



## A Note on Serving JUSTIN “Library” Wines

We have all heard about the glory of aged wines, but most of us have never actually had a chance to try one. As wines age, they acquire a subtle quality that is much sought after, but in order to experience their full potential they must be handled and served properly. As part of the JUSTIN Library Program we thought that a brief primer on decanting your JUSTIN library selections might help you and your friends to have the best experience possible when serving these wines. A JUSTIN decanter kit is available to help you prepare your wines for service. For more information about these kits, just ask your server!

### What’s the fuss?

As an age-worthy red wine develops in the bottle, there are reactions that occur between the components that make up the flavor, color, and even the tannins that cause that dry feeling in your mouth toward the end of a sip of many red wines. These components link up and form molecules large enough to fall out of solution in the form of sediment. As these molecules develop and drop out of solution, the wine becomes less fruit driven, smoother and more subtle; changing the wine into something really special for you to enjoy at a special occasion or with some great food. This is the main reason many people cellar wines and serve them when the moment is right.

Bottles aging in a cellar are generally stored horizontally to keep the corks moist so this sediment will accumulate on the lowest side of the bottle. Since this sediment is unpalatable, a bottle that is reoriented or shaken before serving will cause the sediment to be redistributed into the wine affecting that beautiful taste for which you have so patiently waited. For this reason, I recommend that you store the bottles in your cellar label up so you can identify the bottle with as little movement as possible and gently bring the bottle to the table with as little movement as possible.

### JUST Decant!

To fully enjoy what has developed in your wine over time, you will need to separate, or *decant* the wine from the sediment. Here is a quick description of how this is done.

1. **Remove the bottle from the cellar in the same position as it was stored** (in a cradle, if you have one), or if you are serving the wine in a few days, you can gently move the bottle to an upright position and store it in a cool environment (not a refrigerator!) away from sunlight.
2. **Cut the capsule, or foil, just below the raised band at the top of the bottle;** this gives you full access to the top of the bottle and will prevent any contamination of the wine due to drips that come into contact with the foil.
3. **Wipe off the area around the cork and top of bottle** with a damp cloth to remove any chalky residue that might have accumulated due to long storage in a cellar.
4. **Insert your wine opener into the cork and carefully pull the cork from the bottle.** (Keep in mind that if you are doing this in cradle, you may want to *gently* prop up the front of the cradle to keep from spilling wine when you get the cork out. Keep the bottle as still as possible throughout this step. A simple ‘waiter’s friend’ style wine opener with a long hollow centered screw is the generally best for this job, especially for older corks.
5. **Light a candle or place a flashlight facing up between the table and where the neck of the bottle will be located during decanting.**

6. **Decant the wine** by gently removing the bottle from the cradle and keeping the bottle in the same orientation, being careful not to spill any wine from the top of the open bottle. Bring the bottle to the mouth of the decanter and slowly start pouring the wine gently into the decanter. If you have a funnel, this will make it easier to pour and help prevent spillage. After a while, you will start to see the light from the candle or flashlight through the neck of the bottle. Look for a thin stream of sediment as it travels toward the neck of the bottle. Just before the sediment enters the neck of the bottle, stop pouring and set the bottle in an upright position on the table. At this point, whatever is left in the bottle cannot be consumed since it is full of sediment. *Tip: The more smooth and gentle you are in decanting, the more drinkable wine you will get out of each bottle, so it might be worth practicing decanting with a bottle filled with water to become more familiar with the motions involved with decanting. Relax and keep a fluid motion during the decanting*
7. **It might be a good idea to let the wine breathe a bit.** Depending on the structure and age of the wine you have decanted, it might be a good idea to let it sit for 30 minutes, an hour, or even more before serving it. The older the wine, the less you will want to wait.

***To breathe or not to breathe...*** typically, if a cabernet or Bordeaux style wine is less than six or seven years old, it will want it to 'breathe' or sit a little in the decanter before serving. This will allow the wine to open up a bit and offset the tannins that might be left. As wine ages, the tannins will diminish to a point where it will not need to sit for long. As the wine approaches the end of its aging life, it may actually breathe its last breath in the decanter before you serve it if you decant too early! Since most people do not actually keep wines long enough for this to happen, you more than likely would not need to worry much about this. A simple taste at this point might tell you more than any vintage chart. If you have questions about this with JUSTIN wines, please consult the vintage chart in your latest JUSTIN Times, our Wine Society newsletter, or check our website at [www.justinwine.com](http://www.justinwine.com).

#### **But wait, there's more!**

- a. **Younger wine may also benefit from decanting** so don't just use your decanter for your older wines. By pouring a younger wine from the bottle into the decanter, you will introduce oxygen into the wine and cause the flavor and aromas to 'open up'. With this application, you will want the wine to splash vigorously into the decanter so have fun making some bubbles while pouring the wine into the decanter, or use an aerating funnel or similar device to speed things up a bit. Keep in mind though that decanting can make a very young wine more expressive, helping you to enjoy it a little earlier, but it will not replace the aging process.
- b. **If you have trouble with a cork while opening a bottle** and break some of it off into the bottle, don't worry. You can just decant the wine using the strainer supplied with your funnel to trap any of the cork bits that fell into the wine. Not only do you get rid of the broken cork, but you look like a pro serving the wine from a decanter!

#### **JUST enjoy!**

A decanter set is an essential tool for the wine lover and will help you to more fully enjoy what you have waited years to enjoy. Remember, wine should be a fun and entertaining addition to any occasion. Relax while decanting and enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells the wine gives you during the decanting process, and share this experience as well as your passion for wine with your friends and family.

Cheers!

Jim Gerakaris  
Certified Sommelier, JUSTIN Vineyards and Winery  
[jimg@JUSTINwine.com](mailto:jimg@JUSTINwine.com)