



A Wine Taster's Glossary

Last Updated: June 2020

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A

Acetic

Vinegary taste or smell that develops when a wine is overexposed to air.

Acidity

All wines naturally contain acids, which should be in proper balance with fruit and other components. Sufficient acidity gives liveliness and crispness and is critical for wines to age.

Aftertaste

The flavor impression the wine leaves after it is swallowed. Also referred to as the "finish" of a wine. Fine wines have a lingering finish, or aftertaste.

Aroma

The smell of a wine, especially young wines.

Aromatic

A term for wines with pronounced aroma, particularly those redolent of herbs or spices.

Astringent

The "puckerish" quality of high tannin content, which has the effect of drying out the mouth. Many young red wines are astringent because of tannin.

Austere

Somewhat hard, with restrained fruit and character.

B

Balance

Harmony among the wine's components -- fruit, acidity, tannins, alcohol; a well-balanced wine possesses the various elements in proper proportion to one another.

Big

Powerful in aroma and flavor; full-bodied.



Bitter

Usually considered a fault in but characteristic of such wines as Amarone and certain other Italian reds.

Body

The weight and texture of a wine; it may be light-bodied or full-bodied. Often refers to alcohol content.

Botrytis cinerea

A mold that attacks certain grapes, producing honeyed sweet wines like Sauternes and late-harvest Rieslings.

Bouquet

The complex of aromas that develops with age in fine wines; young wines have aroma, not bouquet.

Breed

Similar to good bloodlines and handling, as in racehorses; the result of soil, grapes and vinification techniques that combine to produce depth and distinctive character in a wine.

Brix

Term used to measure the sugar content of grapes, grape juice (must) or wine. Grapes are generally harvested at 20 to 25 Brix, resulting in alcohol after fermentation of 11.5 to 14 percent.

Brut

Term for dry Champagne or sparkling wine.

Buttery

Descriptor for rich flavor and smoothness of texture, somewhat akin to the oiliness and flavor of butter. More often refers to oak-aged white wines than reds; many Chardonnays and white Burgundies are said to have buttery aromas and flavors.

C

Chewy

Wines with unusual thickness of texture or tannins that one almost "chews" before swallowing.



Clean

Fresh, with no discernible defects; refers to aroma, appearance and flavor.

Closed

Young, undeveloped wines that do not readily reveal their character are said to be closed. Typical of young Bordeaux or Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as other big red wines.

Coarse

Rude or harsh in flavor; clumsy or crude.

Complete

Mature, with good follow-through on the palate, satisfying mouth- feel and firm aftertaste.

Complex

Multifaceted aroma and/or flavor. Most wines considered great exhibit a combination of flavor and aroma elements.

Cooked

Heavy, prune-like flavor; also said of wines from very hot growing regions or wines that are overripe.

Corked, corky

Smelling of cork rather than wine; due to a faulty cork.

Crisp

Fresh, brisk character, usually with high acidity.

D

Deep

Having layers of persistent flavor that gradually unfold with aeration.

Delicate

Light fragrance, flavor, and body.



Developed

Mature. A well-developed wine is more drinkable than an undeveloped one.

Distinctive

Elegant, refined character that sets the wine apart on its own.

Dry

Opposite of sweet; somewhat subjective in that tasters may perceive sweetness to varying degree.

Dull

Lacking liveliness and proper acidity; uninteresting.

Dumb

Not revealing flavor or aroma; closed; typical of wines that are too young or too cold.

E

Earthy

Smell or flavor reminiscent of earth. A certain earthiness can be appealing; too much makes the wine coarse.

Elegant

Refined character, distinguished quality, stylish, not heavy.

Extra Dry

A term used on Champagne labels to indicate not-quite-dry; not as dry as Brut.

F

Fat

Full of body and flavor; fleshy.

Fine

Distinguished.



Finesse

Distinctive balance; fineness; elegance and flair.

Finish

Aftertaste, or final impression the wine leaves; it can have a long finish or a short one (not desirable).

Firm

Taut balance of elements; tightly knit structure; also distinct flavor.

Flat

Dull, lacking in liveliness; wine without sufficient acid.

Flavor

How the wine tastes.

Fleshy

Fatness of fruit; big, ripe.

Flinty

Dry, mineral character that comes from certain soils, mostly limestone, in which the wine was grown; typical of French Chablis and Loire Valley Sauvignon Blancs (Sancerre).

Flowery

Aroma suggestive of flowers.

Forward

Developed ahead of its peers; also, when the fruit is prominent, it is said to be forward.

Foxy

The "grapey" flavors of wines made from native American grapes, *Vitis labrusca*.



Fruity

Aroma and/or flavor of grapes; most common to young, light wines but refers also to such fruit flavors in wine as apple, black currant, cherry, citrus, pear, peach, raspberry, or strawberry; descriptive of wines in which the fruit is dominant.

Full-bodied

Full proportion of flavor and alcohol; big, fat.

G

Green

A wine made from unripe grapes that is tart and lacking fruit flavor.

Grip

Firmness of flavor and structure.

H

Hard

Stiff, with pronounced tannins; undeveloped.

Harmonious

All elements -- fruit, acid, tannin -- in perfect balance

Harsh

Rough, biting character from excessive tannin or acid.

Heady

High in alcohol, very full-bodied

Herbaceous

Aromas reminiscent of fresh grass or hay; grassy, as in certain Sauvignon Blancs; also the green pepper character of some Cabernets.



Herby

Reminiscent of herbs, such as mint, sage, thyme, or of eucalyptus.

Honest

Without flaws, typical and straightforward, simple but not great.

Honeyed

Smell or taste reminiscent of honey, characteristic of late-harvest wines affected by "noble rot" (*Botrytis cinerea*).

I

Intricate

Interweaving of subtle complexities of aroma and flavor.

L

Legs

The viscous rivulets that run down the side of the glass after swirling or sipping, a mingling of glycerin and alcohol.

Length

Lingering aftertaste.

Light

Refers to wines light in alcohol but also to texture and weight, how the wine feels in the mouth. Lightness is appropriate in some wines, a defect in others.

Lively

Crisp, fresh, having vitality.

Long

Fine wines should have a long finish, or aftertaste; see Length.



Luscious

Rich, opulent, and smooth; most often said of sweet wines but also intensely fruity ones.

M

Maderized

Wine that has oxidized; has brown or amber color and stale odor.

Mature

Fully developed, ready to drink.

Meaty

A wine with chewy, fleshy fruit; sturdy and firm in structure.

Mellow

Smooth and soft, with no harshness.

Moldy

Wines with the smell of mold or rot, usually from grapes affected by rot or from old moldy casks used for aging.

Muscular

Vigorous fruit, powerful body and flavor; robust.

Musty

Stale, dusty or rank aromas.

N

Noble

Great; of perfect balance and harmonious expression. The so-called "noble" grapes are those that produce the world's finest wines: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Riesling (some would also include Syrah, Nebbiolo and Sangiovese).



Nose

The smell of the wine; it may have a "good nose" or an "off-nose," meaning defective odors.

Nutty

Nutlike aromas that develop in certain wines, such as sherries or old white wines.

O

Oak, oaky

Aroma and flavor that derive from aging in oak casks or barrels. Characterized by smokiness, vanilla, clove or other spices. Should not be overly pronounced.

Off-dry

Not quite dry, a perception of sweetness too faint to call the wine sweet.

Off-flavors (also off-aromas or off-nose)

Not quite right; flavors or odors that are not correct for a particular type of wine; opposite of clean; defective.

Open

Revealing full character.

Oxidized

Flat, stale or sherrylike aroma and flavor; spoiled as the result of overexposure to air.

P

Petillant

A light sparkle.

R

Rich

Full, opulent flavor, body and aroma.



Ripe

Mature, fully ripe fruit.

Robust

Full-bodied, powerful, heady

Rough

Harsh edges, biting, unpleasant.

Round

Smooth and well-developed flavor, without angularity or rough edges.

S

Sharp

Biting acid or tannin.

Short

Refers to finish, or aftertaste, when it ends abruptly.

Silky

Smooth, sinuous texture and finish.

Simple

Opposite of complex; straightforward.

Smoky

Aroma and flavor sometimes associated with oak aging.

Soft

May refer to soft, gentle fruit in delicate wines, or to lack of acidity in wines without proper structure; used on a label occasionally to indicate low alcohol.

Solid

Sound, well structured, firm.



Sour

Sharply acidic or vinegary

Sparkling

Wines with bubbles created by trapped carbon dioxide gas, either natural or injected.

Spicy

Having the character or aroma of spices such as clove, mint, cinnamon, or pepper.

Spritzzy

Slight prickle of carbon dioxide, common to some very young wines; frizzante in Italy.

Steely

Firmly structured; taut balance tending toward high acidity.

Stiff

Unyielding, closed; dumb.

Strong

Robust, powerful, big.

Structure

The way a wine is built; its composition and proportions.

Stuffing

Big, flavorful, full-bodied wines are said to have "stuffing."

Sturdy

Bold, vigorous flavor; full-bodied; robust.

Sulphur, SO₂

An anti-oxidant used in making most wines; the fermentation process creates minute natural amounts.



Supple

Yielding in flavor; a wine that is readily accessible for current drinking.

Sweet

Usually indicates the presence of residual sugar, retained when grape sugar is not completely converted to alcohol. Even dry wines, however, may have an aroma of sweetness, the combination of intense fruit or ripeness. Considered a flaw if not properly balanced with acidity.

T

Tannin

A natural component found to varying degrees in the skins, seeds and stems of grapes; most prominent in red wines, where it creates a dry, puckering sensation in young reds of concentrated extract; mellows with aging and drops out of the wine to form sediment; a major component in the structure of red wines.

Tart

sharp; acceptable if not too acidic.

Thick

Dense and heavy in texture.

Thin

Lacking body and flavor.

Tired

Past its peak of flavor development; old.

Tough

Astringent or hard; wiry; tannic.

V

Vanilla

A scent imparted by aging in oak.



Velvety

Smooth and rich in texture.

Vigorous

Firm, lively fruit, strong body; assertive flavor.

Vinegary

Having the smell of vinegar; see also Acetic.

Volatile, Volatile Acidity (VA)

Smells of acetic acid and/or ethyl acetate, quite disagreeable when excessive though a tiny amount may enhance aromas.

W

Watery

Thin, lacking in flavor.

Weak

Lacking grip typical for the wine; without character

Weedy

Aromas or flavors reminiscent of hay or grasses; not necessarily unpleasant unless exaggerated

Weighty

Strong, powerful, full-bodied, forceful.

Woody

Excessive aromas of wood, common to wines aged overlong in cask or barrel.

Y

Yeasty

A bready smell, sometimes detected in wines that have undergone secondary fermentation, such as Champagne; very appealing if not excessive.



Young

In simple wines signifies youthful freshness; in finer wines, refers to immaturity, wines as yet undeveloped

K.D. Imports, LLC is based in South Florida, USA and imports fine wines primarily from Italy.

The wines of **K.D. Imports, LLC** have had the honor of appearing on several "Wine Spectator Award of Excellence" wine lists throughout the USA and have been featured at both the Chicago and New York City Wine Enthusiast "Toast of the Town" wine tasting galas. Our San Giulio Prosecco has even been featured on NBC's "Today Show."

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