

Basics sensory evaluation:

- easy to drink wine
- involves conscious (deliberate) intent to smell and taste:
 - in the glass
 - in the mouth
- is subjective (some objectivity is needed)
- objectivity comes from extensive tasting
- Perspective:
 - liking a wine doesn't make it good
 - disliking a wine doesn't make it bad
 - you don't have to like a wine to know that it is well made
 - every style has its advocates
- Comparisons made against recognized standards (tasting memory)
- best to try a broad range of wines —European, Australian, New Zealand, Oregon, Washington, Argentina, etc.

Sensory evaluation is useful for wine-making decisions, resolving many defects early, purchasing wine, determine aging potential expanding your wine knowledge and improving your palette.

Being objective: knowing what to look for

- varietal flavor profiles
- hallmarks of quality
- what makes one wine better than another (smell, taste, balance and finish)
- defects—burnt rubber, rotten egg, rancid butter, cabbage, moldy, stale, VA, mousey, sweaty, horsey, rotten vegetables, etc.

Tastings: generally done blind to ensure impartiality, eliminate expectations or 'power of suggestion'

Helps to know:

- varietal
- where grapes are grown
- how the wine is made (style)
- quality (price range)

Getting started:

In the glass:

- appearance (color, hue, depth/intensity, clarity, texture (legs). Key to age, variety, some defects, style, etc.

- aroma and bouquet
 - swirl
 - sniff
 - aerate wine
 - smells may be recognizable or remind us of familiar things ('bouquet effect')
- sip (first impressions)
- spit (recommended when tasting more than 6 wines)
- savor and assess flavors, balance

Flavors are the perceived from both taste and smell:

- sweet, sour, salty, bitter, savory
- various aromas and bouquet

In the mouth:

- body: weight, thickness or viscosity of (light or heavy), (thin or full) based on alcohol, glycerin and or sugar
- structure—interplay of acid, tannins, alcohol, glycerin and body
- finish – aftertaste and length of time it takes to dissipate

Tannin: can be astringent (puckery feeling) on the tongue, gums, and cheeks and sometimes taste bitter (round and smooth vs. angular and coarse)

Alcohol adds flavor:

- improves mouth-feel
- produces a hot (burning) when excessive or not balanced by other components

Temperature: cold wines taste less sweet, more acid and astringent:

- fruity wines best chilled
- dry, tannic red best near or just below "room" temperature.(60-65°F)

Oak: Oak barrels are traditionally used around the world to enhance flavor, bouquet and improve wine quality. New barrels can impart sweet, vanilla flavors, spice notes: nutmeg, clove, coconut or a toasty quality. When improperly used, oak can be very distracting. It tends to dominate delicate flavors and aromas. When used to excess it masks varietal fruit and imparts undesirable flavor components. A well-made wine (primarily reds and chardonnays) should have just enough oak to add complexity without subduing subtle flavor elements. New barrels impart a great deal of flavor, while older (4-6 years) barrels impart little. Even older barrels,

as long as they are clean, improve wine by softening tannins, increasing richness, texture and concentration. As much as 5 gallons of water and alcohol evaporate yearly through the barrels staves and heads. of wine may be lost per year. The ‘controlled’ exposure to air that penetrates the barrel helps to soften and mature a wine.

Overall: what to look for:

- Varietal character (the French refer to this as ‘typicity’)
- Integration - alcohol, tannins, acid and residual sugar—smooth or harsh, light or heavy, crisp or flat or soft, hard or rich (creamy), sweet or dry,
- ‘balance’ or and harmony
- Expressiveness - intensity, definition, focus, length)
- Complexity - layers, surprises,
- Connectedness - flavors and aromas typify a particular region (‘terroir’)

A great wine: one you keep coming back to

Some descriptors of wine spoilage:

Lactobacillus: sauerkraut, pickles, sweaty, mousey

Pediococcus: sweaty, dirty socks, rotten vegetation

Oxidized: stale, VA

Sorbate: bubble gum, geranium with lactobacillus

Sulfides: H₂S, coffee at low levels, rubber, mercaptans, garlic, asparagus, parsnips, artichoke, rotten vegetables

Brett (*Brettanomyces*) or *Dekkera*: barnyard, horsey, barnyard, band-aids, medicinal, leather cardboard, rancid corn chips, mousey, metallic more positive notes: bacon, smoky spice, cloves