

Blind Tasting Guide

1 Sight

Take your wine and hold it at an angle over something white (a well-lit space is ideal). Having a white background helps you to see the color/concentration better! What color best represents the wine?



WHITES If a white wine is darker (or more yellow) in color it usually means the wine has some oak influence and/or is slightly oxidized (aged). It also could mean the grape is late harvest and has seen botrytis (noble rot). Pale wines are typically more youthful and meant to be consumed early.

REDS Most red wines are ruby in color, but some are more purple (typically thicker skin) while others are more garnet (typically thinner skin). All red wines turn garnet in color as they age, but it's more apparent on thinner-skinned varieties.

Intensity Concentration

Can you see through your wine or is the concentration so deep that you can't see your hand through the glass? Whether or not you can see through the wine can give you clues about the variety. Typically, purple wines are more opaque (deep), while garnet or light ruby wines are paler! There are some exceptions with age or winemaking practices.

2 Nose

First SWIRL your wine! You see people do this often and it's actually helpful. Swirling takes the aromas and lifts them to the surface of the wine, making them more available to your nose. TRY NOT TO SMELL TOO MUCH! The more times you smell a wine, the more you are burning out your olfactory bulb. Your best smell is the first and second sniff!

Aromatic Intensity

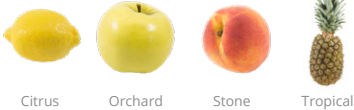
When you are about to put your nose to the glass, do the aromas jump out at you before your nose reaches the glass (pronounced/powerful) OR do you feel like you are digging your nose into the glass to find them (light/delicate)?

Usually, intensity is amplified by floral notes! (sometimes it can include vegetal aromas, like green pepper). This applies to both whites and reds but more so to white wines!

Fruit

There are many fruits in the world, so it helps to think about fruit categories or "camps" instead of pinpointing specific fruit aromas at first. You can often find many fruit "camps" in a wine, but as you smell and taste your wine, which categories below stand out the most?

White Wines



Citrus Orchard Stone Tropical

Red Wines



Red Fruit Black Fruit Blue Fruit

Fruit Condition

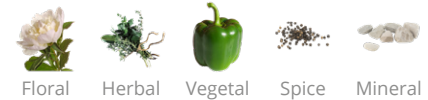
Determine if the fruit that you smell is tart, dried, bruised, ripe, jammy, baked, or anything else. This may help later in determining the climate, country, or region.



Non-Fruit

Some of these aromas come from the grape (primary) while others come from/are enhanced by the winemaking process (secondary), and the rest are from aging (tertiary) - see below. It is often a little harder to pinpoint non-fruit, but try to pick out a few that feel like they help define the wine.

PRIMARY (come from the Grape)



Floral Herbal Vegetal Spice Mineral

SECONDARY (come from/enhanced by winemaking)



Bread Butter/Cream Vanilla/Spice

TERTIARY (come from aging)



Petrol Honey Earth Meat Leather Tobacco

3 Palate

Now taste it and think through the following qualities!

Sweetness

Determine if the wine is dry, off-dry, sweet, or luscious. One thing to note here is that "sweet" and "fruity" are two different things. Sometimes a wine has really ripe fruity flavors and comes off as sweet, however, sweet means the wine has residual sugar (sugar left over after fermentation).

Fruit/Non-Fruit

After you taste the wine you can see if any new tasting notes appear. Did the fruit change? Do you taste any different non-fruit descriptors?

Fruit Condition

Determine if the fruit condition on the palate is riper or tarter than what you got on the nose! This can help in identifying the climate or region. Wines that get MORE TART from the nose to the palate are more likely to be from the old world (FR, IT, SP), or from a cooler climate. Wines that stay RIPE or get RIPER from the nose to the palate are more likely to be from the new world (US, NZ, AUS, etc.) or a warmer climate.

Structure

The structural or textural elements listed below are what give a wine its "backbone" and create balance.

Body

The best comparison I've seen for this is the milk comparison: Light Body is the consistency of water (light on the palate, goes down easy). Full Body is the consistency of 2% milk (heavy on the palate/coats the mouth). Does the wine feel light, medium, or full to you?

Acid

Take a sip and see how much your mouth waters. (You will feel this most on the sides of your tongue.) The more your mouth waters, the higher the acidity. Does the acidity of the wine feel low, medium, or high? Sometimes a lot of citrus can make you think a wine has more acid, so it's important to pay attention to how much you salivate!

Alcohol

Sometimes you can smell alcohol, but when identifying it on the palate specifically, it will usually heat up the back of your throat. Does the wine feel low, medium, or high in alcohol? Alcohol is listed on the bottle, so this is a fun one to check! Low is less than 11%, Medium is 11-14%, and high is 14%+

Tannin

This one applies to red wines. Tannins are compounds from the skins and seeds of red wine that leave a bitter/astringent feeling on your palate. A high-tannin wine will dry out your mouth and make your tongue feel "grippy" (kind of like sandpaper). Does the tannin feel low, medium, or high?