

THE ART OF DECANTING:

We decant wines for two reasons. Young red wines, like the 2013 Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon, can benefit from decanting as it allows them to breathe and the characteristics to soften and develop. Older wines should be decanted to remove any sediment that has built up during aging.

How to Decant a Young Wine:

Simply pour your wine into the decanter. Let it sit for twenty minutes or so before you serve it, and you'll likely notice a dramatic increase in subtlety and complexity. If you have the luxury of time, continue tasting the wine over a period of hours. It may keep evolving and improving.

How to Decant an Older Wine with Sediment:

This requires a bit more finesse. The wine has had plenty of time to age on its own, so it doesn't need any time to breathe. You may even ruin it by overexposing it to oxygen before serving. Thus, you should decant older wine immediately before serving, before it begins to change.

There are a few ways to separate a wine from its sediment. One is to stand the wine bottle upright for a few days before opening it, so that all the sediment collects at the bottom.

To decant on the spot, you'll need a candle or small flashlight, a clean cloth and a decanter. Open the wine and clean the inside of the bottle's neck of sediment with the cloth. Place the light source behind the neck of the bottle so you'll be able to watch for sediment. Then pour slowly into the decanter so the sediment catches in the shoulder of the bottle. When you get toward the end of the bottle, you'll start to see sediment creep up toward the neck. Stop pouring as soon as that happens. The wine you've just decanted will be clean and clear, with a bright and beautiful bouquet, and the sediment will be left behind.

Feel free to take the wine left in the bottle (usually about a glass) and strain it into a separate container, using cheesecloth or a coffee filter. It won't taste the same as the first pour, but it is often very palatable once filtered and, if nothing else, tasting it is a good exercise for one's palate.

About Sediment:

Sediment is simply the organic content of the grapes and is harmless if consumed. It is the sign of a quality wine—one that has undergone less fining and filtering during the winemaking process, which can remove many of the desired components of a wine. And rather than being a shortcut, producing wines this way is actually more labor intensive.

Sediment typically forms much more slowly in wines meant for aging, and will start to form slight noticeable deposits after a few years. And an older red wine will always form some sediment, so careful decanting is the best way to enjoy these beautifully aged wines.