

KES | 101



KOBRAND Wine & Spirits

EDUCATIONAL SERIES

TASTING/EVALUATION

HOW TO TASTE WINE

Facilitator's Guide

How to Taste Wine (Handout)

Wine Tasting Worksheet (Handout)

Aroma Tree (Handout)

Varietal Pages (Handout)

Vino Lingo (Handout)



HOW TO TASTE WINE

OVERVIEW: This exercise is meant to demonstrate a specific method for tasting and evaluating wine. It offers opportunity to clarify basic wine terms and reduce the frustration associated with identifying aromas and flavors.

- Take the frustration out of tasting wine by telling them there is no “right” or “wrong” answer when identifying the combination of aromas and tastes.
- The process of tasting can be learned. Not everyone is born with a keen palate and sense of smell. Practice makes perfect! Your specific and sometimes different evaluation can still lead you to the same conclusion on a wine.

Blind tasting a wine is less about what is IN the glass than what isn't. It is a process of elimination and by following a specific tasting method, your group will become comfortable and learn to trust their instincts about the aromas and flavors of a wine, which will lead to a better understanding of each varietal and how they differ from one another.

HANDOUTS:

- Aroma Tree
- Varietal Pages
- Wine Tasting Worksheet
- Vino Lingo

The Four Steps to Evaluating Wine

- **Sight** (Look at the wine)
- **Smell** the wine
- **Taste** the wine
- **Draw a conclusion** about the wine

Sight

This may seem elementary, but what you see in the glass can give you some clues about the wine.

- Is it white or red? What shade of color would you call it?
- Is it clear or cloudy?
- Does it have bubbles?
- When you swirl it, does the liquid cling to the glass and have distinctive color?
 - The more “legs” or “tears” that are formed on the side of the glass, the higher the alcohol content in the wine, which will help you to make a conclusion about the body. Higher alcohol wines tend to have a fuller body.



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HOW TO TASTE WINE Continued

Smell

Smells are such a huge component of taste. Without our sense of smell, we would only be able to detect sweet, sour, bitter and salt, missing the nuances of flavor.

- Swirl the wine to allow it to “aerate” or mix with the air. The swirling will also force the aromas up and out of the glass towards your nose.
- Place your nose over the glass and sniff.
 - Pay particular attention to your first sniffs, they will constitute your best aroma assessment of the wine.
 - Have them think about the flavors they smell and what affect they have – are the smells strong or weak?
- Try to identify a few aromas – Use the Aroma Tree as a guide.
 - Have them identify specific aromas or general categories if they are having trouble.
 - What do they detect now?
 - Suggest they write down their observations.

Hints:

- Once they are familiar with the typical characteristics of the main grape varieties, they can try to “match” the aromas in the glass with the characteristics of the grape that they think it may be. Use the varietal pages as a reference.
- High alcohol is sometimes detected through the nose and usually causes a burning sensation in the nostrils.

Taste

Cleanse your palate with a simple cracker or plain bread before the first sip of wine. If the last thing your tongue tasted was candy, gum, coffee, soda pop, etc., these lingering flavors will alter (most likely in a bad way) your ability to get the wine’s full taste.

- Take a small sip of wine into your mouth – DON’T swallow
 - Let it roll over your tongue.
 - What do you taste?
 - Do the flavors confirm what you smelled in the nose?
 - What is the texture of the wine?
 - What is the weight or body of the wine?
- Now slightly open your lips and slurp a bit of air over the wine inside your mouth.

Note: As the wine warms, you will notice that the flavors may change or become more prevalent.

- Have them reconsider the same questions – try to identify specific flavors
- Swallow or spit the wine out. Now, notice the finish (or aftertaste).
 - How does your mouth feel?
 - Do any flavors linger? How long do they linger?



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HOW TO TASTE WINE Continued

Note: If you taste many wines, spitting is beneficial because your senses will become dulled with the more alcohol you consume.

Conclusion

Once you have observed as much about the wine that you can, you can begin to fit the puzzle pieces together to better understand the wine you are drinking (or guess what is in the glass if you are blind tasting.)

Over time, you will be able to identify KEY characteristics in a wine which will help you to draw accurate conclusions. Practice – Practice – Practice!

Examples of Key Indicators Include:

Sight

- Clear rim around the edge of the wine indicates a young wine, or high alcohol
- Brownish color for a white wine indicates age – an older wine
- Orangeish color for a red wine indicates age – an older wine

Smell

- Alcohol – Is usually felt as a burning sensation in the nostrils.
- Fruit – If the fruit is more prominent than any other smell, it could indicate that the wine is from “new world” countries such as U.S., Australia or Chile.
- Earth – If the earthy smells are more prominent than the fruit, it is likely that the wine is from “old world” countries such as France, Italy or Spain.
- Wood –
 - Oak barrel aging often smells of vanilla, spice or toastiness (from the toasting of the barrel).
 - These aromas are most prominent when new barrels are used.

Taste

- Refer to the Kobrand varietal pages for key taste characteristics that match the varietal you taste.

*“Age is just a number. It’s totally irrelevant unless,
of course, you happen to be a bottle of wine.”*

–JOAN COLLINS



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