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Basic Wine Tasting Terms

-A-

Acetic – this describes wine which smells and/or tastes of vinegar.

Acid – wine contains a number of different acids these differ from bottle to bottle.

Acid makes a wine taste refreshing and crisp.

Aftertaste – this describes how long the taste of a wine lasts after it is swallowed.

Aggressive – harsh tastes due to excesses of tannins, alcohol or acid.

Alcohol – is the amount of ethanol present in wine.

Aromatic – this term describes perfumed aromas in wine.

Astringent – dry effect in the mouth, usually caused by high tannin.

-B-

Balance – this describes the balance of ingredients within wine. Sometimes wines can be dominated by one flavour.

Blackcurrant – general aroma associated with Cabernet Sauvignon and usually referred to as cassis.

Body – this describes how wine tastes on your palate (impression in the mouth of weight and consistency) usually described as light, medium or full-bodied.

Bottle age – this describes the time spent maturing in the bottle.

Bouquet – this term refers to the different aromas in wine.

Buttery – this describes smell and flavours of butter in wine.

-C-

Caramel – the smell and/or taste of caramelised sugar.

Cardboard – the smell of damp cardboard or papers.

Cedar-smell – likened to pencil shavings and is often associated with many red wines matured in oak barrels.

Chewy – this describes a full-bodied wine with lots of tannin.

Cigar box – tobacco aromas derived from oak influence.

Citrus – aroma of citrus fruit flavours.

Clarity – how clear or dull wine appears.

Clean – the fresh flavours of wine.

Clones – this term is a sub-variety or mutated strain of a particular grape.

Closed – young wines not yet showing their full or expected potential of taste or aroma.

Cloying – this describes sweet wines that lack acid to balance the overpowering sweetness.

Coarse – a harshness occasionally detected in young over tannic red wines.

Complex – displaying a range of flavours and often developing constantly whilst in the glass.

Cooked – this describes baked or jammy aromas and tastes associated with cooked fruit.

Continental – is the difference between summer and winter temperatures.

Corked – if a wine is 'corked' it is stripped of all its beautiful fruit and flavours.

Crisp – a distinctive level of refreshing acidity in wine.

-D-

Delicate – light wine with subtle flavours.

Dumb – this term is given to wine that does not have any distinct aromas/flavours.

-E-

Earthy – this describes the taste or smell of damp earth.

Eucalyptus – a pleasant minty type aroma sometimes found in red Australian wines.

-F-

Farmyard – odours of animal or vegetal expressions.

Finish – see Aftertaste.

Flabby – wine lacking in acid.

Flat – lacking in acidity or character. This is usually associated with sparkling wine that has lost its bubbles.

Fleshy – usually smooth full bodied red wines.

Flinty – mineral flavours and aromas normally associated with dry white wines.

Floral – fragrant scents like flowers in wine.

Fruitcake – flavours and aromas of a rich mixture of dried fruits.

Fruity – exhibiting an abundance of fruit flavours.

Full-bodied – heavy in texture and flavour, the opposite to light-bodied wines which are normally meant to be drunk young.

Funky – this describes wine which has an earthy/animal taste.

-G-

Gamey – pungent aromas occasionally found in big red wines.

Gooseberry – often used to describe Sauvignon Blanc.

Green – this describes young wine which tastes of unripe fruit.

Grog – this is an Australian term to describe alcohol. The term is associated with the watering down of alcohol.

-H-

Harmony – this describes well balanced wine.

Herbaceous – grassy or vegetal or the smell of wet leaves.

Hot – this describes wine which has a high alcohol content producing a warm/burning sensation.

-I-

Inky – this describes the opaque purple colour of wine.

Intensity – this describes how intense a wine's colour is, pale to medium to deep.

-J-

Jammy – cooked flavours of soft dark fruit, usually in wines from warm climates.

-K-

Kabinett – a German term to describe without made without adding sugar.

-L-

Legs – this describes the viscosity of wine.

Length – used to describe the amount of time the flavours linger after the wine has been swallowed.

Liquorice – occasionally found on the palate of red wines.

-M-

Meaty – chewy, substantially heavy-bodied wine.

Mellow – soft, non-harsh wines. A slight hint of sweetness is sometimes present.

Minerally – this can be used to describe the taste of wine, similar to mineral water, crisp and refreshing.

-N-

Nose – bouquet or aroma of wine.

-O-

Oily –mature Rieslings can often have this type of texture or consistency.

Oxidised – flat wine devoid of character after being exposed to excess contact with air.

-P-

Pear drops – a smell similar to acetate or nail varnish remover.

Peppery – a spice, sometimes hot texture impression.

Perfumed – fragrant.

Primary aromas- this describes the aromas in wine that arise directly from the fruit.

-Q-

Quality – the overall quality of a wine.

-R-

Reserve – this term may refer to wine that has seen a period of aging.

Residual sugar – this describes sugar remaining in wine which has not been fermented out.

Robust – this describes a full-bodied wine.

Rounded – a very well balanced wine.

-S-

Secondary aromas – this describes the aromas in wine that arise from the fermentation.

Short – when wine has no length and the taste does not linger on the palate.

Sweetness – how sweet wine tastes (dry, off dry, medium and sweet).

-T-

Tannin – is a type of acid from grape pips, grape skins and wood. It is the dry feeling that you can taste on the back of your tongue.

Thin – wine lacking in body.

Toasty – describes a wine characteristic of lightly burnt toast.

-U-

Underripe – the resulting flavours when grapes which failed to reach optimum maturity are still used in wine.

-V-

Vanilla – detectable in the 'nose' of wine.

Vegetal – describes a wine with vegetable-like aromas or flavours.

Velvety – the texture or mouth feel of wine.

-W-

Woody – this term describes the smell of oak wood in wine.

-X-

Xarel-lo – is a white grape variety which gives a strong aromatic and earthy flavour. This grape variety is indigenous to Spain.

-Y-

Yeasty – a bready smell in wine.

-Z-

Zesty – a wine which is well balanced with fruit and prominent acidity.