

Wine Tasting Etiquette

You don't need to be a 'Wine Expert' to enjoy a wine tasting, all you need is the gumption to try. Wine tasting is subjective and there are no right or wrong answers, so just give it a go.

To help you navigate the do's and don'ts of wine tasting experiences at a cellar door, we've pulled together a few helpful tips to steer you in the right direction.

Pre-Plan if you can! There are over 35 Cellar Doors dotted around Hawke's Bay so we recommend planning your route in advance, and if you are travelling in a group of 6 or more we recommend phoning ahead to make a booking so the Cellar Door staff know you are coming, and can look after you in their usual 5 Star way.

Do I need to pay? Each winery is different and some may charge and some may not, but it's not uncommon to pay a modest fee for a tasting, particularly if you are in a large group. Happily, most wineries deduct the tasting fee from any purchases so you will be a winner in the end!

What should I taste? Cellar Door staff are trained in guided tastings so you can relax and leave it to them. They will pour and explain the wines as they go but don't be shy to ask as many questions as you like! Many of the wines you will taste are only available at the cellar door or as a limited release, so don't miss the opportunity to try something new.

White before Red? Wines are generally tasted with white wines first, red wines to follow and dessert wines last. There is usually a tasting order which is designed to show the wines at their best – be guided by your host and resist the temptation to jump around the list. If you don't want to try a wine that's fine (although we dare you to be brave even if you think you don't typically like that varietal) Be prepared that you may have to wait before you are able to try the wine you are interested in as other members of your group go through the Tasting order.

Spit or swallow? There is no right answer to this age-old question, it is purely personal choice. However, if you want the day to last, it's probably a good idea not to swallow everything you taste! Cellar Doors all have "spittoons" or will indicate where you may spit or empty your glass.

Don't forget if you like what you try, it pays to 'make friends' with the winery by signing up to be a valued friend so they can stay in touch and offer you preferential access to exclusive deals and specials.

Happy tastings!