vinetur

12 common wine beliefs that can mislead you when buying, storing or serving a bottle

From corks and heavy bottles to temperature, scores and oak, this quick guide helps you swap myths for more useful ways to choose.

Wednesday, November 25, 2026

Wine myths



- **“Cork guarantees quality”**

  A screw cap can also protect wine well.



- **«A heavy bottle means better wine”**

  The weight of the glass does not measure quality.



- **«Wine gets better with age”**

  Many wines are ready to drink and can lose freshness if stored.



- **«Legs in the glass indicate quality”**

  They are a physical effect and do not measure quality.



- **«An expensive wine always tastes better”**

  Price does not predict your taste

Closure, bottle weight, age, wine legs, price and oak ageing do not, on their own, guarantee a wine’s quality or your enjoyment of it. Educational illustration generated with AI.

Plenty of ideas about wine keep circulating because they make decisions sound simpler than they really are. In practice, much depends on how the wine is made, how it is served and what you actually enjoy. This quick guide looks at 12 repeated beliefs and turns them into more useful criteria for buying, storing and enjoying a bottle without chasing magic guarantees.

1. “Natural cork = quality”

The closure affects how a wine develops, but on its own it does not decide whether the bottle is better or worse. Some screwcaps offer excellent protection and some corks perform very well, but the result also depends on the specific material and the bottling. The smell known as “cork taint”, linked to TCA, does not always come from the stopper either: it can also appear after earlier contamination. In practice, do not dismiss a bottle just because it has a screwcap, and do not assume every cork-finished wine will be superior.

2. “A heavy bottle means a better wine”

Glass protects the wine, but extra weight does not improve what is inside. A very solid bottle can create a sense of luxury and, in some markets, higher weight has been linked to higher price and greater consumer expectations, but that does not prove better quality in the glass. The important nuance is that some bottles, including those used for certain sparkling wines, do need extra strength because of internal pressure. The practical takeaway is simple: do not pay more just for the impression of a sturdier package.

What you can see is not enough to judge a wine

Closure

Cork and screwcap can influence how a wine evolves, but neither guarantees quality on its own.

The smell known as “cork taint” does not always come from the stopper.

Bottle

The weight of the glass can create a sense of luxury without proving a better wine.

In some sparkling wines, a stronger bottle does serve a practical purpose.

3. “The older it is, the better it will be”

Ageing and improving are not the same thing. Many wines reach the market ready to drink, and long storage does not always add anything; in some cases, it can even cost them freshness and balance. Even wines made to evolve have a more favourable window and do not improve forever. If you are thinking of cellaring a bottle for years, first look for guidance from the producer or winemaker for that specific wine. Storing wine by habit is no guarantee of success.

4. “Legs show quality”

The legs, or tears, that run down the inside of a glass do not score the wine. They are a physical effect linked to alcohol evaporation, differences in surface tension and gravity. So while they may catch your eye, they do not tell you whether a wine is better made, better balanced or more likely to please you. Nor are they a reliable measure of alcohol or sugar. If you want to judge a bottle, pay more attention to its aroma, flavour and balance than to that visual effect.

5. “Sulfites cause headaches”

Automatically blaming headaches on sulfites oversimplifies an issue that can have several causes. Alcohol-induced headaches do exist, and some people are sensitive to certain wine components, including sulfites or histamine, but that sensitivity does not look the same in everyone and does not support broad conclusions. In the case of sulfites, the reactions most often described are respiratory, especially in susceptible people. If you notice repeated symptoms, the sensible step is to discuss them with a healthcare professional rather than look for a universal fix in another bottle.

Three terms that help make these myths clearer

TCA

A compound associated with the smell known as “cork taint”.

It can appear through contamination that does not depend only on the stopper.

Surface tension

The forces acting on the surface of a liquid.

It helps explain why tears appear in the glass.

Histamine

A substance present in some foods and drinks.

It can affect susceptible people, but it does not explain every symptom.

6. “A good wine means spending a lot”

Paying more does not guarantee greater enjoyment. In blind tastings, where the label and prestige carry less weight, several studies have found that non-expert drinkers do not always prefer the more expensive wines; among consumers with more training, the pattern can change. That does not mean cheaper is automatically better, only that price does not ensure satisfaction in proportion. To buy more sensibly, set your budget, remember which styles you enjoy and avoid overpaying just for fame, scores or a luxury look.

7. “Red wine should be served at room temperature”

Room temperature is not a universal reference, because it varies greatly depending on the climate and the setting. In general, lighter reds tend to show better slightly cooler than fuller-bodied reds, meaning wines that feel weightier on the palate. As a guide, you might think of around 13°C for lighter styles and roughly 15–18°C for medium- to full-bodied reds, without treating those figures as strict rules. If the wine is warm, cool it gradually and taste how it changes.

8. “A medal or 95 points guarantees a safe choice”

Awards and scores can be useful clues, but they do not replace your own taste. Some competitions charge entry fees and use blind tasting panels, so paying to enter is not the same as buying a medal. At the same time, one study of a specific competition showed that the same judge could give different scores to repeated samples of the same wine, a reminder that a number is not an absolute truth. Use them as a secondary guide: look at who is judging, how they judge and whether the style described matches what you usually enjoy.

Signal	Can help guide you	Does not guarantee
High price	A style, an origin or a more costly way of making the wine.	That you will like the wine more or that enjoyment will rise in the same proportion.

Signal	Can help guide you	Does not guarantee
Medals or points	A quick reference to who assessed it and how.	A match with your taste or universal success.
A famous name or well-known origin	Information about provenance, profile or reputation.	Higher quality in every case or personal satisfaction.

9. “Only Champagne is worthy of a toast”

A celebration does not need a single origin. Champagne is made with a second fermentation in bottle, meaning an extra fermentation inside the bottle itself that creates the bubbles. There are also other sparkling wines, such as Cava de guarda, Corpinnat or Crémant, that may be worth considering depending on what is available where you live. The key point is not to turn a famous name into a universal rule. To choose well, compare style, freshness, bubble profile and budget.

10. “More oak means a better wine”

Oak is not a quality medal but a stylistic choice. Barrel ageing can bring toasted, spicy or vanilla notes, and it can also affect sensations such as bitterness, but a stronger oak presence does not automatically mean a better-made or more pleasurable wine. Some delicious wines use very little wood, while others deliberately aim for a more marked profile. The better question is not how much barrel the wine has seen, but whether that style suits you. Do not pay more just because oak sounds more prestigious.

11. “Opening the bottle in advance is enough to let it breathe”

Uncorking a bottle, airing a wine and decanting it are not exactly the same thing. Airing means exposing the wine to air; decanting means pouring it into another container, which can also help separate sediment. Opening the bottle ahead of time does not by itself guarantee a useful change, and prolonged exposure is not always beneficial either: some wines can lose part of their aromatic expression. The safest practical move is to taste a small amount first and then decide whether it needs more air or is

better left alone.

What to do before serving and airing

1. **1. Pour a little first**

   Taste a small amount before trying to correct anything.

2. **2. Check the temperature**

   If the wine is warm, cool it gradually and taste again.

3. **3. Decide whether it needs air**

   Simply opening it is not always enough; some wines change very little and others do not.

4. **4. Do not turn it into a routine**

   More aeration does not always improve a wine and can sometimes make it lose expression.

12. “A famous appellation guarantees success”

A well-known appellation or geographical indication gives valuable information about origin and about certain qualities, characteristics or reputation linked to that place, but it does not promise that you will like the wine. These systems also do not work in exactly the same way everywhere and may involve different conditions depending on the country or region. It makes sense to use origin as one clue among others, together with the producer, the style and your own experience. That is the idea that connects all 12 myths: no single sign, however familiar it may be, replaces tasting, comparing and choosing for yourself.