

WINE TASTING

EVENT GUIDES
– all you need
to know

WELCOME

This is the place to find out everything you need to know about organising a Fairtrade wine tasting. You'll find top tips and ideas from other Fairtrade campaigners, facts and information about the wine industry, and details on how to find Fairtrade wine for your tasting. We hope you find it useful and we'd love to hear any ideas you'd like to share with other Fairtrade campaigners.



WINE TASTING

The range of Fairtrade wine is increasing at a phenomenal rate. There is now a wide variety available – including merlot, rosé, sauvignon blanc – from Chile, Argentina and South Africa.

Wine tastings are a fun and creative way to promote Fairtrade in your local area. They offer the opportunity to involve lots of people and often get great media coverage. Organising a Fairtrade wine tasting takes time and effort but it's a great boost to your local campaign and can be an excellent way to recruit new members. Wine tastings raise awareness of the range and quality of Fairtrade wine available and encourage people to choose Fairtrade next time they buy a bottle. The more Fairtrade products we buy, the greater the benefits for some of the world's poorest producers.



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More top tips as the big day draws closer – from recruiting volunteers to entertaining the crowds – and suggestions from Fairtrade wine tasting veterans to ensure everything goes smoothly.



SIP IT!

Let your audience know the difference Fairtrade wine makes

The conventional wine industry

The harsh realities for many hired labour workers in the wine industry:

- **During the picking season workers can be on their feet for shifts that last between 12 and 14 hours.**
- **Workers don't always have the right to use basic facilities – there are reports of vineyards where there's no access to drinking water or toilets.**
- **Many workers experience health problems linked to exposure to pesticides and toxic gases used in the industry.**
- **Workers are often employed on a casual basis. This means they have fewer rights and receive no paid sick leave, maternity leave or medical cover.**
Source: Oxfam, www.maketrade4fair.com

Workers in South Africa face tough conditions not present in other wine-producing countries due to the legacy of slavery, colonialism and apartheid. These include:

- **Highly unequal land distribution.**
- **Power relations make it difficult for workers to challenge unfair practices or poor conditions. In most cases farm owners decide on working rules, wages and housing conditions without consulting workers. A lack of unions and other options means these decisions often go unchallenged.**
- **A hiring and payments system that often discriminates against women.**
- **Many farm-workers live on the vineyard, often adding further complications to worker-management relationships, the definition of a 'living wage' and making it even harder for workers to speak out against unfair employment practices.**



Country profile: South Africa

In South Africa, life expectancy is 50 years (*United Nations Development Programme*) and infant mortality rates are some of the world's highest. Also known as the Rainbow Nation, South Africa has a unique and harrowing history due to the apartheid system, which was abolished in 1994. Apartheid divided the nation, physically and in countless other ways, on the basis of race. It has had wide-reaching negative effects on the economic and social make up of South Africa. The scars of apartheid remain and the benefits of South Africa's reported economic growth are not reaching the poorest people. Since 1994 all South Africans have equal rights in law. However, in practice, around 40 per cent of the black population are unemployed, compared to five per cent of whites, and the white minority owns 85 per cent of agricultural land.

The importance of Fairtrade

Fairtrade aims to change these injustices. It's about making trade fairer. Fairtrade seeks to strengthen the position of marginalised farmers and workers and enable them to earn enough for today so that they can invest in a better tomorrow. This is done through a minimum price which covers the cost of production (enough for today) and a social premium which producer organisations invest in community projects (a better tomorrow).

Most Fairtrade certified wine producer groups in South Africa are located on large farms that use hired labour.

- **Fairtrade standards for farms using hired labour are based on International Labour Organisation Conventions. Estate or plantation owners must pay decent wages, promote the right to join trade unions and provide good housing where appropriate. Minimum health and safety, as well as environmental standards, must be applied. Forced and child labour are both prohibited.**
- **Fairtrade standards must meet or go beyond the national legislation of the country in which they apply. In the case of South Africa, Fairtrade standards embrace Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE), a legislative process to increase employment opportunities and extend the participation of black people in the economy through the transfer of business ownership, management skills and knowledge. The extra resources that Fairtrade delivers, and its underpinning of B-BBEE, mean that workers on commercial farms are empowered both through Fairtrade and B-BBEE.**

Producer profile: Maria Malan

Maria Malan started as a domestic worker at Stellar Farming in Western Cape, South Africa, in 1976. When her mother died in 1974 she was responsible for her younger sisters Sophia, Eliza, Anna and Hesta and her brothers Joseph, Piet, Filemon, Booï and George, as well as caring for four orphans whom she brought up as her own. Maria's natural leadership allowed her to work her way up to become farm manager, in charge of 200 staff and of allocating teams to each of the supervisors at the start of the season. Maria has also chaired Stellar's Fairtrade Committee as well as previously being elected onto the South Africa Fairtrade Committee.

Since Stellar became Fairtrade certified in November 2003, the employees' quality of life has greatly improved. Projects funded by the Fairtrade premium include free housing, electricity and water for permanent farm workers and a trained health care committee for workers. All schooling and childcare facilities are subsidised by Stellar Winery and workers are encouraged to pursue further education. Courses range from personal hygiene to winemaking. Other projects include an organic vegetable garden, where the vegetables grown can be sold at the local market to fund tertiary education for workers' children.

The people who work for Stellar are its greatest asset. Their enthusiasm, drive and sheer hard work have ensured that our dream of building a successful, sustainable organic farming and winery operation has been realised. The workers now play a role in decision making, where they participate in smaller groups where they can work for fair solutions. Projects funded by the premium include a commercial organic vegetable garden and fencing for the workers' houses. We are also planning to build a new community centre.

Maria Malan



For further information about the benefits of Fairtrade and other producer profiles, please see www.fairtrade.org.uk/producers

PLANNING YOUR EVENT

What, when
and where

Theme

Be as creative as you like. Themes could include an Argentinean-themed tango evening with Fairtrade wine and nut tasting, a South African braai and wine evening or a wine and cheese evening.

The Wensleydale Cheese Company combines Fairtrade and local produce in one delicious cheese: Yorkshire Wensleydale with Fairtrade Mango and Honey – a great addition to any Fairtrade wine and cheese night. For more information, please visit www.wensleydale.co.uk

Think about:

- Timing – who do you want to attract to your event and what times will suit them? For a wine tasting, an evening event is probably best.
- Venue – make sure the venue will accommodate everything the event needs. It must be large enough for tables for the wine and for guests to sit at, and also for any other entertainment. Does it have disabled access? Don't forget to think about transport links and parking.

Other ideas to explore:

Investigate student unions, restaurants, pubs or bars, working men's clubs, town halls and community centres – always keep in mind who you want to reach and where they will be most willing to go. When looking for a venue, you will probably have to book well in advance.

Make sure you're there well before your guests start arriving so you have time to set up, decorate and prepare.



Setting up and preparing

Make sure the venue can provide enough tables, chairs, plates and wine glasses. You may need to source some equipment yourself. Contact glass loan services well in advance for a good deal or ask a supportive restaurant or pub to lend you some.

You must ensure your venue has permission for alcohol to be consumed and sold on its premises. If your venue does not have a licence you will have to apply for an occasional licence to serve alcohol. This usually takes about two weeks (although we would recommend leaving plenty of time in case there are any hold-ups) and will cost around £10. The licence will also allow you to sell any unopened bottles of wine and boost campaign funds.

TOP TIPS

- 1** The Fairtrade group in Garstang often organise Fairtrade wine and local cheese tastings. It's a good way to link Fairtrade with local produce and demonstrate that all farmers, in the UK and in developing countries, have the right to a fair deal.
- 2** The Fairtrade group in Ipswich hosted their wine tasting in a school hall after building close links with the school through the local Fairtrade campaign.
- 3** The Fairtrade group in Garstang were able to convince a local hotel to switch its house wine to Fairtrade by organising a Fairtrade wine tasting event in their restaurant.

PLANNING YOUR EVENT

Publicity

Good publicity is essential. Send out press releases to local newspapers and invite journalists along for a glass or two. Design posters and leaflets advertising the event and display them in local shop windows, across the university campus, or in local sports clubs or community centres. Order and customise Fairtrade event posters from www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources. Setting up a Facebook event page is a great, inexpensive way to tell loads of people about your event.

How can you grab the attention of your local media? Could the mayor or a local celebrity open proceedings?



How to find Fairtrade wine

If you are interested in sourcing wine to taste at your event, please email commercial@fairtrade.org.uk with as much detail about your group and the event as possible. You can also try approaching the companies listed on our website or local shops and supermarkets directly. The more detail you give about the event the more likely it is that these companies will be willing to support you. It's your job to convince them that this event is to raise awareness of Fairtrade and understanding of the benefits it brings to producers – not just a private party with a lot of wine!

Fairtrade wines come from Argentina, Chile and South Africa. For a list of the range of Fairtrade wine available, please visit www.fairtrade.org.uk/wine_products



THE TASTING RULES

To enjoy fully the wine you are tasting, you will need to use three senses – sight, smell, and taste. The best time to taste is before a meal. After a meal your taste buds may be affected by what you have just eaten. Taste white wine first, then rosé, then red. To taste accurately, only a small amount (one third full maximum) should be poured into the tasting glass.

Sight

- You can learn a lot about a wine simply by looking at it. Pour the wine into a clear glass and hold in front of a white background (a tablecloth or piece of paper will be fine) to examine the colour.
- The colour of wine varies tremendously. For example, white wines are not actually white – they range from green to yellow to brown. In general, the more colour there is in a white the more flavour and age it has. But be warned – a brown white wine may just have gone bad. Time improves many red wines, but ruins most white wines. Red wines are not just red – they range from a pale red to a deep brown red, usually becoming lighter in colour as they age.
- You can guess the age of a red wine by observing its ‘rim’. Tilt the glass slightly and look at the edge of the wine. A purple tint may indicate youth while orange to brown indicates maturity.
- Swirling the wine allows you to look at the body of the wine. Legs are the pattern formed when drops of wine trickle down the inside of the glass after the wine has been swirled. The longer the pattern stays on the inside of the glass, the better. Good legs may mean the wine has a thicker body and a higher alcohol content and/or sweetness level.



Smell

- Swirling your wine also allows you to smell the aroma, also called the bouquet or nose. You can do this in two ways – take a quick whiff to get a first impression, then a second deeper whiff. Or just take one long sniff. Now sit back and contemplate the aroma. Concentrate only on what you smell. It may help to shut your eyes.
- Most people find it difficult to describe the smell, but after trying many wines you will start to notice similarities and differences. Sometimes a certain smell will be very strong with underlying hints of other smells. Take your time. By labelling an aroma you will probably remember it better when it comes to scoring it, or buying it in the future.

Taste

- The most important quality of a wine is its balance between sweetness and acidity. Consider three aspects when you take a tasting mouthful:
 1. First impression: This is where the wine awakens your senses (your taste buds respond to sensations).
 2. Taste: Slosh the wine around and draw in some air. Think about the body and texture of the wine. Is it light or rich? Smooth or harsh?
 3. Aftertaste: The taste that remains in your mouth after you have swallowed the wine. How long did the taste last? Was it pleasant?
- After tasting the wine, take a moment to value its overall flavour and balance. Is the taste appropriate for that type of wine? If the wine is very dry, is it supposed to be?
- Some serious wine connoisseurs assign a point score to a wine to determine its quality. You could devise your own scoring system for the event with different categories – Fantastic Fairtrade, Full Fairtrade, Fruity Fairtrade, Fiery Fairtrade! The more wines you try and the more attention you pay to each of the three senses, the better you’ll get at describing and judging each wine.

TOP TIP

The Fairtrade group at Lancaster University asked their tasters to rate each wine out of 10, with the title of Best Fairtrade Wine awarded at the end of the night.

PRE-EVENT AND ON THE DAY

ENTERTAINING YOUR GUESTS

Did you know?

- Although red wine can only be made from red grapes, white wine can come from both red and white grapes.
- Wine has about the same number of calories as an equal amount of grape juice. On average it takes 600 grapes to make a bottle of wine.
- Dionysus is the god of wine, the inspirer of madness, and a major figure in Greek mythology. He represents not only the intoxicating power of wine, but also its social and beneficial aspects.
- Archaeological evidence suggests that the first wine was produced at sites in Georgia and Iran, from as early as 6000 BC.

Entertainment

Why not complement the wine tasting with other entertainment and activities? Groups have included speakers on Fairtrade, live bands, quizzes, raffles, film screenings, DJs, campaign stalls and other Fairtrade refreshments and tasting. Wandsworth Fairtrade group rounded off their evening with a Fairtrade coffee tasting. There are several short films about Fairtrade wine available for campaigners. To borrow a copy, please contact volunteer.towns@fairtrade.org.uk

TOP TIP

The Fairtrade group in Ipswich accompanied their event with live music to show off the talents of local student musicians.

The Dumfries Fairtrade group taxed their guests with a Fairtrade-related quiz. For ideas for quiz questions, please visit www.fairtrade.org.uk/quiz



PRE-EVENT AND ON THE DAY

Delegating roles

You will need help to organise your wine tasting. Work out what needs to be done and who has the skills to do it.

- **Event manager** – needs to be an organised person with a good overall knowledge of the event, able to answer any questions. Most groups nominate someone from the main Steering Group to take this on. The event manager is responsible for coordinating the event and volunteers and ensuring everything runs smoothly.
- **Sommelier** – in charge of sourcing the wines and the overall co-ordination of the serving and the tasting of the wines. This is a job for the wine-lover in your group.
- **Compere** – to announce when each wine is to be tasted and to give a brief description of each wine, including type, country of origin and some information about the producers. Check out the profiles on www.fairtrade.org.uk/producers
- **Ushers and stewards** – to ensure the event runs smoothly and everyone is enjoying themselves. They can also help serve the wine and collect glasses and wine score cards.
- **Entertainment manager** – to organise any other entertainment and to make sure it runs smoothly. Think about your target audience and what they will enjoy.
- **Publicity manager** – to promote the event and secure media coverage. They could send out press releases to local newspapers or design posters and leaflets and display them in local shop windows, across the university campus or in local schools. Setting up a Facebook event page can be a good way to reach lots of people.
- **Venue decorators** – a job that everyone can be involved in. Please visit www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources to order Fairtrade-themed posters, bunting, balloons and other materials or be creative and make your own.
- **Photographer** – this can be a good way to recruit local students to your campaign.

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Cheers!

We'd like to raise a glass to you for taking the time to organise a Fairtrade wine tasting and we look forward to hearing all about it. We hope you found this guide useful and your event is a great success! It's thanks to dedicated people like you that Fairtrade continues to go from strength to strength and can benefit more of the people who need it most. Thank you.

For more information and updates on Fairtrade, please visit www.fairtrade.org.uk



