

The world's [oldest bottle of wine](#) is about 1,700 years old, and you could probably still drink it!

Of course, after spending nearly two millennia in a dusty tomb, no amount of decanting and aeration could make that wine taste good. For many modern wines, however, aeration is essential!

Decanting, aeration, and millennia: these terms sound like buzzwords at a winery spelling bee. What is aeration anyway?

Sit back, pour yourself a glass, and don't touch it. In this article, we'll explain everything you need to know about aerating wine!

What Is Aerating Wine?

"Aerating" is a fancy term for letting the wine breathe or interact with the air. When wine contacts the air, it oxidizes and evaporates, creating a smoother, more even flavor.

Wine is aerated to open up [the "bouquet"](#) of aromas and flavors contained inside. Aerating your wine for some time before drinking brings out the hidden flavors that it develops in the bottle. As a general rule of thumb, you should aerate red wines with rich tannins and avoid aerating white whites.

Aeration vs. Decanting

Aeration and decanting are not the same, but you can use a decanter to aerate your wine. This may seem tricky, but it's not as confusing as it sounds.

Aeration is the process of exposing the wine to air.

There are several ways to aerate wine, the fastest being a rapid aerator. Rapid aerators are devices that aerate your wine almost instantly by pouring the wine through various spouts. [Discover more here](#) about aerator devices!

Decanting is the process of transferring your wine from the bottle to another container.

"Decanters" are containers for decanting wine. Most decanters look like a wide-bottomed pitcher that closely resembles a vase. This wide shape creates more surface area where the air can meet the wine, thus speeding up the aeration process.

The Science Behind Each Sip

Two essential reactions happen when you aerate your wine: oxidation and evaporation.

Oxidation happens when an atom loses an electron to an oxygen molecule. Oxidation is happening all around us, from a rusty bicycle to a browning apple and [our own blood](#).

If you leave a sliced apple on the counter, it oxidizes and turns brown within a matter of hours. Oxidation doesn't make your wine go bad or turn brown, but it does bring out the subtle aromas. Oxidizing wine during the production process can make wine taste like honey, coffee, or spices.

Evaporation is one of the first reactions you probably learned about in science class. Temperature, humidity, and surface area can impact how slowly or quickly your wine evaporates. As wine evaporates, it releases some undesirable substances into the air, creating a better-tasting wine.

Methods of Aeration

Now that you know the science behind wine aeration, you're ready to experiment. You don't need any special equipment to aerate your wine; in fact, you could do it right from the bottle, but here are some more efficient ways to aerate.

Using a Wine Aerator

There are several types of wine aerators, but they all perform the same essential functions to speed up the aeration process. Using a wine aerator significantly speeds up the aeration process, so you won't have to wait to enjoy your wine.

You can set some wine aerators inside or directly above your glass, then pour in the wine. As the wine runs through the aerator like a funnel, it oxidizes, and the flavors bloom.

Other wine aerator designs sit on the wine bottle like a cork. When you push a button or lever, wine is pulled through the aerator and streamed into your wine glass.

Using a Decanter

In theory, you could use nearly any container as a decanter, as long as it holds the wine in a way that exposes it to air. Of course, there are specialized wine decanters in many beautiful and elegant designs.

Pouring your wine into a decanter is an efficient way to aerate it before drinking, but you'll want to let it rest in the decanter at room temp for at least 20 minutes. Depending on your personal preference, you can leave the wine in the decanter for up to a few hours or even overnight. If you're headed out for a date night, you can leave your wine to decant until you return home!

Glass by Glass Method

If you don't have a wine aerator or a decanter, don't worry. You can still aerate your wine right in the glass!

Pour your wine into glasses and allow them to rest for at least twenty minutes before drinking. If you plan to have multiple servings, pour the wine early and allow your second glass to aerate while you're drinking your first glass.

There is a reason why wine-snobbs love to swirl their wine glasses! Swirling wine encourages aeration and opens up the wine's aromas. As you're sipping, you can keep swirling to experience the blossoming of new flavors.

Which Wines Should You Aerate?

You can aerate any red wine to open up the bouquet, but aeration is especially important for specific wines. You should aerate older wines, expensive wines, or wines that have been in your cabinet (or your dusty tomb) for several months. If you're at a restaurant or winery, don't be afraid to ask if you should aerate your wine before drinking.

As a general rule of thumb, it's a good idea to aerate or decant these wines:

- Bordeaux
- Cabernet sauvignon
- Malbec
- Merlot
- Nebbiolo
- Petite Sirah
- Shiraz
- Syrah

You don't need to aerate or decant these wines:

- Chianti

- Pinot noir
- Zinfandel
- Other affordable or light-bodied reds

It's not recommended to aerate most [white wines](#). White wine, especially chilled white wine, naturally opens up its bouquet as it warms in the glass. Of course, there are some exceptions to this rule:

- Alsace
- White Burgundies
- White Bordeaux
- Other full-bodied whites

A Wine Worth Waiting For

It's hard to have a bad time when you're drinking wine, but aerating wine will enhance the experience! Remember that wine glass you poured at the beginning of this article?

Now you can take a sip while you check out our other health, lifestyle, and entertainment reads!