

Tasting Notes:

For century's kings and queens, presidents, dictators and even the guy down the street have enjoyed wine, but you just don't understand what everyone is talking about. Maybe it all tastes the same to you. That's okay, I'll give you a few pointers and a little education, the rest is up to you to practice your "tasting technique" so you too can enjoy wine.

Has the couple down the street ever had you over for dinner and asked you to try this great wine they have? Then served it in an ordinary glass or even dropped an ice cube in it? If this has happened to you, take it from me, they have no idea how to taste wine. Incidentally, wine is to be enjoyed not guzzled like a keg of beer! Wine should be savored, treat each glass as if it's the finest thing in life, savor it, this is what is meant by enjoying a wine. So how do you savor wine? There are two parts to this, first the mechanics or "tasting technique" and second a little practice.

Here's the simple. Invest in a few wine glasses. A wine glass is designed to encapsulate your nose as bring the liquid to your mouth, the reason for this is simple. Humans can only taste four things on their tongue salt, bitter, sweet and sour. The rest of our ability to taste is done through our olfactory senses or our taste of smell. These receptors are located in the back of the mouth and in our nose. The use of a wine glass helps concentrate the smell to enhance the taste. The mouth can however feel the texture of wine such as creaminess or dryness which is important to the taste. Swirling wine in the glass exposes the wine to air which releases the bouquet and aroma. The more you swirl the more aromatic it becomes helping you taste the wine. Swirling is done by moving the wrist in a circular motion not your arm, this will take a little practice too. Notice the wine streaking down the side of the glass? This is known as the legs of the wine, the more streaks the more alcohol. Also take note of the color of the wine this may give you a clue as to how heavy or light it may be.

Enough education, let's get to the fun stuff. We'll try something that you know so you can see that this really does work. Pour about three ounces or a third of the glass of 7UP into a wine glass, let the fizz settle, raise the glass to your nose, keep your mouth open and breathe in lightly but take a deep sniff. take a sip breathing in lightly through your nose and mouth. Lower the glass, swirl the liquid in your mouth letting it surround your tongue, open your mouth slightly and breathe in lightly letting the air roll over the liquid, as you swallow breathe out through your nose this will enhance the flavors. This is the "tasting technique". Did you pick up any lemon or lime flavor? Maybe just citrus? Try a ginger ale, carefull, the ginger will really jump out! Did you get it? If not don't worry about it, this is the practice part. Try the technique with any beverage, you'll get the hang of it.

Let's move on to some wine. Start out with a Classic Burgundy that sells for about \$2.99 a bottle. Use your "tasting technique", go slow, and try to describe the taste and texture. Did you pick up the fruity bouquet? Light sweetness? Slight dryness? Good, screw the top back on, put it in the fridge, burgundy is great for cooking or marinating. Just a note on cooking with wine, Red wines will only keep for a day or two unless you

use a vacuum stopper whites will last a little longer but don't throw it out just because you don't want to drink it. Wine can be frozen and used at a later date for cooking or marinating. I'm sure you have heard of red or white wine vinegar. Wine that has been opened to the air for a length of time turns to vinegar so there's need to throw it out, use it for cooking.

Now we'll move on to some wines that will exercise your senses! It is usually true that most wines are more aromatic when kept between 60 and 64 degrees F, even though whites can be chilled in the fridge. So let's not chill the wine yet plus we'll have some consistency. Clear your pallet between each taste with water and soda crackers, not saltines, the salt will dry your mouth and change the taste of the wine. This is a lot of fun to do with friends! If you're going to try it by yourself I would suggest using 187ml bottles for this experience. Woodbridge is a good choice, Cabernet, Merlot, Zinfandel (not white Zinfandel), Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Riesling and Sutter Home Sauvignon Blanc. Normally the order of tasting would be light whites, heavy whites, rose', light reds, heavy reds then sweet wines, but I wanted to swing your taste buds back and forth to demonstrate the huge differences in wine. Try these in the order of the bullet points below and use the description to pick out the different flavors and textures.

- **Cabernet:** A big bold wine that will jump out of the glass. Very rich and aromatic, aged in oak barrels for long periods which gives it a vanilla flavor and creaminess. Typically you should taste plum, raspberries, black currant, tobacco and in some a mustiness from the oak.
- **Chardonnay:** A medium to heavy wine aged in oak, very creamy and buttery a result of the winemaking process. A floral bouquet with peach, pineapple and pear flavors sometimes even a lime or citrus flavor. Some chards are fermented in stainless steel tanks instead of oak, these wines are lighter less creamy and rich but the citrus flavors stand out.
- **Merlot:** Merlot is sometimes blended with Cab to soften it and other times used to add extra flavor to a Shiraz. Consequently Merlot is softer than a Cab, has an excellent bouquet and a medium body. Aged in oak barrels, Merlot is known for its blackberry and plum characteristics sometimes chocolate, currant and vanilla. Usually the driest of the red wines.
- **Sauvignon Blanc:** A light to medium body, crisp and acidic usually the driest of the white wines. Mostly aged in stainless steel the citrus fruit and grape flavors stand out. Lots of herb tones sometimes a hint of grass or straw. Fume Blanc is the same grape aged in oak which can bring out a barnyard smell.
- **Zinfandel:** Not White Zinfandel! White Zin is made by removing the skin from a Zin grape; this removes all the healthy tannins and the flavor producing a rose colored sweet wine. Zinfandel is related to the Primitivo grape from Italy. I mention this because Zin pairs very well with Italian foods including tomato sauce, mozzarella, pesto and pizza. Zin is a medium to heavy wine. Lighter young Zins are very fruity while older vintages will have a deep berry jam flavor like cherry. Some known as Old Vine or Ancient Vine Zinfandel are exceptional in flavor and value and age well. The older the vine the better the wine.

- **Pinot Grigio:** Sometimes called Pinot Gris, its light, smooth almost silky texture that stays on your palate. Light fruit flavors include peach, pear, apricot and citrus fruit, in some you may notice a honey or smoke flavor. Fairly acidic which gives it a bite on the end.
- **Syrah:** Syrah or Shiraz is the same grape but has two distinct styles of winemaking. Syrah is a more European style while Shiraz is used by California and Australian brands but this rule is not set in stone. A medium to heavy wine Syrah starts out with soft blackberry tones, light tobacco and herbs but finishes with a cinnamon, peppery spice. Syrah is dark almost ink like and goes well with barbequed dishes. Petite Syrah is a different grape and is well worth trying. As the name implies the grape is very small therefore concentrating the flavor in the grape and is usually earthy with dark fruits and black pepper.
- **Voignier:** (Available in 750ml only) Pronounced vee-own-YAY. Medium body, floral bouquet, white fruit flavors apricot, pear, apricot, nutmeg, peach and melon. Mostly aged in stainless vats, some are aged in oak barrels giving it a creamy, buttery texture like a Chard. Viognier is often blended with other wines to enhance the flavor. Zontes Footsteps is a Shiraz blended with Viognier producing an exceptional red wine. Yes, a red blended with a white wine!
- **Pinot Noir:** (750ml only) When choosing a Pinot Noir be sure it comes from a region that is cool, this “noble” grape as it is sometimes referred to can only be grown in a cool climate. It is difficult to grow and vint which explains why good Pinot Noir is a little pricey but well worth it. A medium to light body, usually light in color. Raspberries, cherries, violets, sometimes spicy with an earthy scent and a taste of mushrooms. Serve this “noble” wine at 58 to 62 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Riesling:** Look to Germany for these “elegant” wines. Unlike other regions of the world, German wines including their reds do not use commercial yeasts nor do they alter the acidity or age Riesling wines in oak. German vintners rely on the soil and their expertise in growing the grape and picking at just the right times of the year to produce different tastes, dryness and acidity. The picking season for Riesling runs from early September through January. The various picks produce very different wines and have names for each of these. All Rieslings can be characterized by their sweet, summertime fragrances, honeysuckle, peach, juicy apple, pear, apricot and citrus tones, depending on the time of the pick these flavors are more or less prevalent.
 - **Kabinett:** These grapes are picked during the early harvest and may not be fully ripened; therefore light bodied, less sweet, lots of citrus, usually dry.
 - **Spatlese:** These grapes are picked during the late harvest and are fully ripened. These wines have more intensity and acidity than Kabinett. Their sweetness and dryness may be hidden because of the high level of citrus flavors. Ripe apricots, clove, honey and wildflowers leave a long finish on the palette.

- **Auslese:** Very ripe grapes especially chosen for this varietal. Richer and more intense than Kabinett and Spatlese. Honey and spice, lush peach and apple finish with bold citrus flavors. Usually a little drier than the Kab or Spat.
- **Eiswein:** Pronounced ice-wine. This is the very latest pick of the Riesling grapes and are dehydrated by the warm summer sun, left on the vine and frozen by the cold wintry nights concentrating the flavor. Very sweet but hidden by the acidity it is very well balanced. Pineapple, maybe even a hint of kiwi, plush ripe peach and citrus flavors velvety smooth the flavor lingers on.

Obviously I could have gone into much greater detail; there are many books and websites you can visit for additional information. Some include elaborate tasting forms and an intense study of each wine, I wanted to explain wine tasting in easy to understand terms so you can enjoy the experience, relax with it, after all it's supposed to be fun. When your tastes have matured and your ready to expand your knowledge you can visit those other places but you now have an understanding of what wine tastes like and how to taste it. It's up to you to do the practice part have fun and feel free ask us any questions you may have or help you pick out some wines. I hope you will enjoy your wine experiences!