

**Be careful, A Sommelier\* can hide another:**  
*Book of Bertil. 1.08*

*An intimate and personal letter to all those who love wine and its profession.*



I must admit that I love my job; it is for me the recognition of an education, an apprenticeship, and especially the result of hard work and years of practice. The gold or silver brooch that is the pride of our profession must not be confused with the certification pin of a British, American, or other oenophile level so proudly worn by those who believe themselves to be associates, when in reality are only apprentices. By using a term that has unfortunately become overused, we allow said apprentices to "believe the moon". I have a lot of respect for my peers and all those who have a desire and passion for wine, and I would never stop promoting the education and discovery of Bacchus elixirs. But, for the respect of the true meaning of "Sommelier" and the respect of yourself, declare yourself "Certified Oenophile," but not Sommelier, please. Because you may have the knowledge but not necessarily the desire to carry the physical and emotional load of this profession's demand, including the possibility of being poorly paid and not well respected. Do not boast of a glory so simply acquired without having earned the attribution.

\*To simplify, I have attributed the word Sommelier to include all genders



*The short history of "sommellerie" by Bertil:*

I must explain to you as concisely as possible the history of our profession and the origin of its attributed name. This information is the synthesis of extensive readings and research on the subject, and not claims or assumptions that are sources of "fake news" or deliberations of vague social media considerations.

Another belief: my judgment and my deliberations are personal opinions that I only develop to inform you of the reality of a profession, and the name nobly attributed to it. I don't want to offend anyone, only those who sold the bear's skin before killing it, so "let's call a spade a spade," because it is quite easy and simple to understand.



It all began in the fourteenth century under King Philip V of France, where the sommelier is known as "échanson" (cupbearer) and would be responsible for being the officer in charge of the beverage service in the royal courts. Their work and duties changed, and their complexity increased until the French Revolution in 1789. With the growth of kingdoms and duchies after the fifteenth century, the sommelier would be appointed responsible for the loading and management of goods (wine, water, table objects and the transport of food and spices and condiments) during the travels of the noble court and subjects. They are also known as a "wine merchant" for the purchase, management, bottling wines in barrels in taverns or relays. They were serving at the table of their master in order to avoid possible poisonings, which was common at the time. Their function also included the financial management of the entrusted assets. The sommelier was also an administrator and strategist. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the number of nobles living near the court and owners of Hôtel Particulier (mansions) forced the sommelier to become sedentary. Their reputation goes hand in hand with that of the Chef, because the sommelier was also a "Maître d'hôtel" at that time, and the nobles who ran the worldly dinners in the mansions prioritizing good quality food and drink. The first stars of the table were then born, Le Chef and Le Sommelier.

At the Time of the French Revolution these great Chefs and Sommeliers opened eateries to accommodate both the Nouveau Riche and the people to discover and consume the foodstuffs and drinks previously reserved for court nobles. But it is not yet the time of Grand restaurants where the sommelier is a wine merchant responsible for the purchase, management and bottling of wines & alcohols for their work establishment. It was not until the early 1900s that the first great restaurants appeared, and the sale of fine wine evolved from barrels to bottles. It is also the birth of gastronomy and the new science of food and wine pairings. The role of the sommelier then changes and they appear in the dining room and become a gastronomic advisor for the customers, an ally for the Chef, and an accomplice to the Maître d'hôtel. Their task is to buy, negotiate, administer, and manage cellar and the sale of wines in the dining room and also manage their team. Thus, the modern sommelier has just been born.

The knowledge of wines, their origins, intrinsic qualities, possible evolutions over time, and aromatic compositions are only part of the sommelier's science. Because all this knowledge is only intended for the purpose of obtaining the best products (wines) to offer to the establishment's customers. The sommelier's task is simple - achieve the greatest possible customer satisfaction for the house's greatest possible profit. The sommelier is a pedagogue, financial strategist, and a passionate, hard worker. The great sommelier called "Master Sommelier" are those who have enough knowledge and science to share and transmit it. The Master Sommelier is the equivalent of a "Executive Chef" in a kitchen.



*And everything since 1980:*

Chefs begin to come out of their kitchens to appear on television. They're no longer cooking; they're hosting shows of which they are the stars. Taste and harmony are no longer the main essence; now it's the visual and the dramatics that really count. The competitions for the best cooks have now replaced the years of apprenticeship with a master, the tests required to become "Best Ouvrier" (worker), and the privilege of wearing the title and colors of one's country on their work jacket's collar. The same goes for Sommeliers. A poorly paid profession, barely respected by employers, physically and mentally exhausted, the sommelier has left the dining room and the cellar to become a beast of competition and an athlete of olfactory, gustatory and cognitive memory. It is envied and spreads into films with this effigy. The sommelier thinks they are Dionysus and

dream of fighting on television against Goliath. They live to fight in the arena and win so as not to be forgotten - an almost barbaric activity.

And then as everything is a question of opportunism, schools and easy diplomas multiply. No need to be a Master and work in a restaurant with customers and a team to proclaim yourself "Sommelier", you technically only need a Level 1 diploma and a fair amount of ego without necessarily understanding or respecting the profession. What desolation. I almost have a hard time finishing my glass of wine.



The roots and origin of the word are not English, or as it is called "wine steward", but French. In Latin "sagma", "bât". The term sommelier originally means "beast of burden driver". In Provençal French "saumalier", herd driver, himself from "sauma", herd.

But then what is a Sommelier?:

A sommelier can only be a professional, because they work for a house, and have been hired to accomplish a very specific task, which gives them their title.

Here are the specifications that an employer expects from a Sommelier:

1. Have an in-depth knowledge of wines, spirits and waters related to the theme (French, Italian, Modern American etc.) of the restaurant for which they work, as well as from the rest of the wine world.
2. Have an in-depth knowledge of the cuisine and the techniques used and a mastery of molecular and tactile pairings of food and wine - essentially be a foodie and gourmand.
3. Work in very close collaboration with not only the chef, head bartender, maître d', director & owner, but also with the entire restaurant team.
4. Know how to negotiate, choose and buy, respect budgets, and know expectations of the targeted clientele. Manage and plan projections and expected profit margins. Understand and produce inventory and P&L, and have sufficient knowledge to make the right strategic decisions for the company.

5. Know how to write and administer a wine list according to international standards. Master and know the establishment's entire wine list (which can range from 40 to 3000 selections).
6. Master all room service protocols and wine service according to the needs of the wine and the customer.
7. Be a seasoned and charismatic communicator. Have a great ability to listen to others (clients) and be a passionate teacher.
8. Be capable of working long hours, most of the time standing.
9. Be able to carry and handle heavy loads of wine.
10. Commit to spending your holidays and leisure time reading about and visiting vineyards.
11. Be available and ready to work weekends and holidays.
12. Be available for any other necessary tasks like serving in the dining room, welcoming customers, or less than glamorous tasks including mopping the floor, polishing glasses, cleaning the toilet, etc.



*Decantation conclusion:*

If all these tasks are not included in your training and work, be kind enough to define yourself as a "certified oenophile". This is prestigious, respectable, and accurate. And then you may leave the title of Sommelier to others, as it seems to me in the end can be less prestigious and more average than what you want the world to think of you. You don't want to be seen as a "Beast of Somme" at the end!!!

*But then why does Bonde host a Sommelier?*

A wine merchant (wine store steward) cannot be a sommelier by definition, but a sommelier can become a wine merchant. The advantage for the customer is that the sommelier, in addition to knowing his wines and having made a very curated selection for his customers, can advise you in all your needs and questions to find the best choices food and wine pairing possible. The sommelier does not sell wine, he is there primarily to advise you in a very welcoming space. The sommelier is also an expert for table accessories and especially for wine accessories. Bonde offers you all this and more with themed nights hosted by Bertil. So yes, "Bonde fine wine and accessories" is a boutique of professional sommeliers, and we are proud of it.



*Mr. B*

**\*Memorandum:**

*My words and opinions in these newsletters are and would always be personal, and I intend to offend. I always accept that others have the full right and duty to challenge me, to argue, and, if it is necessary, excommunicate me from their beliefs (often dull and hollow) because I would act the same way if it were the other way around.*



54 Church Street, Cambridge MA 02138  
[www.bondewines.com](http://www.bondewines.com)