

What is the difference between red and white wine glasses?

Professor Claus Riedel first recognised that the shape of a glass can alter the overall experience and enjoyment of a wine, which helped to promote and enhance the world of the wine connoisseur. Now there are common rules applied to wine glasses, with different shapes for red wine glasses and for white wine glasses.

While wine glasses can come in a variety of shapes and sizes, if you want to enter the world of a wine connoisseur you will need to know the difference between red wine glasses and white wine glasses to get the most out of your drinking experience.



Red Wine Glasses:

- Shorter stem
- Larger/rounder bowl
- Wider mouth



White Wine Glasses:

- Longer stem
- Smaller/narrower bowl
- Narrow mouth



Stemless Wine Glasses:

- No stem
- Available in red and white varieties

Red Wine Glasses

Red wine glasses are usually characterised by the following attributes,

A red wine glass will usually feature a shorter stem than that of white wine glasses. This is because while white wines are usually served chilled, red wines are served at warmer temperatures so the glass is usually held by the bowl, helping retain a mildly warmer temperature to help promote the flavours and aromas.

Red wines are bettered by oxidation, which is a chemical reaction between the wine and oxygen that helps to further enhance the flavours and aromas of a wine. It is common for red wine glasses to have large capacity bowls which are only designed to be filled around a third. This larger size combined with a rounded shape gives you more room to swirl your red, helping increase the oxidation process.

The wider mouth of a red wine glass also helps speed up the oxidation process by simply letting more oxygen reach the wine, while also allowing you to get your nose closer to your chosen tittle to experience the broad range of scents emanating from the glass.

There is a wide variety of red wine glasses that are ideal for use with different wines to best suit their bouquet, however there are two common types of red wine glasses.

Bordeaux Glass

The Bordeaux wine glass is designed for full-bodied wines such as Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon, and is shaped to allow the wine to reach the back of the throat.

Burgundy Glass

A Burgundy wine glass is best used when serving finer wines such as a pinot noir, and is shaped to help you appreciate the aromas of your wine.

White Wine Glasses

White wine glasses are characterised by the following attributes,

White wine is best served chilled, so the longer stem found on white wine glasses allows you to hold the glass without having to grasp the bowl, warming the chilled contents with your hand.

While red wines are enhanced by oxidation, there is less need to aerate a white wine, so the bowl is usually narrower, giving less surface area to the contents, allowing less air to react with the wine.

Acting just like the smaller body of a white wine glass, the narrower opening ensures less air can initially enter the glass, helping reduce oxidation, and this also allows the more delicate aromas of a white wine to be concentrated towards your nose when sniffing.

Although there aren't specifically named white wine glasses like there are for red wines (Bordeaux glass and Burgundy glass), there is a couple of basic rules you can follow when selecting the right glass for your favourite wine.

For delicate wines such as Riesling or Pinot Gris, choose a narrow glass with a narrow opening to allow the more subtle aromas to travel up the glass.

When sampling more spirited white wines such as a Sauvignon Blanc or a Chardonnay, choose a shallower glass with a slight taper towards the mouth as these wines benefit from slight oxidation.

Stemless Glasses

Stemless wine glasses are available for both red wines and white wines, and are commonly chosen for their unique presentation style. While you can serve white or red in a stemless wine glass, they are perhaps best suited to reds because your hand will affect the overall temperature of the contents which goes against the need for a chilled white wine.

It is common when serving wine to hold the glass by the stem to ensure the clarity of the glass bowl isn't affected by fingerprints. A glass covered in fingerprints can get in the way of appreciating the colour and clarity of the wine, which is all part and parcel of fully appreciating your wine.