stores in the area, including Riverside, West Point Market in Akron and Heinen's in Hudson, have staff on hand to help make wine purchase decisions.

"The best way to learn is to pick up a couple books and magazines, then connect with a local wine or bar establishment," Morson said. "Someone trained professionally will be able to say, 'If you like this, well you might like this ...'"

"We can find a wine you like, it's all a matter of tasting and communicating."

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### Local Wineries

The following wineries are all in Northeastern Ohio. Visiting wineries and sampling various wines is a good way to learn about the differences between the types and also find what works for you.

#### ■ Viking Vineyards

**Hours:** January through March: Thursday 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday noon to 11 p.m., and Sunday 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.; and April through December: Tuesday through Thursday 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday noon to 11 p.m., and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
**Location:** 268 Old Forge Road in Brimfield Township  
**Web site:** [www.vikingvineyards.com](http://www.vikingvineyards.com)  
**Phone:** (330) 678-2080

#### ■ Candlelight Winery

**Hours:** January through March, Wednesday and Thursday 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Friday and Saturday noon to 11 p.m.; and April through December: Tuesday through Thursday noon to 9 p.m., and Friday and Saturday noon to 11 p.m.  
**Location:** 11325 Center St. in Garrettsville  
**Web site:** [www.candlelightwinery.com](http://www.candlelightwinery.com)  
**Phone:** (330) 527-4118

#### ■ Mastropietro Winery

**Hours:** Thursday 4 to 9 p.m., Friday, 4 to 11 p.m., Saturday 1 to 11 p.m., and Sunday 1 to 5 p.m.  
**Location:** 14558 Ellsworth Road in Berlin Center  
**Web site:** [www.mastropietrowinery.com](http://www.mastropietrowinery.com)  
**Phone:** (330) 547-2151

To find more Ohio wineries, visit [www.OhioWines.org](http://www.OhioWines.org).

### Pairing wine and food:

"All wine tastes better with food," says Frank Erickson, who teaches several wine courses at Kent State.

The general rule for pairing is red wine goes with red meats, and white wine goes with poultry and seafood. Of course, this is a general guideline. Drink and decide what works for you.

Here are a few specific suggestions for meals and wines to pair:

- **Pinot Noir**, a red wine, with grilled red meats or roast chicken or duck.
- **Cabernet Sauvignon**, a red wine, with roast beef, aged cheeses or chocolate desserts.
- **Chardonnay**, a rich white wine, with grilled chicken or pasta in a creamy sauce.
- **Riesling**, a white wine, with sautéed chicken, white fish or fresh fruit.

Source: Carlucci & Associates wine class handout



"It's easiest to drink and easier on a beginner's palate."

### Red

- **Cabernet Sauvignon** (cab • behr • NAY so • veen • YOHN), full bodied with rich fruit and excellent balance.
- **Pinot Noir** (PEE • NOH nwah), medium bodied with berry fruitiness.
- **Merlot** (mair • LOH), medium bodied, high acid with berry-like fruit flavors.
- **Chambourcin** (SHAHM • bor • san)
- **Zinfandel** (ZIN • fan • del) full bodied with black-berry and pepper notes and fruit character.

### White

- **Chardonnay** (Shar • doe • nay), medium bodied, rich with smoky, vanilla or oak flavors.
- **Riesling** (REEZ • ling), light bodied, slightly sweet, fruity.
- **Sauvignon Blanc** (so • veen • YOHN BLAWN), light bodied, dry with grassy citrus notes.
- **Pinot Grigio** (PEE • NOH GRE • je • oh), light bodied with gentle aroma.
- **Muscat** (MOOS • kat), medium bodied, sweet desert wine.

Source: Carlucci & Associates wine class handout