



WINE OFFERING SUMMER 2001

(Editor's note: This is the first brochure I have mailed in 12 months.
My sincere apologies for taking so long. I have no excuses.
The next brochure will be mailed this fall – I PROMISE! J.J.)



Hot Wine, Ice-cold Wine

Part 1: Ice-cold Wine and What You Can Do About It

*May I Offer You a Glass of Freezing-cold White Wine,
Or Would You Prefer Some Hot Red Wine?*

By Josh Jensen

I. Introduction, with a Digression on Other Companies' Catalogs and Prices

We Americans typically serve and drink our wines at the wrong temperatures, the whites too cold and the reds too hot. I object to those practices because good wines can't – and don't – taste right when they're too hot or too cold. And for that small category of truly great wines, it's a crying shame to drink them too warm or too cold. Both extremes prevent us from appreciating and savoring their greatness.

I know many of you are busy and lack the time to wade through page after page of self-congratulatory wine brochure prose, especially if your name, like mine, is on too many winery mailing lists. So I've summarized the basic information about the proper temperatures at which to serve and enjoy wines in three easy-to-grasp visuals below.

Again, like me you may be so busy that you barely have time even to look at the pictures in most catalogs, such as Victoria's Secret. Another favorite catalog is Whips, Chains & 'Cuffs, mailed from Antigua, I believe. I must say the quality of writing in most catalogs nowadays isn't as uplifting as it used to be, so you don't miss much if

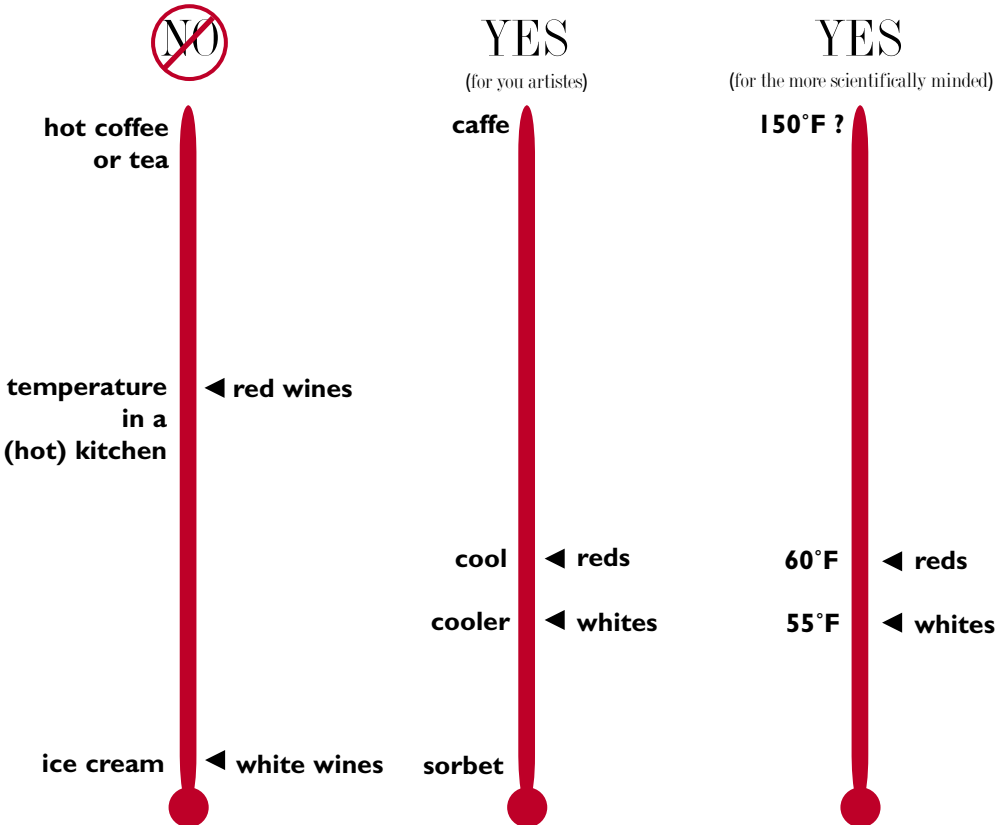
you just gloss over those parts. But I digress.

My three visuals, or “pictures,” below explain most of what you’re likely to want to know about wine temperatures. So if you’re in a hurry you can just check out the “pictures” and skip the rest of this essay. That will save you some time, which you can put to good use by flipping straight to the Wine Order on the last page of this brochure, getting out your credit card, reaching for the phone, and dialing (831) 637-9170 to place a substantial order.

That’s actually the way I approach the many winery brochures I get – at least the part about skipping the text. I quickly turn to their Wine Order pages, fully intending to order several cases of Napa This and Sonoma That for myself and my friends, only to be stopped dead in my tracks by the high prices some wineries charge! What are some of these people thinking? (By contrast, when I turn to the last pages of Calera’s brochures, I’m always struck by the reasonableness and essential fairness of Calera’s prices. Way to go, Hollister!)

Our uptight legal staff wanted me to mention that the temperature preferences contained herein are just one man’s opinions, and that if you’re unhappy with the temperature of your next glass of wine that’s your problem, not ours. However, I will qualify that disclaimer by adding that I know I’m absolutely right about these temperatures no matter what anybody else says or thinks.

II. All You Ever Need to Know, in “Pictures”



III. Very Cold Wines; Right and Wrong Ways to Use Ice Buckets; Hypothermia

An extremely cold wine, such as a bottle of Chardonnay that's been fully immersed in ice or in an ice-and-water mixture for 30 minutes or in a cold refrigerator for more than an hour or two, will be between 32° and 36° F. At such a low temperature, unfortunately, that wine can show you only a mere fraction of its many aromas and flavors, until and unless you allow it to warm up *a lot*. You can warm a glass of wine quickly by cupping the bowl of the glass in your hands, if you happen to own a pair of hands that are warmer than 32° F. If your wine's too cold but you're in no hurry, the room temperature eventually should warm it up. In any case, take the bottle out of the damn ice bucket and leave it out.

Doing so in a restaurant, though, can lead to a cute little minuet between you and the waiter if you're dining in a place that is 100 percent determined that its customers should drink their white wines cold, or else! This happens to me more often than I care to think about. My glass of white wine will be too cold, so I'll take the bottle out of the ice and put it (the bottle, not the ice) on the table. I'll go back to my conversation, or, if I'm by myself, to whatever catalog I'm "reading." I'd probably read more newspapers, instead of catalogs, if newspapers would use more photos, especially those nice "artistic" photos, and less writing. *The New York Times* is a good example of a paper that could use more photos, but it ran a fabulous article (and a photo!) on Calera on May 16th (see enclosed). So the *Times* is tops in our book no matter what.

Now back to our restaurant minuet. Next thing I know, without my having heard or seen anything, the bottle is back in ice. Hmm. I take it out a second time and put it on the table a second time. Now I'm beginning to get suspicious. Is this restaurant haunted? I watch the bottle out of the corner of my eye while pretending to "read" my catalog. This time I catch the waiter or waitress cold-handed, trying to take it off the table a second time to put it back in the ice. Usually at that point all you have to do is calmly explain that you didn't put the bottle on the table by mistake, but rather on purpose, and he'll buy into your eccentricity in hopes of being rewarded with a big tip.

Sometimes, though, you have to do a little jawboning. The waiter will explain to you in short, easy-to-understand, well enunciated, declarative sentences, "Sir, this is a white wine. White wines are served cold." That speech pattern is familiar to me because I just got back from my college reunion. The undergraduates who worked at the event spoke to us that way, which, incidentally, is how

you're supposed to speak to the mentally retarded. (Come to think of it, they might have a point.)

So you try telling the waiter, in a confident enough tone, that you're the customer and this is how you want your wine, and the customer is always right, etc. Usually that will do the trick, but not every time. In those tiny number of cases you might have to pull out all the stops, explaining with a big smile on your face that your generosity as a tipper is legendary, provided that you are allowed to drink your white wine at a temperature at which you can actually smell and taste the wine, but that if you are forced to drink your wine at a temperature at which you can't smell or taste it at all, such as freezing-cold (here you might want to interject that you read somewhere that wines can get hypothermia, just like humans; see below), not only do you not intend to pay for the wine but also he will observe that your legendary tipping generosity can turn instantly into parsimony, and further that you happen to be on very cordial terms with both the mayor and police chief of whatever town you happen to be in, so would he please stop putting your wine back in the ice and tell all busedpersons, captains and anyone else likely to walk by that you're a weirdo who doesn't want his white wine cold, but who claims he's a big tipper, so can we just let him be?

In fairness, there are at least four separate situations in which ice buckets can play a useful role. The first situation is when you have a bottle of white or rosé that's not cool enough. Perhaps it's been in your car and there's no fridge nearby, or you want to start drinking the wine right away, sooner than a fridge could lower the wine's temperature. (As an aside, I'm proud to say I really like good, dry rosés, and I prefer to drink them at white wine temperatures, around 55°.) So for those situations where you wish to cool down your white or rosé quickly, an ice bucket is the perfect device. But fill the bucket with a lot more water than ice.

The second situation arises when the ambient air temperature, whether indoors or out, is warm or even hot, for instance if you're having a summer picnic in direct sunlight. Again, an ice bucket, but always with more water than ice, is the perfect solution, for red wines as well. Take the bottle out of the bucket if the wine starts to get too cold, and put it back in if it starts to warm up more than you want.

When I pour our wines at wine tastings in warm weather, I'll often be at the edge of a tent, and my luck usually has me pouring with the sun full on me and our wines. When that happens, I constantly rotate all the wines we're showing, moving them into and out of the ice water, Pinot Noirs as well as all the whites, to keep them as close as possible to the right temperature. It helps if you have about six hands.

A third (somewhat “emergency”) use for ice buckets is for cooling down red wines in restaurants that seem to have nothing but warm or hot bottles of red on hand, or whose staffs believe that hot is best for red wines (see Part 2 of this essay on wine temperatures, coming to your very own mailbox from Calera this fall). It’s actually sort of fun to see the expression on the faces of some of these people when you ask for an ice bucket for your red wine. You usually can get them to honor your request by claiming, “I own a winery.” Or you can make an even more outrageous claim, “I know what I’m doing.”

The fourth valid use for ice buckets is for champagnes, which I prefer to drink quite cold, say around 40° F.

But to return to my belief that it’s a mistake to drink still, i.e., non-bubbly, white wines too cold, it shouldn’t surprise us that lowering a wine’s temperature almost to the freezing point stuns a wine. It certainly would stun you or me if we were put in ice for that long, and it’s the same for humans. It’s called hypothermia. Wines – and humans – just don’t work right at those very cold temperatures. But the good news for wine lovers is that wine recovers immediately from the effects of (short-term, at least) hypothermia as soon as it warms up. At any rate, wine recovers better and faster than you or I would.

IV. To Anthropomorphize or Not to Anthropomorphize, That Is the Question

A fancy way of categorizing the above comparison between wines and humans is to say that I “anthropomorphized” the wine. Well, let me tell you that’s a big taboo among the chemistry professors who run the winemaking department at the University of California at Davis, our country’s biggest and best known training ground for winemakers. Their approach seems to be – and I know they wouldn’t be thrilled with the following description any more than they like anthropomorphizing wine – that wine is a sort of soup of water, alcohol, chemicals, minerals, ions, esters, phenols and other substances, and that it is “made” by white-coated chemists operating in pristine, sterile control rooms.

These scientists make and implement specific decisions, adding this, subtracting that, processing all wines through huge, shiny machines in the same way totally fake, manufactured beverages such as disgusting colas and other artificial soda pops are made, i.e., assembled from the ground up by taking some water from your city water supplies, shooting some carbon dioxide into it for bubbles, throwing in some sugar (or fake sugar so it can be called “diet”), some chemicals for “flavoring,” some other chemicals for artificial color, then flooding every known retail outlet with cans and bottles of this

stuff, even sending it all around the world to poor, unsuspecting foreigners who are unfamiliar with our bizarre customs, and paying the three or four surviving monster broadcasting companies hundreds of millions of dollars to brainwash our citizenry into going out and spending their hard-earned money, or should I say the 49 percent of their money they still have after the U.S. Government and the California Government have helped themselves to the first 51 percent that came rolling down the assembly line of life, on that garbage.

I happen to be an ardent believer in freedom and other liberties, but when I see otherwise sane, well-adjusted adults drinking soda pop I have to wonder if society has gone just a wee bit too far with this “consenting adults” thing. Kids, I can understand. After all, soda pop is cloyingly sweet. But adults, shouldn’t they know better? This is just one item in the long list of things I will never understand.

Well, I’ve got news for the chemistry profs at U.C. Davis: Wine is a living thing. I first heard that at about age 6 from the late Dr. George Selleck, a lifelong friend of my family’s and my first wine mentor. George had advised my dad to buy some German wines for our family’s use, and was outraged when he learned that my dad was storing them in our barn in the East Bay hills. It was bad enough, said George, a lifelong San Franciscan born in North Beach, that we lived “over there” in the boondocks. But when he saw that my dad had put these few cases in the barn – which, aside from the proximity to horses and a cow, also was a place that got very hot in summer and very cold in winter – George went ballistic.

“Wine is a living thing! You can’t treat wines that way!” he told my dad in no uncertain terms. To his dying day George remembered the wine-in-the-barn episode, and it never failed to rile him up. But hey, in fairness to my dad, he was new to this whole wine thing. It was about 1950. Not many Americans knew much about wine back then, including my dad and me. But I learned right then and there, at age 6 from a legitimate expert, that wine was a living thing. My dad never dared store wine in the barn after that, or if he did he never let his buddy Selleck (or me) find out about it.

I’ve run out of room, so I’ll close by summarizing my guidelines on correct wine drinking temperatures.

1. Wines often are served and consumed too hot or too cold in this country.
2. White wines, which are usually, but not always, the ones served too cold, and rosés both should be served cool to the touch, say around 55° F,
3. Red wines, which usually are served too hot because people misinterpret the old “room temperature” guideline, should be served

cool, too, in fact only slightly warmer than white wines. Let's call this 60° F.

4. The main exception: Champagnes and other sparkling wines, which are best when quite cold. I know of one outstanding Northern California restaurant that sets the thermostat on its storage-for-service cold box (it uses the Sub-Zero brand) for most of its champagnes at 44° F, and the Sub-Zero holding its prestige Champagnes, the *grande marques* and *tête de cuvées*, at 45° F.

In the fall brochure, we'll explore more about red wines and why they should be served cool, not warm. We'll learn some additional ways, other than super-cooling a wine, to mask or stun a wine if you're so inclined – for instance, if you want to cover up a defect in a wine you happen to have. Hint: Just about every one of those tricks is performed in the making of Sangria.

Department of Chest Thumping: Since the last time we crowed about it, Calera has been the subject of many wonderful articles in the press. We have reprints available of all these, and will be happy to mail any of them to those of you who request them. They're listed below in no particular order.

1. "Calera: Mining Pinot Noir on a Limestone Mountain," by Steve Pitcher in *The Wine News*, Oct.-Nov. 1999.
2. "Calera: The Great Limestone Gamble," by Jim Burns in *The Underground Wine Journal*, Feb. 2001.
3. "New World Pinot Noir," by John Winthrop Haeger in *Saveur* magazine, March 2001.
4. "Calera is Putting Hollister Pinot Noirs on the Map," by Laurie Daniel in the *San Jose Mercury News*, Aug. 16, 2000.
5. "A Reputation at Stake," by Tracie Cone in *The Magazine of the San Jose Mercury News*, Sept. 26, 1999.

There's also the *USA Today* article we enclosed in last year's brochure, "Lone Wolf Popularizes Pinot Noir for U.S. Palate," by Jerry Shriver, June 2, 2000. And the *New York Times* article we are enclosing in this brochure, "Shadow Boxing With Burgundy," by Frank J. Priol, May 16, 2001.

Finally, there is a terrific new book just out, *Real Wine: The Discovery of Natural Winemaking*, by Patrick Matthews, published by Mitchell Beazley, London. It's a small book in its format, with 256 pages of text (no pictures), and costs \$25 U.S. The author writes at length about Calera's history and philosophy.