

HOW TO JUDGE A DATE BY THEIR WINE CHOICES

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I have recently come to the end of a relationship. Or, to look at it in a more alarming and tedious way, I have recently become single. And while I could embrace watching what I want on TV and not worrying about any apparently innocuous 'girl-best-friends', as a hopeless romantic, I am ready to do it all again. I am back on the dating scene.

The last time I was properly, *properly* single was five years ago. That might not seem so long, but the world of dating has accelerated at a rapid pace and warped beyond recognition. There is now a flurry of apps by which to be depressed, dozens of new words to rot valuable space in my brain (see: 'breadcrumbing', 'orbiting' and 'rizz') and people just don't seem to approach each other in real life any more (although many are quick to obtusely attribute this to feminism and #MeToo, as if nothing existed between disregard and harassment on the sliding scale of human interaction).

It also seems that a lot of people use a date just to get their leg over – which is totally fine – and are prepared to fake their height, marital status and National Insurance number to do so. Afterwards, you're either ghosted (cowardly) or given the 'I don't know what I want' spiel (unbelievably unhorny). Everyone's time is wasted and you're each £60 worse off. If only there was a way to discover someone's true intentions at the very beginning of your date...

Here's what you do: hand them the wine list. Turns out you can tell an awful lot about someone from what they order for the table. Now, I know the wine lovers reading this will find their toes curling at the thought of a stranger ordering wine for them. But trust me, it's an investment in your own safety and wellbeing. Taking the reins to order your favourite Alsace Riesling for the table means never knowing that the person sat opposite was about to ask for Echo Falls.



If only I'd had my wits about me when one date (who knew fuck all about wine) whisked the menu out of my hands to order a bottle of Prosecco and a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, I'd have realised he was a maddening arsehole well before he took the trouble to reveal it to me himself. So, relinquish the list to your potential love interest, and judge away.

Aligoté: On a budget, but classy about it. I can see myself having a good date with this person.

Burgundy: A potential minefield for some, a promising sign for me. They have to know what they're talking about to recognise the plethora of guises a Burgundy could wear on a wine list. Or they're curious and keen to learn – I maintain that the sexiest thing a man can do is ask a sommelier for guidance or a stranger for directions.

Champagne: *Ça dépend.* Not all Champagne is created equal. If they're ordering a non-vintage *Grande Marque* with an unreasonable markup just so they can say they're getting Champers, that's a bit beggy. If it's outstanding value Champagne from a grower they visited earlier this year, why are you still reading this? Why are you not fucking them right this second?

Gamay: A safe bet. Will make you a cup of instant coffee the next morning without milk because they don't have any.

Lambrusco: Don't take themselves too seriously. Have probably holidayed in Italy outside the 'done' areas, which they'll gladly talk about for the rest of the evening until you shut them up with an impatient snog.

Merlot: Why are you on a date with your aunt?

Meursault: They're trying to impress you.

Nebbiolo: They know what they like and they've got the beans to back it up. A generous soul or a well-heeled psychopath? Only time will tell.

New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc: Mummy issues.

Nondescript Bordeaux blend: Daddy issues.

Pét nat: They want you to know they're a natty wine bro. If it tastes like fresh, crunchy red fruit, why not kick? If it tastes like a tangerine that's spent a couple of days inside a glovebox in summer, best to quit while you're ahead and climb out through the bathroom window.

Pinot Grigio: Their favourite position is missionary so they can make full eye contact.

Prosecco: An incredibly odd move. I remember a date aping an Essex accent whenever he said Prosecco, which rubbed me (and the chip on my shoulder) up the wrong way.

Provence rosé: If you're a woman on a date with a heterosexual man, this is what he thinks you want to drink. He's either doing it to manipulate you or to be nice to you. Either way, he shouldn't be trusted.

Ploussard: You should definitely fuck them, and they're probably hiding a bald patch under that beanie.

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Riesling: This is an interesting order. They clearly know their stuff and, if they've verified you're a wine lover, this is a very earnest attempt to impress you but not push the boat out too far. Second date territory.

Rioja: Watch them ask for a Rioja and then see if they get out their phone. Good Rioja vintages don't come to the front of one's mind as readily as those from, say, Burgundy, so it's a good sign if they're checking the vintage. A reliable shag.

Super Tuscan: Why are you on a date with an investment banker?

Sherry: If it's a biologically aged Sherry like a Fino, he's either Spanish or works in wine. Anything else, he's either 80 years old or works in wine. Either way, good luck trying to get any money out of him for a cab home.

Vinho Verde: Be wary of all uber-quaffable wines. They're trying to get you home or get you drunk quickly. Or both.

White Zinfandel: (somehow both confectioned and oaky): Call the police – there's almost definitely something lurking on the hard drive.

Non-committal wine bars (that make for a swift exit)

Binch
The 10 Cases
107
Mother Superior
Bar Crispin
The Connaught