

TASTING BASICS



People should know a little about the technique of wine tasting to be able to enjoy the wine to its fullest. There is a misconception that only the underprivileged can fully enjoy a wine.

The reality is that anyone can and should learn to taste a wine. So all you need is your senses to work and know the basic principles of tasting.

To taste a wine is to subject the drink to your sense organs and to analyze carefully or to taste is to drink carefully. In principle, wine should be tasted in a suitable, well-lit, odor-free place and care should be taken to serve the wine in suitable glasses, such as ISO standard glasses and at their correct operating temperature.

To accompany the wines during the tasting is recommended only mineral water with or without gas and plain bread that should be consumed between one wine and another.

The Phases of Tasting

The tasting is divided into three phases, visual analysis, olfactory analysis and taste analysis and in this order. Before you start you should be aware of how to hold the glass and always by the base or stem and never by the body of the glass so as not to change the temperature of the wine and not to dirty the glass and make it difficult to see the wine.



Visual analysis

Visual analysis is the most neglected phase of all stages of wine tasting. People don't bother to appreciate the color of wine and to discover the clues that visuals provide about the evolution, maturity or even the alcohol content of wine.

To analyze a wine, one must be aware of the color intensity, tone, clarity, transparency and tears and should put wine in about 1/3 of the glass and enjoy the wine both at eye level and slanted 45° on a white surface.

As for the intensity a wine may be more or less dark depending on the grape it originated, its age and the concentration of solid matter dissolved in the liquid or extract.

The hue of a wine roughly indicates its degree of maturity. Thus, it can generally be said that a white wine gets darker with aging and that red wines become lighter as time goes by and it is important to understand in the case of red wines with a slanted glass if there are differences in shade between the center the glass and the edges, as it indicates a degree of evolution and maturity of the wine.

White wines usually begin their life with a straw-yellow color, evolving to golden yellow and amber over time. However, it depends somewhat on the type of grape with which the wine was produced, as there are certain grape varieties that give rise to darker wines even when young.



Red wines, due to the initial presence of blue anthocyanin pigment, are purple in color when young and evolve to ruby red, garnet red and amber with maturity.

Whites and reds end their life the same color, as wines end up as a living being and have a finite life. Thus, the older the wine, the better it is absolutely false and without any foundation, since each wine has its best moment of consumption and visual analysis gives us good indications of when it will be.

Visual analysis shows whether a wine is clear and has no particulate matter and how transparent it is or how much the wine lets out of light.

A slight stirring of the wine will allow it to drip down the walls of the glass, forming structures that are described as tears or bows. This is due to a physicochemical phenomenon due to the difference in surface tension between the different substances in wine. Thus, the more tears a wine shows and the thinner the tears, the higher its ethyl alcohol content.

On the other hand, the speed with which the tears run down the wall of the glass indicate the density of the wine that depends on the extract and the amount of glycerin.

Olfactory Analysis

When you stop stirring the wine and when the tears fall, it is time to begin the next step of olfactory analysis.

Stirring the wine, it vaporizes and in the thin film of liquid that covers the inner wall of the glass it evaporates quickly. The result is an intensification of the aromas that will become more concentrated if the glass is narrower in its upper portion and the wine should be allowed to rest for a few seconds and after placing the nose directly into the glass and aspirating.



Wine has various grape aromas and analysis of its volatile components reveals the same molecules that create familiar aromas. Thus, some examples such as rose, cherry, plum, blackberry, raspberry, passion fruit, banana, peach, honey and vanilla and even some unusual aromas such as tar, leather, tobacco and smoked bacon, identified by experienced tasters and have their origin. in substances with basic chemical affinities.

There is a natural difficulty in finding suitable words to describe the complex and ephemeral olfactory sensations emanating from a glass of wine. To increase the difficulty, it should be emphasized that the aroma of a wine is constantly evolving, changing its characteristics quickly from the moment it is put into the glass.

The aromas also change if evaluated with the glass at rest or shortly after shaking. Thus, in a tasting one should often reevaluate the aromas of the wine and catching the changes.

On the other hand, in an attempt to facilitate the olfactory analysis of wines one can theoretically divide the aromas into primary ones that originate from the grape itself, the

secondary ones that originate from the fermentation process and the maturation in wood or oak and the tertiary ones. These are those originated from aging in the bottle and also known as bouquet.

The classification of wine aromas can be classified into families:

- Floral roses, violets, jasmine, acacia, etc.
- Fruity cassis, cherries, plums, peaches, lemons, oranges, etc.
- Spices pepper, cloves, cinnamon, licorice, nutmeg, etc.
- Hunting animals, meat, wet fur, leather, etc.
- Vegetable straw, grass, hay, sugar cane, mushrooms, tea, smoke, etc.
- Volcanic minerals, petroleum, lighter rock, etc.
- Resin balsamic, pine, eucalyptus, vanilla, etc.
- Chemical fermentation odors, bread yeast, sulfur, nail polish, mercaptan or alliaceous, model airplane glue, nail polish remover, etc.
- Empire smells associated with heat and fire, such as tar, toasted, smoked, caramel, roasted coffee, tar, etc.
- Other aromas chocolate, honey, cigar box, etc.

The aromas of wine offer clues to its character, origin and history and a very general and simplistic way to say that:

- Young wines predominate traces of flowers and fresh fruits or vegetables that evolve with the aging of wine to the aromas of more ripe, dried or jelly fruits.
- In older wines predominate animal or decomposition aromas- In white wines predominate aromas of white and yellow flowers or white or yellow fruits: apple, pear, pineapple, melon, peach, passion fruit, lily, white jasmine, etc.
- In red wines we notice aromas of flowers or red fruits: pink, violet, strawberry, cherry, raspberry, blackberry, currant.
- Typical aromas of different grape varieties and why not, even in some wine regions, can be recognized in certain wines.

The only way to easily identify the complex aromas that wines present is to reactivate the immense ability to recognize aromas in nature or in other words to form olfactory memory,

which is done systematically and carefully, paying attention to aromas. existing in nature and the environment and trying to keep in memory.

Gustative Analysis



The last part of the wine's sensory assessment concerns the taste aspects and it is important to note that the expression taste actually encompasses a range of sensations such as taste, skin and retro nasal olfactive.

The taste sensations reveal four flavors like sweet, salty, acid and bitter and the skin sensitivity gives us tactile sensations like astringency, roughness and softness or thermal and painful, which can be defined as complementary.

Smell provides the aroma, retro nasal odor, which is the most important component of taste, as it most influences character and determines quality.

Sensations are perceived at almost the same time, so it is often difficult to analyze, separate and assign with certainty a particular sensory modality. Thus, the correct technique is essential for a complete assessment such as bringing the glass to the mouth and placing a sufficient and sufficient amount so that the wine can go through the mouth.

Keep the wine in the mouth for about ten to fifteen seconds, make it keep in touch with the different parts of the tongue that identify the taste sensations. In other words, let the wine roam freely through the mouth and carefully observe the different sensations in each region of the tongue and mucous membranes.

Sensations refer to the sweet, salty, acidic and bitter flavors:

- Sweet - The sweet taste is caused not only by residual sugars such as fructose and glucose, but also by alcohol and glycerin or glycerol and these substances are best perceived at the tip of the tongue and in the attack phase or first phase of taste analysis and then that wine comes into contact with the mouth and is recognized not only for its sweetness but also because it gives the mouth mucosa a tactile sensation of softness and greasiness.

- Salty - Salty taste is a flavor rarely found in wines and is sometimes described in wines from regions close to the ocean, with Jerez in Spain being the best example.

- Acid - the acidic taste derived from wines is from the grape's own acids such as tartaric, citric and malic acid or from the acids from alcoholic fermentation such as succinic, lactic and acetic and these substances are perceived on the lateral edges of the tongue, also in the phase. attack and recognized by the fluid and abundant salivation they cause.

- Bitter - The bitter taste of tannins can cause a discreet bitterness in good quality young wines that is best felt at the bottom of the tongue or even no bitterness if these tannins are very thin and mature. Intense and unpleasant bitterness is, whenever present, a defect or disease of wine.

The range of taste sensations can be increased through special techniques that are more appropriate for tasting rooms than for social occasions. Initially hold the wine in the mouth and with parted lips inhale a small amount of air which will create a whirlwind that will accelerate the vaporization of wine, intensifying the aromas. Then chew the wine vigorously to remove every subtle flavor.

At this stage, the so-called wine body should be evaluated, which is the sensation of weight that the wine appears to have in the mouth and can be further defined as how different from water the wine in question appears to be. The body of the wine is directly related to its alcohol content or the amount of ethanol in the wine and its extract, the amount of solid material diluted in the wine.

Alcohol may also excite the thermal receptors of the tongue and cause a false sensation of heat and often accompanied by a slight burning in the oral mucosa, as well as a sensation of sweetness and softness.

The Concentration of Flavors

A fundamental concept that is highly valued in tasting a wine concerns the concentration of aromas and flavors in the mouth. In tasting it is often referred to as the middle of the mouth and that in a good wine should be filled with its aromas and fruit flavors.

Important is to value the quality and concentration of the wine or how much pleasure that wine gives us in the mouth. However, one should not underestimate the subtler wines that have the subtlest aromas and flavors, and not be impressed by the over-extracted and often very alcoholic wines that are often powerful and inelegant.

Intense Aromatic Persistence and Mouth Aroma

Intense aromatic persistence is related to the duration of aromas and flavors of a wine in the mouth before they diminish sharply. The longer this sensation is, the more valuable a wine will be and the length of time, measured in seconds, in great wines can exceed one minute.

A wine has short persistence when the duration is less than 4 seconds, medium persistence when the time is 5 to 7 seconds and long persistence when the time is 8 or more seconds.

After swallowing the wine should slowly expire through the mouth and nose, as it will cause the aromas to reach the olfactory bulb via the nasal route, which connects the throat and nose, constituting an alternative route for aromas and prolonging its effects long after the wine has been ingested and called the retro smell. Thus, the better the wine, its residual aromas will be more complex, deeper and longer lasting.

A great wine usually has different aromas in the retro smell than the direct aromas and the newer aromas appear the more valued the wine should be.

Astringency or Quality of Tannins

At the end of the mouth one should understand if there is any sign of astringency that is the sensation of dryness in the mouth. Astringency is caused by tannins that have a coagulant action on saliva. Thus, the coarser the tannin, the greater the sense of astringency perceived in the mouth.

Young red wines may have more aggressive tannins that vary in intensity according to grape variety. Thus, excessive astringency regardless of the age or varietal grape used in the wine is a worrying sign of poor winemaking or grapes harvested before reaching their

maximum physiological maturity and translates into green and coarse tannins and most likely they will not improve in the aging period in the bottle and no matter how long the cellar is.

Great wines, even young ones, have ripe and soft tannins that never damage the mucosa of the mouth or cause excessive astringency.

At the end of the taste evaluation one must also correlate all sensations perceived and express a concept of difficult definition that is the balance and harmony of wine.

The Wine Balance

Taste balance is the result of the complex interaction between substances that form the structure of wine such as alcohol, tannins, sugars, extract and acids.

In the case of white wines, the relationship between sugars should be analyzed if the wine is sweet and alcoholic and that they soften the wine as opposed to the present acidity.

On the other hand, in the case of red wines the elements to be appreciated are the acidity, tannins and alcohol, because the more correct and equanimous the relationship between the elements, the better the balance and harmony of the analyzed wine.

Finally, it should be remembered that wine tasting should be regarded as great fun and above all extremely enjoyable and an unrivaled intellectual activity that should be practiced with great passion.