



# FRENCH WINE

F O R B E G I N N E R S

BY MICHELLE LYN

Forget what you know about choosing wines for a moment...

**ÔCHATEAU**  
WINE TASTING & WINE BAR

French wines require you to approach them from a regional perspective, rather than focusing on varietals. Let me explain. In the U.S., we have our major winemaking regions (Napa, Sonoma, Santa Barbara, etc.). You may like a Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa or may have your favorites that are made in Santa Barbara. In France, Champagne is only made in the Champagne region, otherwise it's just a sparkling wine. Did you know that?

These are some of the many things I learned during a lively wine-tasting "class" I took at Ô Chateau in Paris last month. Olivier Magny, the founder who is an expert in French wine, started wine-tasting classes and tours for locals and tourists to educate individuals on the nuances of French wine, as well as to provide a fun experience.

After starting the classes in a gorgeous underground wine cave, Magny opened a bar upstairs that is now well known in Paris for offering a wide variety of unique French wines by the glass. In fact, Ô Chateau has grown to become France's No. 1 wine school and Paris' largest wine bar.

The evening of my class, there were couples and friends from the U.S., Spain, France, Germany, Holland and Switzerland. Clearly a date night of choice for locals, it was also a memorable experience for tourists.

According to Magny, you should never choose a French wine by the winery, because odds are that you will never find it again. There are more than 75,000 wineries in France as compared to approximately 12,000 in the U.S.

Instead, he recommends that you sample wines from the different regions to learn what you like. For example, I discovered that my red of preference is a Bordeaux from Medoc, perhaps because it is a Cabernet blend and offers a bigger, bolder flavor than something like a Beaujolais.

Perhaps my biggest takeaway from this crash course in French wine is that, according to Magny, you can find a lovely French wine for under \$10—unlike American wines, where one at that price point will surely guarantee a lovely headache the next day.



To learn more about French wine from Magny, visit [OlivierMagny.com](http://OlivierMagny.com) or just book a trip to Paris and sign up for one of Ô Chateau's classes at [O-Chateau.com](http://O-Chateau.com).