

HOW TO TASTE WINE

Hundreds to thousands of flavor compounds distinguish one wine from the next and make tasting each wine its own experience. There is no right or wrong way to interpret our impressions when we taste.

The wine tasting experience examines appearance, aroma and taste:

Appearance

1. Tilt the glass 45° in front of a white background and examine the color.
2. Swirl the glass and note the “legs” or “tears” on the side of the glass. This may indicate a higher alcohol level.
3. Examine the color.

Color: A Cue to Style and Age

- For whites, green or straw tints can suggest a lighter-bodied, youthful, fresh wine like Sauvignon Blanc.
- A gold or deep yellow in whites can indicate a fuller-bodied, oak aged wine like some Chardonnays or Sauternes.



- Deep, purple-red can indicate a younger, fuller, robust red like a Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo or Malbec.
- A lighter ruby red can signify a younger Chianti or Pinot Noir.
- Brown can indicate a wine is oxidized; good for a Sherry or Tawny Port but a flaw for most others.

Aroma

1. Avoid distracting scents like perfume or cigarettes before tasting.
2. Swirl the wine in the glass to aerate it and optimize the release of aromas.
3. Isolate the different aromas and note their intensity.
4. Using the aroma chart, identify individual aromas you detect.

Tasting wine means smelling wine.

- The nose can detect over 1,000 aromas; the tongue detects only five flavors.
- With five to six million smell receptors, each person’s perception of smell is subjective and may detect unique aromas.
- Many wine varieties are easily identified by their signature aromas. Tar and roses are classic aromas for Nebbiolo; for Sauvignon Blanc, it’s gooseberries.

The Kobrand Aroma Chart

Light Fruit	Dark Fruit	Floral	Spice	Herbaceous or Vegetal	Earthy	Mineral
Citrus Lime Grapefruit Lemon Orange Peel Blood Orange Green Green Apple Pear Gooseberry Grape Skin Green Plum Stone Fruits Apricot Nectarine Peach Tropical Pineapple Litchi Melon Banana Kiwi Mango Coconut Guava Passion Fruit	Red Cherry Wild Cherry Sour Cherry Raspberry Red Currant Strawberry Wild Strawberry Cranberry Black Blackberry Black Raspberry Boysenberry Black Currant Black Cherry Plum Blueberry Dried Raisin Prune Fig	Honeysuckle Orange Blossom Elderflower Apple Blossom Rose Petal Lilac Violet Pear Blossom Jasmine Lavender Confection Marmalade Jam Honey Caramel Butterscotch Toffee Brown Sugar Molasses Bubblegum	Nutmeg Cinnamon Pepper Clove Ginger Licorice Cardamom	Cut gGrass Hay Lemongrass Asparagus Sage Dill Mint Eucalyptus Tea Dried Herbs Anise Bell Pepper Tomato Skin	Mushrooms Wet Leaves Moss Forest Floor Barnyard Truffles Beeswax Woody Oak Cedar Smoke Tobacco Sawdust Sandalwood	Flint Slate Steel Pencil Lead Petrol Rubber Tar Wet Stones Bread Fresh Bread Biscuits Brioche Toast Butter Yeast Liqueur Cassis Kirsch
			Nut & Bean Vanilla Almond Hazelnut Walnut Chestnut Chocolate Coffee Cola Espresso			

Taste

1. Cleanse your mouth with a cracker or bread before taking your first sip.
2. Swish the wine around your palate and evaluate its flavors, texture and body.
3. Determine whether the flavors confirm the aromas.
4. Form conclusions about the wine's characteristics and grape variety.
5. Note how long the wine's flavors last in the mouth and how they evolve after you've swallowed.

Terms to Describe What We Taste

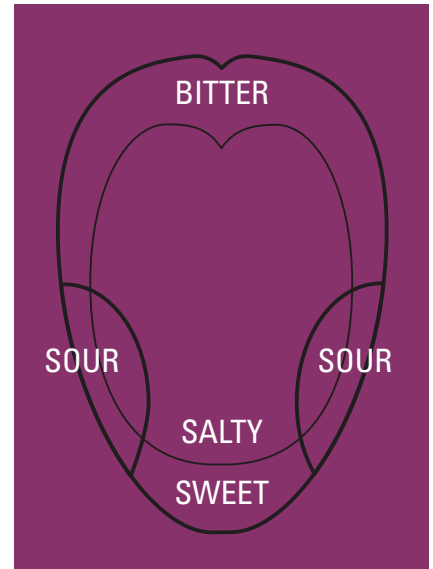
Attribute	Descriptors
Body	Light, medium, full-bodied
Sweetness	Dry, off-dry, sweet
Acidity	Crisp, fresh, tart
Tannins	Firm, silky, round, dry, dusty

Where the Tongue Senses Flavors

- Sweet: A tingling sensation at the tip of the tongue indicates residual sugar.
- Sour: Salivation triggered on the sides of the tongue indicates pronounced acidity.
- Bitter: A drying effect at the back of the tongue indicates concentrated tannins.

"The Finish"

- The wine's aftertaste is appropriately called the finish.
- A basic metric of quality is how long a wine's taste remains on the palate.
- Great wines have flavors that linger in the mouth for several minutes and can remain in the taster's mind for a lifetime.



How to Determine if the Wine is Flawed

This is one of the most difficult areas of wine to navigate. Many wine flaws are easy to recognize while others are subtle and identifying them requires experience. In some cases, what initially may appear to be a flaw is actually a quality that enhances a wine's complexity, unless it's present in excess. As always, degree and proportion are crucial in assessing a wine's overall character.

Appearance

Older wines made for cellaring naturally become darker as they age. However, dark tones, especially in younger wines can also indicate that a wine has become oxidized, ruining its flavor:

- In red wines, a dark brownish garnet color is normal for Tawny Port or a sweet Banyuls, but most other young reds with this appearance should not be consumed.
- For white wines, a deep, honey-gold or amber-caramel color for a Sauternes or late-harvest wine can be normal—even brown for Sherry—but these colors

in most other whites can indicate oxidation.

- Visible deposits, crystals or other solids in the wine sometimes indicate a fault, but usually not. Many "natural" wines and age-worthy reds such as Burgundies, Bordeaux and Barolos are made with no fining or filtration, so some dark, flaky sediment is natural and not cause for concern.
- Many whites have visible sediment called tartrate crystals, which can look like clear sand or salt in the glass but are perfectly normal and won't affect the wine's flavor.
- Whites, rosés and sparklers that contain floating particles can indicate improper conditions during transport and should be avoided.

Aroma

- In red or white, the telltale musty, wet cardboard aroma indicates a wine is "corked," among the most common faults.
- Red wines that show aromas of brown apple or cooked, stewed fruit are usually flawed. Brown apple or sherry aromas often indicate oxidation, while raisins or

cooked fruit may indicate wine stored at temperatures that were too warm.

- A small amount of Brettanomyces, or "brett," which has a barnyard or "horsey" aroma, can actually enhance a red wine's complexity, while a wine that shows a lot of brett is usually flawed.
- A white wine with the heavy smell of sulfur or struck matches may be flawed, although this aroma will often disperse if the wine is poured and allowed to air for a few minutes.

Taste

- Occasionally, a corked wine is not detectable on the nose but is perceptible on the palate as a musty, wet cardboard flavor along with significantly diminished fruit.
- A red or white wine with vinegary acidity or a chemical taste like nail polish may be flawed, the result of a winemaking mistake.
- Reds that have stewed fruit flavors may be flawed, due to transport or storage at too-high temperatures.