



Wine Flight November 13, 2013



Blinded by the White

Each individual has different sensitivities to components that make up wine, including tannins, acidity, sulfur dioxide, etc. One's tolerances and sensitivities account for one's personal likes, dislikes, and preferences in wine. This is a simple explanation as to why some like sweet wines while others loathe them; why some relish the harsh tannins of Cabernet Sauvignon when the same wine would do untold damage to others.

Color:

Wines have a distinct color according to the variety of grape used in its production. Rieslings tend to be very light and almost white, while Chardonnays have a more full golden hue. Gewurtztraminers look like an apricot melted into your glass.

Secondary Colors:

Hints of green or silver colors are signs of a white wine that is (a) young and (b) was produced from grapes grown in a cool climate. The color green in a white wine, by the way, is chlorophyll, in this case the unripe portions of the grape.



Old world vs. new world:

What drives the wine: fruit or other-than-fruit elements? Does the wine smell and taste of earth or minerals? If so, the wine is probably from an old world country. High acidity can also be a hint that the wine is from an old world country as there are many cooler growing regions in the old world. If the wine is overtly fruity without a trace of earthiness, chances are it's from one of the new world countries.

Brightness:

This is the potential of a wine to reflect light. Tilt your glass of vino forward against a white background and observe how much light is reflected. The following qualities may be observed: cloudy, hazy, dull, bright, star bright, brilliant.

A cloudy wine is just that: cloudy, even murky. A cloudy or hazy wine usually means one of two things: the wine is either unfiltered or flawed--or perhaps an older red wine with the sediment mixed into solution. If the wine is flawed you'll know just as soon as you stick your nose in the glass.

Viscosity:

A wine high in viscosity will have higher levels of glycerine, an indication of both sweetness and body. Crisp, clean whites will run down the sides into the bottom where a full or sweet wine will slide slowly down. A high alcohol content is evidenced by "legs" of the wine, which gently run down the side of the glass when you swirl the wine. Wines high in alcohol have well-defined legs that crawl slowly back towards the wine. A general rule is that wines from warm growing regions are higher in alcohol than wines from cooler climates.

Pigment:

White wines tend to gain color as they age, whereas reds lose it. Wines of age start to fade towards the edge of the glass as they get older. An aged Riesling will have light golden hues, whereas an older Chardonnay will have a deep golden color.



Nose:

The aroma of the wine is the most important factor in determining what the wine is. The palette can differentiate only 5 different tastes (sweet, sour, bitter, salty and umami), but the nose can identify up to 180 aromas.

Active inhalation is where one smells wine using both the mouth and nose. Tilt the glass forward to about 40° and lean forward, putting your nose just above and over the glass and slowly open your mouth to about a quarter of an inch and begin breathing in and out gently through both mouth and nose.

Does the wine smell hot? That can be an indicator of high alcohol, which as we know is an indicator of climate. Do you smell a lot of fruit, or more earth? Wines from the new world (Australia, the U.S., and S. America) tend to be very fruit forward. On the other hand wines from the "old world" regions of western Europe tend to have more complex earthen aromas.

Taste:

Take a sip of the wine. Roll it around the inside of your mouth so that it coats all parts of your tongue. Each part of the tongue identifies different sensations so it is important to hit them all. Can you taste any residual sugar? Is the wine high in acidity or tannins? Is it simple or complex? Is it of a low or high quality? These and many other questions can be answered with the palette. Certain grapes are high in residual sugar such as Riesling, Pinot Blanc and Gewurtztraminer.

White wines:

Tree fruit: apple and pear

Citrus fruit: lemon, lime, grapefruit, orange, tangerine

Tropical fruit: pineapple, mango, papaya, passion fruit, banana

Stone fruit: peach, apricot, nectarine