

Harris Organic Wine Tours & Tasting – Swan Valley

The Ten Commandments.

If you are coming to the Swan Valley for an organic wine tour, we recommend you read this excellent article.

ANGELA YEAGER - Statesman Journal

May 27, Wine -- you love it, and you want to drink it.

If you're planning to visit the more than 5 local wineries that will be open today through Monday during the Memorial Day tasting tours, you need to be prepared.

In "Grade A" Queen Anne Thompson's words, don't be an idiot. If you are new to wine tasting, there are certain rules by which you need to abide.

If you don't, the best you can hope for is that people will know you are a newbie, feel pity and turn away from you in disgust. At worst -- you would be amazed at how easily corkscrews end up planted into people and how it ALWAYS looks like an "accident."

So read and memorize these wine-tasting commandments, (thinking of Charlton Heston playing Moses and reading them may help you to get in the right spirit -- because we are deadly serious).

I. Thou Shall Have a Designated Driver

If you are a smart, sensible person, then you already know to bring someone along who doesn't drink.

However, if you are the kind of jerk who doesn't always let common sense prevail, remember this -- the cops also know it's Memorial Day weekend, and they will be out in droves looking for brain-dead people like you. Also, drivers should remember you will be dealing with narrow, twisty roads and driveways, so for the love of all that is holy, slow down. And leave the obscene Hummer limos at the rental place. They sicken us.

II. Thou Shall Be Aware of Your Surroundings

Wineries frequently have little or no parking space to speak of, so think about where you leave your car. Don't squeeze your minivan in, making it difficult for the Honda next to you to open their door. Use common courtesy (which isn't common -- we know) from the moment you enter the driveway to your behavior inside the winery. In some cases, you are not just at a winery -- you are on the winery owner's property, where they LIVE. So please, be respectful -- don't yell, curse or laugh extremely loudly. This is not a Super Bowl party. Watch where you walk and check your rear-view mirrors before you back up in a tasting room -- you may slam people's elbows, and they will break their glass on their teeth. Don't cut in line or make rude comments about the wine in front of the person who may have made it.

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III. Thou Shall Start with the Whites, then Proceed to the Reds

If white wines aren't your thing, it's perfectly acceptable to start with the reds. Otherwise, the best way to taste is to start with the lightest, driest wines and work your way through to the heavier reds. Sweet dessert wines should be tasted last.

IV. Thou Shall Take Thy Sample and Move Away from the Tasting Table

You may think that your tasting fee rented you a private spot at the wine counter. You are wrong. On big busy weekends like this one, step up to the counter, receive your sample of wine and step aside. Note: When you step aside, look to see if a body is on either side of you. (See Commandment II)

V. Thou Shall Swallow With Discretion; Spit Carefully into Designated Receptacle

You don't need to drink every sample of wine poured for you. It is fine to spit (carefully) into the jar provided. In fact, if you plan on visiting more than one winery, it is preferred that you don't drink everything so you're not a drunk fool by the time you get to your next stop. Because no matter how suave you think you are when you're blasted, the rest of us are not amused.

VI. Thou Shall Not Make a Meal Out of the Appetizers

Food is provided for nibbling, so nibble! Don't heap your tiny plate with fistfuls of cheese and crackers and don't hover over the plates like a leopard over a kill. At some wineries, meals are available for purchase. Otherwise, the food is there to help cleanse your palate and keep a little something in your stomach. We advise you to eat a full meal before going to taste wines.

VII. Thou Shall Spend Quality Time With the Wine and Fellow Tasters (unless they are violators of other commandments, and then you're off the hook)

There is no need to make wine tasting a competition. Savor each sample -- take your time. Wine tasting also is social. Chat with your companions and make new friends by talking with those around you.

VIII. Thou Shall Not Put On Airs

If you don't know what terroir or tannins are, don't pretend you do. No one expects you to show up to a tasting as an expert. Don't throw around a bunch of lingo if you lack real knowledge. And if you do have knowledge, don't think that everyone wants to hear you expound on every single aspect of the wine you are tasting. Weekends like this one are to have a good time, and no one wants to hear some blowhard announcing what they think they know. If it tastes good, it's right for you. 'Nuff said.

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IX. Thou Shall Not Steal

Don't take anything from the winery that you didn't walk in with, unless the tasting fee included a souvenir glass. Period. It's rude, it's illegal, and you most likely are stealing from a local family. Shame, shame, shame.

X. Thou Shall Buy Something (even if it's just a hat)

You don't need to buy a case at every winery you visit, but if you are making your way through four or five wineries and leave each one empty handed, something is wrong. Wineries don't make money off your tasting fee -- that covers the cost of opening the bottle. They make money from sales. So if you like a wine, buy it. Start thinking about gifts for birthdays, holidays or just a little treat for yourself. Remember there are 12 gifts in every case.

Harris Organic Wines only ACO certified Organic Winery in the Swan Valley.