

There are only 2 types of wine

◆ **Red or white?:** No. It's the kind you like or the kind you don't like, says Renate Wallem.

IF YOU LIKE wine, but you get your cabernet-sauvignons mixed up with your cabernet-merlots, Renate Wallem should be the person you make your new best friend.

Wallem is the owner of the three-month-old Vintner's Cellar franchise on South River Road in Bedford,



Renate Wallem, owner of Vintner's Cellar in Bedford, with the display of house label wines.

next store to the Land Rover dealership. There, she teaches others to make their own wines and she makes her own as well, selling them from an area at the front of the spacious storefront that hosts parties and special events. Vintner's Cellar is a national franchise with 41 locations, two in New Hampshire (the other is in Portsmouth) with two more on the way in the state (in Concord and North Conway).

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In Good Taste

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The Bedford store makes more than 25 varieties of wine for patrons to sample, buy or actually make themselves. Customers may also book private wine tastings with friends, family or colleagues (evenings or Sundays) to sample and make their own wine. Customers may also create their own custom labels for their personal collection or as gifts, on their own wine or the store-made variety.

Because the wine ferments in five to six weeks, Wallem should soon start getting busy with holiday customers planning ahead. She will tend to the wine as it ferments over those weeks, stir it vigorously, filter it, even talk to it in her Austrian accent.

Wallem said every batch makes between 24 to 28 bottles, and that averages out to less than \$11 per bottle.



BOB LAPREE/UNION LEADER

Renate Wallem, owner of Vintner's Cellar in Bedford, corks a freshly bottled Pinot Noir.

Red or white? As far as she's concerned, "There are two types of wine, the ones you like and the ones you don't like."

Wallem notes that there's no one out back of her store stomping grapes in a giant vat. All the wines are made from syrups supplied by the store. All of the wine sold in the winery is made in the store. You won't find the usual commercial labels around the state. They come in several "blends" — gold, silver and bronze — which indicates whether they have been made with all pure juice, a mixture of juice and concentrate, or all concentrate.

Wallem, who once worked as a vice president of risk management for a large Boston bank, knows her wine. And she's not adverse to taking chances — she's now preparing a chocolate port made with Godiva chocolate liqueur. Other wines on her store list include a black currant merlot, raspberry zinfandel and white ice wine — served very cold and with a hint of peach and apricot.

We asked for some pairing suggestions, and here are her comments:

White wines

• **Chardonnay:** A full-bodied wine with a distinctive complexity and apple-like bouquet. A superb table wine with roast, poultry, veal and delicate pork dishes.

• **White Merlot:** The same as white Zinfandel, except it is made from the Merlot grape. These wines are tremendously popular during the hot months of summer because they are served chilled, usually with fish or meat.

• **Johannesberg Riesling:** This wine exudes aromas of fresh, sweet fruit such as ripe apricot, peach or something exotic — maybe guava or Muscat. It has a strong smell of minerals, sweet fruit taste upfront, held together by a good balance of medium acidity, finishing completely dry. It can be paired with white fish or pork, and it is one of the few wines that can stand up to the stronger flavors and spices of Thai and Chinese cuisine.

Red wines

• **Cabernet-Sauvignon:** Generally full-flavored with a smooth and lingering finish. These wines are high in tannin. They are bold and assertive with the potential to overwhelm light and delicate dishes. When paired with steak or dishes with a heavy butter cream sauce, the tannins are neutralized, allowing the fruits of the vine to be more noticeable. To counterbalance the tannins, use bitter foods such as radicchio and endive, or cook the food by charring on the grill.

• **Merlot:** A medium-bodied wine featuring a smooth flavor and aroma, hints of berry, plum and currant. They are fairly versatile when it comes to food-pairing options: Poultry, red meat, pork, pastas, salad all go well with Merlot.