



Wine Craft

BY KELLY

How to Taste

An introduction ...

Appearance

Blind tasting isn't really blind!

White Wine

Most common color is **lemon** or **straw**.

- Silver or pink tones = type of grape?
- Green tones = youth?
- Bright yellow color = sunny climate?
- Gold or brownish shade = oxidation and/or age?

Red Wine

Most common color is **ruby**.

- Redder shade = higher acid
- Bluer shade = lower acid
- Translucent = thin-skinned grape
- Opaque = thick-skinned grape
- Orange tones = age

Remember -

Rim variation is an indicator of age. White wine tends to deepen in color as it ages; red wine tends to drop color.

Aroma

Much of a wine's flavor and character can be attributed to aroma!

- **Floral or Botanical.** Check for these first!

Examples:

- ✓ Orange Blossom – Muscat
 - ✓ Rose Petal – Gewurztraminer
 - ✓ Lavender & Thyme – Grenache
 - ✓ Lemon Grass – Sauvignon Blanc
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- **Anything Else That Jumps Out!**
 - ✓ Gasoline – Riesling
 - ✓ Black Olive or Bacon – Syrah
 - ✓ White Pepper – Gruner Veltliner



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Fruit Profiles

White Wine

- **Citrus**
 - ✓ Lemon, Lime, Orange?
- **Tree**
 - ✓ Apple, Pear?
- **Stone**
 - ✓ Peach, Nectarine?
- **Melon & Tropical**
 - ✓ Melon, Honeydew, Passionfruit, Pineapple, Mango, Kiwi, Guava?

Red Wine

- **Red**
 - ✓ Strawberry, Cherry, Pomegranate, Raspberry, Cranberry?
- **Blue**
 - ✓ Blueberry, Boysenberry?
- **Black**
 - ✓ Blackberry, Black Current, Black Cherry, Black Plum

More Fruit ...

- ❖ Identify the **family** of fruit, such as “citrus” or “red fruit”, then try to get more specific, such as “lemon” or “strawberry.” Zoom in. Is it Meyer lemon? Mandarin orange? Asian pear?
- ❖ What **part** of the fruit do we taste? Flesh, pith, rind, zest?
- ❖ Most importantly, what is the **condition** of the fruit? Think tart, fresh, ripe, over-ripe, baked, stewed or dried!



The Exciting World of Other...

This unimaginatively named category *should* ignite your imagination! Identify anything else found that wouldn't be categorized as floral, fruit, wood or earth.

Bell Pepper – Cabernet Franc

Eucalyptus – Shiraz

Graphite – Cabernet Sauvignon

Jalapeno – Sauvignon Blanc

Lentil – Gruner Veltliner

Mushroom – Pinot Noir

Tar – Nebbiolo

Tomato Leaf – Sangiovese

Wood

Has the wine been aged in oak? Easier asked than answered, since multiple factors can affect the wood signature of the wine! These include the following ...

- **Origin** – Is the oak from France, the US or somewhere else entirely?
 - ✓ In general, French oak is more subtle than American oak. Think vanilla and baking spice verses coconut or dill.
- **Age** – New oak imparts flavor; old oak imparts oxygen. This sometimes expresses as nuttiness or marzipan, and/or adds weight and roundness to the mouthfeel of a wine.
- **Size** – Smaller barrels assert more influence over a wine than larger barrels.
 - ✓ Foudres VS barriques
- **Toast** – A moderate amount of toast (charring of the barrel) increase vanillin; an excessive amount decreases vanillin.

Other Winemaking Decisions

- **Carbonic Maceration** – Also known as intracellular fermentation. Occurs when whole cluster grapes are contained in an oxygen-free environment and begin to split open under their own weight. Creates cherry-berry aromas and sometimes hints of bubblegum or banana. Common in Beaujolais-Villages wines.
- **Malolactic Fermentation** – Converts tart malic acid into smoother, rounder lactic acid. Imparts notes of butter and cream. Particularly common in Chardonnay production.
- **Lees Aging** – The process of allowing a newly fermented wine to rest on expired yeast for an extended time. Can lend notes of dough, biscuit, brioche, parmesan or sour cream. Common in many white wines, the most famous of which is arguably Champagne.

Earth & Mineral

Earth

- Wet Leaves
- Forest Floor
- Turned Earth or Potting Soil
- Barnyard

Mineral

- Rainwater
- Wet Rocks
- Saline or Sea Spray
- Dust or Gravel
- Chalk, Slate

- IN GENERAL, Old World wines have more pronounced earth and/or mineral characteristics than New World wines.

Taste

Take a sip, being sure to warm and aerate the wine before swallowing or spitting ...

- **Confirm Aromas**
 - ✓ Anything new?
 - ✓ What's changed?
 - ✓ Did something become more or less pronounced?
- **Access Structure**
 - ✓ Think about *structure* as the elements of a wine you FEEL rather than smell or taste.



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Structure

- **Acid.** A key element in wine, contributes a refreshing sensation and illusion of tartness and leanness. It literally makes you salivate.
- **Tannin.** Present in the skins, seeds and stems of grapes, as well as oak. Present mainly in red wines. Tannins create a drying sensation on the palate.
- **Sugar.** This refers to residual sugar left over from fermentation. Most wines have been fermented to dryness and are therefore DRY. You will normally detect sugar on the tip of your tongue. Be sure not to confuse sweetness with ripeness or fruitiness!
- **Alcohol.** The riper the grapes at harvest, the more potential alcohol in the finished wine—unless the winemaker chooses to halt fermentation, leaving some residual sugar in the finished wine. Warmer climates tend to result in higher alcohol wines!
- **Body.** A full-bodied wine can be compared to whole milk, while a light-bodied might be compared to skim. The grape, climate, amount of alcohol or residual sugar, as well as winemaking choices such as oak aging, lees aging or mf fermentation can contribute to the perception of body.



Recognizing Quality

Quality isn't synonymous with expense; in fact, even wine professionals with significant disposable income love discovering value in wines that are far higher quality than their price indicates.

But what *is* quality? It goes beyond simply what we like, although the more you learn about cause and effect in wine, the less likely you'll be to accept a grossly commercial, mass-produced beverage. Still, the concept is so object that we need some type of metric to guide us. Try this:

- **Intensity** – How concentrated and immediate are the aromas and flavors of the wine?
- **Balance** – Is each element in proportion, or is one speaking too loudly, like that annoying guest at dinner?
- **Complexity** – Is there a lot to think about, or is the wine a one-hit wonder?
- **Finish** – A good way to assess quality is how long the wine lingers on your palate after you drink it. Great wines can last more than a minute.

WHY Taste...?

Tasting wine, whether deductively or for appreciation, requires us to be present, transporting us from our real-world problems. There are many other ways to accomplish this, but wine is arguably one of the most enjoyable! We hope to be of assistance on your own wine journey—however far it takes you!



Cheers!

WineCraft is a local and online community comprised of enthusiasts and hospitality professionals who want to experience wine in a fun new way!

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