

WINES&VINES

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Tips on Buying Bottles

Before buying bottles, a winery should define the target audience for its wines in terms of the nature of the winery and its marketing methods, whether its wines will sell primarily through retail stores or largely at the winery and a few nearby restaurants; that the character of the wine fits the image; and the price level. The entire package must work together: bottle, label, cork and foil. With about 72% of consumers buying on impulse, a basic concern is how to get the bottle off the shelf the first time.

The winery's filling line should be taken into consideration in terms of production economics, particularly the behavior of the bottles on the line and change parts that can impede production. Bottles must also work on retailers' store shelves – tall or exotic bottles may not fit. Make sure that the same bottles can be ordered in small quantities after the initial order. It is a good idea to ask if there is a residual stock somewhere in the country.

Wines made from lighter varietal grapes such as Pinot Noir and wines that are expected to spend more time on the shelf should be UV protected. Protection rates vary according to bottle color. In the 200-450 nm range, champagne green gives about 40% protection, amber 60% and antique green 90-98%. Cobalt blue has substantially less than champagne green.

Based on consumer response, the idea of quality is conveyed by the weight of the bottle, dark glass color, and the presence of a punt. Light glass color such as emerald green, thin glass, light bottle weight and a flat bottom suggest that the wine does not need to be protected. Antique green was perceived to indicate value in both red and white wines. Champagne green did not rank as high. Deadleaf is seen as working best for white wines. The rounder heavier bottle equated with value is thought of as being elegant: simple lines, a lack of clutter, and a degree of understatement. Bottle symmetry and flowing lines are important; rounded lines are better than angular shapes such as an octagonal bottle.

Selling coated or multi-colored bottles requires a stronger marketing strategy. The bottles must be tastefully done, fit the rest of the package and not look contrived. Gimmicky and confusing packaging tends to backfire. It is important to be honest with the consumer, and the color of glass should not leave the consumer guessing whether the wine in the bottle is red or white.