

Making the Most of Your Cellar Door Experience

Hawke's Bay is New Zealand's oldest and most loved wine region, and there is a lot to see and taste! Here are a few tips to help you make the most of your wine time.

Pre-Plan if you can! There are over 35 Cellar Doors dotted around Hawke's Bay so we recommend planning your route in advance, and if you are travelling in a group of 6 or more we recommend phoning ahead to make a booking so the Cellar Door staff know you are coming, and can look after you in their usual 5 Star way.

Timing is everything! Don't rush it, give yourself at least half an hour per winery. Be sure to turn up with plenty of time before the cellar door closes, especially if you're wanting a full tasting. (If you arrive within 30 minutes of closing time, don't be surprised if you're politely invited back another time)

Patience is a virtue: Be courteous to others at the Tasting Bay. When the cellar door is busy you may have to wait, but we can guarantee it'll be worth it.

Do I need to pay? Each winery is different and some may charge and some may not, but it's not uncommon to pay a modest fee for a tasting, particularly if you are in a large group. Happily, most wineries deduct the tasting fee from any purchases so you will be a winner in the end!

What to Taste: Cellar Door staff are trained in guided tastings so you can relax and leave it to them. They will pour and explain the wines as they go but don't be shy to ask as many questions as you like! Many of the wines you will taste are only available at the cellar door or as a limited release, so don't miss the opportunity to try something new.

White before Red? Wines are generally tasted with white wines first, red wines to follow and dessert wines last. There is usually a tasting order which is designed to show the wines at their best – be guided by your host and resist the temptation to jump around the list. If you don't want to try a wine that's fine (although we dare you to be brave even if you think you don't typically like that varietal) Be prepared that you may have to wait before you are able to try the wine you are interested in as other members of your group go through the Tasting order.

Spit or swallow? There is no right answer to this age-old question, it is purely personal choice. However, if you want the day to last, it's probably a good idea not to swallow everything you taste! Cellar Doors all have "spittoons" or will indicate where you may spit or empty your glass.

How much is too much? The key to keeping on the right side of the Cellar Door staff is to remember it's a Tasting session and not a Boozing session. Wineries are licensed premises and as part of their legal Host Responsibility obligation, they can and will refuse service or admittance to people who are intoxicated. Don't be "that guy"!

Do I need to be a Wine Expert to enjoy a Tasting? Definitely not! All you need is the gumption to try. Wine tasting is subjective and there are no right or wrong answers, so just give it a go. Be considerate of other visitors and members in your group, and let everyone ask their questions. If you don't like a wine that's ok, it's all personal to your taste but think about how you share that opinion and be courteous to your hosts, no one wants to be told they have an ugly baby!

Make friends for life: If you like the wineries you visit, sign up to be a valued friend so they can stay in touch and offer you preferential access to exclusive deals and specials.

Think local, drink local. When you're dining out and about in Hawke's Bay, we'd love you to select Hawke's Bay's wonderful wines from the Wine List. Supporting local keeps helps us keep making world class wines. And that's good for everyone.

Thank you! Thank you for visiting, we hope you have a memorable and enjoyable stay in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand's most loved wine region.