

Sensory Glossary

acid/acidity	Acidity gives a wine crispness and vitality. The three main types of acid found in wine are tartaric acid, malic acid and lactic acid.
aftertaste	The taste left in the mouth after swallowing wine.
alcoholic	A wine with an unbalanced perception of too much alcohol.
angular	An angular hits specific places with a high impact and usually has high acidity.
aroma	The unique smells of a certain grape variety which are commonly associated with a young wine.
aroma wheel	A visual graphic of the different categories of wine aroma components.
ascorbic acid	Vitamin C is found in young grapes prior to veraison, but is lost during the ripening process.
astringency	The puckering quality of high tannin wines, which often dries out the mouth.
austere	Usually, the wine has very high acidity and very little fruit flavours. An austere wine is not fruit-forward nor opulent.
autolytic	A yeasty taste commonly associated with wines that have been aged.
baked	A wine with a high alcohol content that displays stewed or baked fruit flavours.
balance	A wine where the concentration of fruit, level of tannins, and acidity come together in a harmonious way.
barnyard	The wine displays barnyard aromas or related terms like "horsey, manure, animal, etc."
big	A wine with intense flavour or is high in alcohol. It is not necessarily fruit-forward and can also mean that it has big tannins.
bitterness	An unpleasant taste sensation caused by tannins that is perceived on the back of the tongue.
body	A tactile sensation which describes the palate weight of a wine in the mouth. Often wines are referred to as light, medium, or full bodied.
bouquet	The complex aromas perceived in aged wines.
breathing	To expose a wine to oxygen to improve its flavours. Often, aeration will round out and soften a wine.
bright	Wines that are higher in acidity.
brilliance	When describing the visual appearance of the wine, this term refers to high clarity, very low levels of suspended solids. When describing fruit flavours, brilliance refers to noticeable acidity and intensity.
buttery	When a wine has gone through malolactic fermentation, it often has a rich, creamy mouthfeel and flavours of butter.
carbonated	A bubbly wine containing significant levels of carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is dissolved in a still wine under pressure.
cassis	A low alcohol syrupy liquor made from blackcurrants which is often used as a flavouring and sweetening agent.
cat pee	An aroma often associated with Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand.

character	A term which often refers to the personality, substance and integrity of a wine.
charcoal	A wine that is described as tasting like charcoal tastes gritty, it's usually dry (with higher tannins) and has this rustic flavour.
chewy tannins	The sense of tannins that is not overwhelming, but is a little drying. This sensation is not necessarily a negative attribute for wine.
chocolatey	Typically associated with rich red wines, chocolatey refers to the flavours and mouthfeel associated with chocolate.
cigar box	These flavours are hinting toward sweetness and cedar-wood with an abundance of smoke.
clean	A wine without off-flavours or taints.
closed	A wine that is not very aromatic.
cloying	A sticky or sickly sweet wine without balanced acidity.
coarse	A coarse wine has a rough texture or mouthfeel, usually due to the perception of tannins.
colour	The colour of a wine mostly comes from the grape skins. Generally, red wines become lighter and more brown as they age, while white wines get darker.
complexity	The perception of a multi-layered wine in terms of flavours and aroma.
concentrated	A wine with intense flavours.
cork taint	A wine fault caused by the presence of the chemical compounds 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA) or 2,4,6-tribromoanisole (TBA) in wine.
corked	A wine fault, usually from an unclean or faulty cork resulting in a musty smell.
creamy	A popular description for white wines and sparkling wines fermented or aged in oak.
crisp	A term often used to describe a white wine with high acidity.
crust	The bottle sediment of red wines as they age. This is usually associated with sediments in port.
decanting	The transferring of a wine from its bottle to another container. This process removes sediment and exposes the wine to air.
dense	Dense often describes bold red wines, but isn't always a positive characteristic in other wines because it implies that it is unbalanced.
depth	An aspect of complexity. I.e. a wine with several layers of flavour.
descriptors	Words used to describe the aromas and flavours of a wine when assessing its overall quality.
dessert wine	A sweet and high alcohol still wine which is usually served after a meal or with dessert.
developed	A tasting term referring to the maturity of a wine.
dirty	A wine with off flavours, often from poor hygiene during the fermentation or bottling process.
dry	A wine with low or no residual sugar which lacks the perception of sweetness.
earthy	A slightly unpleasant finish on a wine; often the aromas and flavour are reminiscent of earth, such as forest floor or mushrooms.
elegance	A well balanced wine that has subtle complexity.

expressive	A wine with projected aromas and flavours.
extracted	A wine with concentrated flavours which are often derived from extended skin contact.
fat	A wine that is full in body and has a sense of viscos.
faults	The presence of an attribute at an intensity that detracts from a wine style.
finesse	A very subjective term used to describe a high quality wine that is well balanced.
finish	The perception of a wine after swallowing.
fino	A style of sherry that has a distinctive tangy flavour that comes from being aged under a layer of 'flor' yeast cells.
firm	A strong perception of tannin and structure.
flabby	A wine that lacks acidity.
flat	The term is often used interchangeably with 'flabby' to denote a wine that is lacking acidity.
flavour	The complex combination of the olfactory, gustatory and trigeminal sensations perceived during tasting.
fortified wine	A wine to which a distilled spirit (usually brandy) is added.
foxy	A musty odour and flavour from Vitis labrusca grapes native to North America.
fresh	A positive perception of fruit and acidity.
freshness	A positive perception of wine acidity.
fruit	The perception of grape characteristics unique to a varietal.
full	A wine with heavy weight or body, due to the alcohol concentration. Alternatively, it can also refer to a wine that is full in flavour and tannin.
fumé blanc	A synonym for wines made from Sauvignon Blanc grapes.
glasses	A type of glass stemware that is used to drink and taste wine.
grassy	An herbaceous or vegetal characteristic of a wine.
green	A negative tasting term for a wine that tastes youthful, unripe, raw and acidic.
hard	An extremely tannic wine.
heavy	An unbalanced wine that is very alcoholic.
herbaceous	Vegetal aromas and flavours.
herbal	A wine with a flavour or aroma profile that is reminiscent of herbs.
hollow	Diluted wines which lack fruit depth and concentration.
hotness	A wine which is too high in alcohol and therefore leaves a burning sensation in the back of the throat when swallowed.
jammy	A wine with rich fruit intensity that maybe lacking in tannins.
labels	Every bottle of wine sold must have a label, providing certain information about the wine. Some of the information on a wine label is required by the country where the wine is made, whereas other items are required by the country where the wine is sold.
lactic acid	An acid formed in trace amounts during yeast fermentation and in larger quantities during malolactic fermentation.

lean	The sense of acidity in the wine that lacks a perception of fruit.
leathery	A red wine high in tannins with a thick and soft taste may be reminiscent of leather.
legs	The tracks of liquid that cling to the sides of a glass after the contents have been swirled.
length	The amount of time that flavours lingers in the mouth after swallowing wine.
malic acid	An acid found in high concentrations in unripe grapes, it has a tart, sharp flavour.
metallic	The perception of an unpleasant bitter taste which resembles metal.
minerality	When a wine smells and tastes of crushed minerals, stones, wet stones, and even ocean water.
mouldy	A wine which exhibits an unpleasant musty, rotten and earthy aroma and/or taste.
mousy	Mousey taint is a microbiological fault caused by the spoilage yeasts belonging to the genera <i>Brettanomyces</i> and <i>Dekkera</i> . Wine affected by the taint often displays an intense metallic bitterness.
mouthfeel	The texture of a wine as it is perceived in the mouth.
musty	A wine with a dank aromas arising from processing mouldy grapes or using unhygienic storage containers.
New World	New World wines are those produced outside the traditional wine-growing areas of Europe and the Middle East.
non-vintage	A non-vintage wine means the year isn't listed on the label and may contain wine from different years.
nose	The nose is the smell of the wine in the glass.
nutty	A wine that exhibits aromas and flavours reminiscent of nuts.
oaky	A wine with a noticeable perception of the effects of oak, often described as vanilla and sweet spice aromas, a creamy body and a smoky or toasted flavour.
oily	A term for wine with a viscous texture or that is low in acidity and feels flabby in the mouth.
Old World	Wines made from countries with a long history of winemaking, including countries in Europe, the Middle Eastern and North Africa.
olfactory bulb	When wine is inhaled into the nose or mouth, information is transmitted to the olfactory bulb which can identify nearly 10,000 unique aromas even at very low concentrations.
oxidation	If a wine has been exposed to air, it undergoes oxidation which causes chemical changes and deterioration. Often, an oxidized wine is stale, dull and becomes brown.
oxidised	A negative term indicating that a wine that has undergone oxidation.
palate	The overall impression of aroma, flavour and textures produced by the wine in the mouth.
petrol	A wine containing a high concentration of trimethyldihydronaphthalene, whose scent is evocative of the odour of petrol, kerosene or paraffin.
powerful	A wine with a high level of alcohol that is not excessively alcoholic.
raisiny	A wine with a taste of raisins, resulting from the use of grapes that were overripe and possible dried when picked.

rancio	An unique character, often described as butterscotch and old wood aromas, found in fortified wines which have spent a significant time in old oak barrels.
regions	A wine producing location that is distinct from another area.
reticent	A wine that is not exhibiting much aroma or bouquet characteristics.
retro nasal passage	The airways that connect the nose and the mouth.
rich	A sense of sweetness that is not excessive.
rough	A wine with a coarse texture.
round	A wine with a balanced body that is not overly tannic.
sappy	A slightly green character often found in young wines.
sensory evaluation	The assessment of wine based on sight, smell, taste and touch.
smokey	A wine exhibiting the aromas and flavours of the various types of smoke.
smoothness	A wine with a non-astringent texture.
soft	A wine that is not overly tannic.
sour	A wine with unbalanced, puckery acidity.
sparkling wine	A term used to describe almost any other carbonated wine produced outside the French Champagne region which can be made using the <i>méthode traditionnelle</i> , the <i>Charmat</i> process, the transfer method or carbonation.
spicy	A wine with aromas and flavours reminiscent of various spices.
spittoon	A receptacle made for spitting wine into after tasting.
standard drink	A standard drink is any drink containing 10 grams of alcohol.
structure	The term concerns the mouthfeel of a wine, provided by the balance of acidity, tannin, alcohol and sugar.
subregion	A subdivision of a region.
superzone	Part of a wine producing state.
supple	A wine with good fruit and soft astringency.
sweet wine	Red or white wines which have varying degrees of residual sugar.
sweetness	Residual sugar provides wine sweetness, which is leftover glucose from grape juice that wasn't completely fermented into alcohol.
table wine	An still wine which is neither fortified nor sparkling.
tactile	The sensations perceived while <i>wines</i> were held in the mouth.
tannic	A wine with aggressive tannins.
tar	A wine with aromas and flavours reminiscent of Tar.
tart	A wine with high levels of acidity.
tartaric acid	One of the strongest acids in wine which controls the acidity levels. It contributes to the "tartness" of a wine, but not as much as malic and citric acid.
tears	The ring of clear liquid near the top of a glass of wine, from which droplets form and fall back into the wine.
terroir	How a particular wine region's climate, soils and terrain affect the taste of a <i>wine</i> .

texture	How a wine feels on the palate.
tight	A young wine that has muted aromas and flavours which needs time to mature.
toasty	A charred or smoky taste from an oaked wine.
transparency	The ability of a wine to clearly portray all unique aspects of its flavour.
tepidity	The expression of the typical characteristics of a varietal.
vanillin	An oak induced characteristic aroma reminiscent of vanilla.
varietal	The dominant grape variety from which a wine is made.
varietal expression	A varietal wine primarily shows the fruit and the grape variety dominates the flavour.
vegetal	Aromas and flavours reminiscent of vegetation.
vinegary	The aroma of vinegar from the presence of acetic acid.
volatility	The presence of water-soluble organic acids which have short carbon chains. Volatile acidity (VA) in wine represents acetic acid (vinegar).
weight	Similar to "body". It is the sensation when a wine feels thick on the palate.
wine style	Style can be broken down into palate structure (influenced by ethanol, acids and phenolic compounds), flavour quality and flavour quantity.
wine type	Varieties of wine determined by various production factors, such as sparkling wine, still wine, fortified wine, etc.
zones	Part of a wine producing superzone.