

LONG FINISH

A bottle of wine can open up communication and evoke emotion like nothing else in the world.

There are few things as dynamic, engaging and provocative as a bottle of wine. Contained in that bottle are the blood, sweat and tears of the hundreds of people involved in its production. The fact that it ages and has its own life cycle sets it apart from just about any other beverage. But it's what can occur between individuals who share a special bottle that makes it so intriguing.

Just to be clear, I'm not advocating overindulgence. However, it sometimes takes more than just a sip, or even a glass, to open the doors of communication and set the human spirit free.

Often, the last sip of wine is the best. It can take some time for a wine to open up and reach its full potential. But when you sit with a friend or family member and look forward to an in-depth conversation about life, the improvement and evolution of that wine is part of the overall enjoyment.

My parents were over for dinner last year, and I opened a bottle of Hanna 2013 Bismark Mountain Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. It was young and opulent upon opening, but my dad and I agreed it was going to improve dramatically in just a short while. So as we sipped, we talked.

We talked about the wine, of course. But we also discussed the amazing playoff run the Yankees were on, and how the team compared to those of the late 1970s that we loved so dearly. We talked about how, a few years back, he had lost his passion for oil painting, but he had just started his first new painting in ages. And as we sipped, not only did the wine improve, but so did the content of our conversation.

As we enjoyed our last glass, my daughter came flying into the room to give him a big ol' Grandpa hug. Filled with emotion, he wanted to make sure I knew that my daughter, his only granddaughter, had filled the void left when he and my mom lost their first child and only daughter shortly after her first birthday.

Of course, having my brother and I soon after that traumatic event certainly helped. But never having a little girl around had apparently left a vacancy in his heart and soul that was never fully repaired until now.

And as we discussed this truly heartfelt and intimate revelation, we realized that the bottle was finished. As anticipated, the last sip was indeed the best.

—Marshall Tilden III

