



**COURT OF MASTER
SOMMELIERS EUROPE**

CLASSIC GRAPE MARKERS

TIM GAISER MS



CLASSIC GRAPE MARKERS

GRAPES INCLUDED

Cabernet Sauvignon

Left Bank Bordeaux
California
South Australia

Pinot Noir

Côte de Nuits
Côte de Beaune
California and Oregon
New Zealand

Merlot

Right Bank Bordeaux
California and Australia

Cabernet Franc

Loire Valley

Gamay

Beaujolais

Carmenere

Central Valley Chile

Nebbiolo

Piedmont

Sangiovese

Tuscany

Corvina blend

Amarone

Grenache blend

Southern Rhône

Zinfandel

Central Valley California

Syrah/Shiraz

Northern Rhône
South Australia

Tempranillo

Rioja

Malbec

Argentina

Sauvignon Blanc

Loire Valley
New Zealand

Chardonnay

California and Australia
Chablis
Côte de Beaune

Riesling

Germany
Alsace
Australia

Chenin Blanc

Loire Valley
New World

Sémillon

Bordeaux
Sauternes
Australia

Viognier

Rhône
California

Muscat

Alsace
Italy

Gewürztraminer

Alsace

Pinot Gris

Italy
Alsace

Marsanne

Rhône

Grüner Veltliner

Wachau

Albariño

Rias Baixas

Melon Blanc

Muscadet

Torrontes

Argentina

Assyrtiko

Santorini



BLIND TASTING

Why We Use a Deductive Tasting Method?

- To improve the ability to taste and accurately describe a wine.
- To form valuable taste references (or markers) leading to logical conclusions.
- Increasing overall wine knowledge by tying theory to what you taste.
- Improve your ability to sell wine using customer friendly phrases and descriptors.

We Recommend

- Tasting hundreds (even thousands) of wines a year using the same technique.
- Learning the elements of the 'Grid' so they are second nature – repetition is key.
- Using blind tasting to increase skill level and perception of the wine in your glass.
 - Consistent study to supplement tasting – strong theory and successful tasting are closely connected.



Chair's comments to the candidate before the tasting exam.

Before you start, there are several things to tell you.
You have 25 minutes to describe and identify the 6 wines in front of you.
You have 5 minutes before the end.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Left Bank Bordeaux Blend

Sight: deep ruby.

Nose: black fruits (blackcurrant, black cherry and cassis) with olive, cedar, pencil lead, violet-floral, and turned earth/soil. Wines from cooler vintages can display more red fruit character as well as more pronounced herbal notes, pyrazine and green pepper characters. Pencil lead graphite and new wood (pencil shavings) often very pronounced. Elements of clay, dried leaves, mushroom and turned earth can often be found.

Leather and game are common in older wines.

Oak aging adds smoke, toast, sweet baking spice notes, cedar wood, tobacco, cigar aromas.

Palate: medium-to-full bodied and bone dry to dry. Generally quite elegant styles.

Structure: alcohol: medium-to medium plus in warm vintages; acidity: medium-plus; tannin: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: the combination of deep black fruits, lean blackcurrant, earth/forest floor, and bright acidity. Some wines can be bone dry with considerable herbal elements and pronounced earthiness. Pencil shavings and use of high quality French oak.

New World: California

Sight: deep ruby.

Nose: ripe even jammy black fruits (berry, cherry, cassis and currant) with olive, cedar, chocolate and green herb notes. A menthol mint aroma may be present.

Cooler climate wines can display red fruit characteristics and more herbal notes. Oak ageing adds smoke, toast, sweet baking spices and sawdust notes. A toasted coconut aroma may be found in wines aged in American oak.

Palate: full bodied and dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high; acidity: medium to medium-plus; tannin: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: generally much riper and richer in style than Bordeaux without the prominent earth/mineral component.

New World: South Australia - Coonawarra

Sight: deep ruby.

Nose: blackberry, black cherry and blackcurrant fruit with pronounced mint/eucalyptus and notes of olive and herbs, also a ferrous, ironstone, sanguine note.

Oak adds vanilla, baking spices and toast.

Palate: full bodied and dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high; acidity: medium to medium-plus; tannin: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: Coonawarra Cabernet is very distinctive with classic Cabernet black fruits but with a strong presence of mint and eucalyptus.

PINOT NOIR

Burgundy: Côte de Nuits

Sight: light to medium ruby.

Nose: red fruits (cherry, raspberry, pomegranate, strawberry) with tea, floral, herb, and earthy complexity. With age the wines take on gamey-farmyard-earthly complexities. Oak ageing adds smoke, vanilla, sweet spice and wood notes to the wines, but usually only found in Premier Cru and Grand Cru.

Palate: medium to medium-plus bodied and dry to bone dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus; tannin: medium-minus to medium. Some winemakers use stems in the form of whole bunches. This may add a light camphor, aroma to the wines and firmer almost stalky tannins.

Often heavier than those from the CdB.

ID Keys: although deceptively light in colour the wines can be quite concentrated in flavour. Light-bodied, supple, and elegant with bright red fruits (not black fruits!), tea-spice, earthy complexities, and new oak.

Burgundy: Côte de Beaune

Sight: light to medium ruby.

Nose: tart or ripe red fruits depending on the quality of the vintage; cherry, raspberry and cranberry are common. Pomegranate in riper years. Non-fruit aromas include black tea, rose floral, and clay/earth/mineral notes. As with wines from the Côte de Nuits, age can add gamey—savory-farmyard-earthly complexities. Oak ageing adds aromas of vanilla, baking spices and toast.

Palate: medium-bodied and dry to bone dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus; tannin: medium-minus to medium.

Often lighter than those from the CdN (Pommard may be the exception).

ID Keys: generally, wines from the Côte de Beaune tend to be relatively earthier and softer in tannins than those from the Côte de Nuits; they also tend to have less forward fruit, and are leaner.

New World: California and Oregon

Sight: medium to deep ruby.

Nose: ripe red fruits (black fruits in warm vintages or regions), herb, floral, tea and more. A sweet Cola aroma may also be present. Oak ageing adds smoke, sweet spice and wood flavours. Whole bunch fermentation often used which will - reduce alcohol and colour (as stems absorb both), increase tannin, add a herbal savoury note similar to camphor (mothball).

Palate: medium-minus to medium-plus bodied and dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium to medium-plus; tannin: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: supple red berry fruit, spices and new wood. Stem tannins often present but a relative lack of earthiness when compared to Burgundy.

New World: New Zealand

Sight: light to medium ruby.

Nose: red fruits—both fresh and dry with considerable herb, floral, tea and mineral/soil. Oak ageing adds smoke, sweet spice and woody flavours. Whole bunch aromas may be present.

Palate: medium to medium-plus bodied and dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium to medium-plus; tannin: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: New Zealand Pinots are similar in style to California and Oregon with its supple red fruit, spices and new wood qualities. However, the wines are distinct with their pronounced herbal aroma; many display a chalky mineral quality.

MERLOT

Right Bank Bordeaux Blend

Sight: very deep ruby.

Nose: red and black fruits, green herb, forest floor, violet floral, earth-mineral. Oak ageing adds vanilla, sweet spice and toast/smoke flavours.

Palate: medium-plus to full-bodied; supple, rich and lush; and dry to bone dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high in warmer vintages; acidity: medium to medium-plus; tannin: medium to medium-plus tannins.

ID Keys: Generally, Merlot-based right bank wines tend have softer tannins than their Cabernet-based left bank counterparts as well as more herbal/vegetal characteristics.

New World: California, Australia and Chile

Sight: very deep ruby.

Nose: ripe black fruits, green herb, bitter chocolate, and oak. Mint and eucalyptus can also often found.

Palate: full-bodied and usually richer and riper than right bank Bordeaux wines with more new oak.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high, acidity: medium to medium-plus; tannin: medium to high.

ID Keys: generally Merlot tends to be ripe and supple with lush fruit and herbal notes; full-bodied wines display considerable alcohol with a relative lack of earthiness and considerable new oak. Tannins tend to be less angular than Cabernet Sauvignon although Cabernet is often blended with Merlot for added structure.

CABERNET FRANC

Loire Valley Chinon or Bourgueil

Sight: medium to deep ruby.

Nose: tart red and black fruits (sour cherry, plum, raspberry, and cranberry) with a pronounced green tobacco-leaf, herbal character and chalky minerality. Warmer vintages yield wines with more black fruit character. Oak usage varies from old wood to noticeable new barrique.

Palate: medium to medium-plus bodied and very dry, sometimes austere in character.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus to high; tannins: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: similar in weight to many to lighter right Bank Bordeaux wines but with a pronounced leafy green herb (and stemmy) quality and chalky minerality.

GAMAY

Beaujolais Villages

Sight: medium to deep ruby with purple highlights

Nose: candied, artificial fruit basket derived from carbonic fermentation with confected red and tropical fruits, pear drops, bubble-gum, floral, green herb and stony earth.

Palate: medium-bodied and dry to bone dry. Emphasis on candied fruit, herb and granitic soil

Structure: acidity: medium-plus; alcohol: medium to medium-plus, tannin: medium-minus to medium.

ID Keys: look for the candied fruit-basket quality with herbal and stony qualities.

CARMÉNÈRE

Chile

Sight: medium to deep ruby. Probably staining.

Nose: ripe, even jammy, dark fruits such as blackberry, black cherry, plum, raspberries, and cherry aromas, with an underlying green pyrazine, bell pepper, and green peppercorn character giving a herbaceous note. It may also show coffee and chocolate.

Palate: medium to full bodied, dry. Medium + alcohol.

Structure: alcohol: medium+ to high; acidity: medium to medium +; tannins: medium.

ID Keys: ripe, almost jammy fruits with an underlying green character. Not derived from any winemaking process, but from the grape. A variety with high pyrazines.

NEBBIOLO

Piedmont

Sight: medium ruby garnet with lots of rim variation. Orange and brown can be found at the rim/meniscus, even in young wines.

Nose: rose petal floral, tar, dried red cherry, vegetal-forest floor, mushroom-earth, and wood. Unique combination of sweet and earthy-tangy aromas

Palate: medium-bodied and bone dry.

Structure: medium to high acid, high tannins (grape and barrel tannins), and medium + alcohol. Austere, tart and incredibly tannic when young.

ID Keys: high acid, high tannins (grape and barrel tannins), and medium + alcohol. Austere, tart and incredibly tannic when young.

SANGIOVESE

Tucany

Sight: medium to deep ruby.

Nose: ripe red fruit flavours, sour cherry, cranberry, herbal savoury (wild herbs and flowers), forest floor, mushroom-earth complexities, sweet baking spices, and wood qualities. Very often, it has a touch of sun-dried tomato and a lifted balsamic, volatile acidity.

Palate: medium to medium-plus-bodied.

Structure: medium-plus to high acid, medium to medium+ tannins and medium+ alcohol. Generally, quite taut and defined tannins depending on age.

ID Keys: lighter in colour but concentrated in flavours, bright acidity, and Medium to Medium-plus tannins. Great combination of intense red fruit flavours, herbal savoriness, earthiness, wood and VA.

CORVINA

Amarone della Valpolicella

Sight: deeply coloured, probably will have a mature, browning rim

Nose: candied, artificial fruit basket derived from carbonic fermentation with confected red and tropical fruits, pear drops, bubble-gum, floral, green herb and stony earth.

Palate: medium-bodied and dry to bone dry. Emphasis on candied fruit, herb and granitic soil

Structure: acidity: medium-plus; alcohol: medium to medium-plus, tannin: medium-minus to medium.

ID Keys: look for the candied fruit-basket quality with herbal and stony qualities.

GRENACHE

Blend (Southern Rhône) with Syrah and Mourvèdre

Sight: medium to pale red.

Nose: very ripe, jammy, strawberry and white pepper. Blackberry and black pepper, gamey and leather. Often a sanguine, animal, meaty character.

Palate: ripe fruit, medium tannins, medium acidity, high alcohol. .

Structure: alone, Grenache from a hot climate can be soft in acid and tannin and very high in alcohol. The addition of Syrah brings dark fruits and black pepper and balances the structure.

ID Keys: strawberry and blackberry combined, pepper - black and white spice, gamey and animal, sanguine character, high alcohol.

ZINFANDEL

Central Valley

Sight: medium to deep purple

Nose: ripe to jammy red, black and blue fruits. May show some green herb, sage notes. Tutti-frutti, gumdrop, confection. May show coconut from US oak.

Palate: Ripe, jammy fruit, blueberry, raspberry, and blackberry, very ripe and verging on sweet.

Structure: medium tannins, and medium to medium plus acidity. High alcohol.

ID Keys: mixed, very ripe, red, black and blue fruit, US oak, high alcohol.

SYRAH

Northern Rhône

Sight: Deep purple colour

Nose: Black fruits, black currant and dark cherry, ground black pepper, smoked meat, bacon fat and sanguine (bloody) character.

Palate: Medium+ tannins, medium+ acidity, medium to medium+ alcohol. Lean and elegant fruit with some minerality and graphite character.

ID Keys: Ground black pepper, bacon/meat, sanguine, black olive, lavender, medium to medium+ alcohol.

SHIRAZ

Australia

Sight: Deep purple colour

Nose: Black and fruits, blackberry, plum, dark cherry, blueberry, dried violet, ground black pepper, liquorice, vanilla character. Rosemary, Eucalyptus, Mint.

Palate: Medium+ tannins, medium+ acidity, medium+ to high alcohol. Jammy and elegant, fruit-forward combining black and blue fruit, dried floral element with some leathery and earthy character.

ID Keys: Overripe to jammy black and blue fruit, dried violet, medium+ to high alcohol, fruit-forward.

TEMPRANILLO

Spain

Sight: Medium to deep ruby (youthful) – garnet (aged)

Nose: Ripe black cherry, plum, raspberry, dried figs, tobacco, vanilla, coconut from US oak, leather and wet forest floor. A mix of red and black fruits.

Palate: Medium+ tannins, medium+ acidity, medium+ to high alcohol. Combination of red and black fruits with a touch of dried figs, vanilla, tobacco, coconut from US oak with an earthy/savoury note.

ID Keys: Mixed black and red fruit with the apparent presence of dried figs, with the notes of coconut, chocolate (and dill from the US Oak in classic examples of Rioja).

MALBEC

Argentina

Sight: Deep purple with bright purple rim with heavy staining

Nose: Jammy black and blue fruits like cherry, blackberry, blueberry, dried prune, violet, savoury herbs, baking spices and cocoa.

Palate: Medium to medium+ tannins, medium to medium+ acidity, medium+ to high alcohol. Jammy black and blue fruits like blackberry and blueberry with a touch of dried prune, violet and cocoa.

ID Keys: Deep purple in colour with medium+ staining. Combination of jammy black and blue fruits with notes of dried prune, fruit-driven with floral nuances and apparent oak use.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EDUCATION CHAIR

“ One of the key factors leading to success in the blind tasting examinations is recognition of the specific characteristics of the classical grape varieties, and the differences that exist in different regions of production.

This essential document sets out the key elements of sight, nose and palate to enable the profile of the grape to be more easily identified. ”

BRYAN DAWES MS
EDUCATION CHAIR, COURT OF MASTER



SAUVIGNON BLANC

Sancerre/Pouilly-Fumé

Sight: pale to medium straw with green highlights.

Nose: grapefruit-lemon/lime citrus notes with pronounced chalky minerality, herbal-grass and white flower notes.

Palate: light to medium-bodied and very dry to bone dry. Use of little or no wood typical is typical for Sancerre while use of partial or all new wood can be found in Pouilly-Fumé.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: the combination of tart citrus, herbal notes with the minerality often taking centre stage. Look for oak in Pouilly-Fumé but not in Sancerre. Not easily confused with New Zealand Sauvignons because there's less fruit and less aggressive grass/herb/vegetal notes and striking minerality.

New Zealand

Sight: very pale straw with green and silver highlights.

Nose: pronounced grapefruit and lime citrus notes with gooseberry, grass, and green herb notes; some wines can be aggressively vegetal with elements of asparagus, green bean and bell pepper/jalapeño. Other wines have a touch of minerality while still others are pungently vegetal.

Palate: medium-bodied and dry with emphasis on mouth-watering, juicy citrus fruit. Oak is almost never used.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: intense citrus and herbal/vegetal flavours combined with tart acidity are keys to recognizing New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. Some wines have an impression of "sweet" tropical (passion fruit) and pink grapefruit notes as well. Other wines can be overtly vegetal with canned green bean or asparagus notes.

CHARDONNAY

California/Australia

Sight: pale to medium yellow with gold highlights; riper styles tend to be deeper in colour.

Nose: cool climate wines tend to display tart malic green apple/under ripe pear, tropical fruit (mango, papaya, pineapple), and tart citrus notes. Cool climate wines can also display a touch of Chablis-like minerality depending on the site. Warmer climate wines offer ripe (even baked or puréed) apple/pear fruit and other aromas including floral, lemon/lime citrus and butter/cream/popcorn aromas from malolactic fermentation/conversion.

Barrel fermentation and lees contact imparts aromas of cream and yeast as well as lending a richer texture on the palate with aromas of vanilla, baking spices and wood.

Palate: medium to full-bodied depending on the climate and/or appellation and quality of the vintage.

Styles range from lean, racy wines from cool climates with tart, malic fruit, to warm climate wines with ultra-ripe fruit and high alcohol. Malolactic fermentation/conversion imparts buttery, butterscotch flavours; oak makes its presence known in the form of vanilla, sweet spices, and wood tannins. Dry to off-dry to slightly sweet in style.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high; acidity: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: though there are an increasing number of exceptions New World Chardonnay tends to be all about winemaking. Look for the combination of ripe fruit and medium-high to high alcohol along with the classic Chardonnay treatment of barrel fermentation, lees contact, malolactic fermentation and new oak. Also note that with warmer vintages and richer wines the distance between New World Chardonnay and White Burgundy is getting closer together. But classic examples of the latter tend to have less overt fruit and a more pronounced earth/mineral quality than their New World counterparts.

Chablis

Sight: pale to medium straw with green highlights.

Nose: tart green apple, lemon-citrus fruit with pronounced chalky seashell minerality. Some producers use new oak imparting spice and wood aromas. Malolactic fermentation is also sometimes used.

Palate: medium-bodied and very dry to bone dry. Flavours include tart green apple, lemon peel, and chalky minerality. The intensity of flavour and quality varies with producer and the specific appellation (1er cru vs. grand cru, etc.). Theoretically, the better the appellation the more intensity of minerality and overall flavour.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: textbook Chablis is an austere, bone dry, high acid white with pronounced chalky minerality. The fruit is often overshadowed by the minerality in all but the ripest vintages. Traditionally made wines display little, if any, oak although winemakers are increasingly using more wood.

Côtes de Beaune

Sight: light to medium straw with green highlights.

Nose: apple/pear and citrus fruit with mushroom-earth and mineral notes; also butter/cream aromas from malolactic and vanilla, baking spices, toast, and wood notes from oak ageing.

Palate: medium to full-bodied and dry to bone dry. The wines can be quite powerful depending on the pedigree of the vineyard and quality of the vintage.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: the combination of tart apple/pear fruit with bright citrus, hazelnut, earth and new oak flavours is key to recognition. Generally, the style of Chassagne-Montrachet tends to be rich and full-bodied with Puligny-Montrachet known for elegance and Meursault for pronounced earthiness. Again, these are very broad generalizations and exceptions occur often.

RIESLING

Alsace

Sight: straw to medium yellow.

Nose: ripe apple-pear and yellow peach fruit with sweet and tart citrus.

Wines with botrytis have honey and stone fruit elements along with floral and mushroom/earth notes.

Palate: full-bodied and dry to off-dry in style. Some “dry” wines are slightly sweet.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus sometimes bordering on high; acid: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: Riesling flavours but with rich, ripe fruit, high alcohol, and medium acidity; more alcohol and richness than most German Rieslings with less acidity; also less opulently floral than German Riesling with a weightier and rounder mouth feel.

Australia: Clare and Eden Valleys

Sight: medium straw with green highlights.

Nose: racy green apple, unripe green pear, lime zest, and mineral with a touch of white floral.

Palate: medium-bodied, very dry and bracingly acidic with an austere character.

Structure: medium alcohol and medium-plus to high acidity.

ID Keys: Clare and Eden Rieslings can be remarkably intense in character with bracing acidity and astonishing minerality not to mention their austerity and potential for long-term aging. Wines that do have age often show pronounced petrol or TDN notes.

Germany

German Riesling can be found in a dramatically wide range of styles depending on the specific *prädikat* and region. Young wines offer bright, pure fruit, minerality, and tart acidity while wines with bottle age often display a complex, earthy character often referred to as petrol or diesel. The compound responsible for the petrol character is called TDN (*trimethyl dinaphthalene*) Here are general descriptions for young wines for all six *prädikats*:

Kabinett:

Sight: very pale straw green and brilliant in colour.

Nose: tart green apple and green pear with white peach, lime citrus, tropical fruits (pineapple, mango and more), and slate/mineral.

Palate: Kabinetts tend to be light-bodied, racy wines with a touch of residual sweetness. Flavours range from tart green apple and pear to white peach, tart citrus, tropical fruits, and slate/mineral. No wood influence.

Structure: low alcohol with medium-plus to high acidity.

Spätlese:

Sight: pale straw green and brilliant in colour.

Nose: tart apple and pear, white peach, stone fruits (apricot, peach and nectarine), honey (if botrytis is present), tropical fruits, tart citrus, and slate/mineral.

Palate: light to medium-bodied and off-dry to slightly sweet in style. No wood influence.

Structure: low to medium-minus alcohol with high acidity.

Auslese:

Sight: pale to medium straw with green highlights.

Nose: honey, ripe stone fruits (peach, apricot and nectarine), tropical fruits, sweet and tart citrus, and slate/mineral.

Palate: medium-bodied and medium sweet to very sweet depending on the specific wine, producer and vintage. No wood influence.

Structure: low to medium-minus alcohol with high acidity

Beerenauslese:

Sight: ranges in colour from pale straw to deep yellow with green, gold and even orange highlights depending on the specific wine.

Nose: botrytis flavours are usually found in the form of honey, ripe stone fruits, orange marmalade and preserved citrus; also pear oil, herbs, tropical fruits, and slate/earth and mineral.

Palate: medium-plus to full-bodied and very sweet in style.

Structure: rich, unctuous, and intensely flavoured but at the same time with low alcohol, high acidity, and no wood.

Beerenauslese show great length and persistence with the stamp of the vineyard in the form of pronounced minerality.

Eiswein:

Sight: pale to medium straw green.

Nose: flavours include tart citrus (lemon, lime and grapefruit) with notes of tropical fruits, herb, and mineral. Some wines show slight herbal/vegetal notes such as parsley or celery. It's important to note that there are no botrytis elements in Eiswein.

Palate: medium to full-bodied and very sweet in the style.

Structure: low alcohol and very high acidity. In fact, the acidity can be remarkably high, in some cases over 15 grams per litre. Eiswein is very intensely flavoured and the extreme acidity masks just how sweet the wines are.

Trockenbeerenauslese:

Sight: medium straw to medium yellow to deep red amber depending on region, producer and vintage.

Nose: flavours include honey, citrus marmalade, tropical, roasted pear, marzipan, sweet baking spices, red fruits and much more.

Palate: full-bodied and very sweet, often at over 200 grammes per litre residual sugar.

Structure: low alcohol and very high acidity with the mineral stamp of the vineyard.

ID Keys: German Rieslings vary dramatically in style from light, delicate Kabinetts with just a touch of sweetness all the way to the noble sweet wines with amazingly high acidity and a wealth of residual sugar. Increasing residual sugar in each succeeding prädikat gives a richer, more unctuous mouth feel. The high acidity found in most wines also masks some of the residual sugar making the wine seem less sweet. Quality wines show the stamp of the vineyard regardless of the level of residual sugar, all without any trace of wood. Older wines take on petrol notes (TDN) and other bottle complexities.

CHENIN BLANC

Loire Valley

Sight: pale to medium straw green, very bright.

Nose: red and golden apple, quince, lemon-lime citrus, peach-apricot, floral, spring greens/herb, green olive, sulphur/wet wool, and pronounced chalky minerality/wet stone. SO₂ often detected; used barrels or no wood at all. Oxidative bruised apple, apple purée.

Palate: bone dry to sweet depending on the style. Vouvray Sec and Savennières can be austere, bone dry and intensely flavoured wines with intense minerality. Vouvray Demi-Sec and Doux often display honey and botrytis notes with tart citrus and chalky minerality.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: dry wines have a combination of apple-peach fruit, wet wool, wet stone-mineral quality with high acidity and no wood. Sweeter wines have honey, ripe stone fruits, citrus, and minerality. The SO₂ qualities often make Old World Chenin easier to identify.

New World: California – Washington State

Sight: pale to medium straw.

Nose: a fruit-bowl of ripe melon, pear, and tropical fruit with sweet and tart citrus notes. Little, if any, minerality and oak infrequently used.

Palate: medium bodied and off-dry to slightly sweet. Quality wines have a good balance of ripe, succulent fruit and crisp acidity.

Structure: acidity: medium to medium-plus; alcohol: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: off-dry, pleasantly fruity and easy drinking.

SEMILLON

Bordeaux Blanc – with Sauvignon Blanc

Sight: medium to deep straw.

Nose: ripe pear fruit with notes of wax-lanolin, floral, lemon citrus and earth. Many wines are blended with Sauvignon Blanc and oak aged.

Palate: medium bodied and dry with a waxy texture and notes of gravelly earth and oak.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus.

ID Keys: the combination of waxy texture, racy acidity, presence of earth and oak are keys to recognizing Semillon-based White Bordeaux.

Sauternes – Barsac

Sight: medium yellow to gold.

Nose: honey, ripe stone fruits, butterscotch, sweet spices, vanilla-oak with a touch of earthiness.

Palate: medium-plus to full-bodied; medium sweet to very sweet depending on the specific wine and vintage.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: honey and botrytis notes, residual sugar, and the presence of oak.

Australia

Sight: straw or deep yellow depending on the style of the given wine.

Nose: traditional Aussie Semillons are oak-aged for long periods of time and the aromas reflect such with elements of baked fruits, butterscotch, sweet spices, vanilla custard, and oak. Newer styled wines, especially those from the Hunter have little or no oak and bright lemon-lime citrus, floral and malic apple flavours.

Palate: oak-aged wines are rich, full-bodied, and developed with nutty, oxidative notes. Newer styled wines are lighter in body with higher acid and less alcohol. Both styles are very dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium-minus to medium; acidity: medium-plus to high.

ID Keys: look for oxidative qualities with ripe fruit, butterscotch and new oak in traditional wines. Newer non-oaked wines are remarkably distinctive wines with relatively lower alcohol and very high acidity.

VIOGNIER

Northern Rhône: Chateau Grillet & Condrieu

Sight: medium straw.

Nose: pronounced floral (white flowers and roses), stone fruits, honey and stony mineral. Some wines are aged in new oak.

Palate: medium-to full-bodied and dry to bone dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus.

ID Keys: the combination of pronounced floral notes, ripe stone fruits, minerality and a touch of bitterness on the finish found in all the aromatic grape varieties (Viognier, Gewürztraminer, Muscat and Torrontés).

Some wines offer new oak aromas and flavours. Usually more acidity and less alcohol than New World counterparts.

California

Sight: deep straw to deep yellow gold.

Nose: profile similar to Condrieu but much riper and without minerality. Fruits include apricot/peach/nectarine, golden apple, orange as well as honey and floral elements. A high percentage of new oak and full malolactic are often used.

Palate: medium-plus to full-bodied with ripe sweet (even canned) fruit and the hallmark touch of bitterness on the finish with elements of new oak.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high; acidity: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: ripe, often over-ripe stone fruits, floral notes and the use of new oak; like Chardonnay.

GEWÜRZTRAMINER

Alsace

Sight: deep straw to pale yellow.

Nose: exotic, highly-perfumed nose of ripe stone fruits, lychee, sweet citrus, pronounced floral (rose petal and jasmine), and earth-mineral. Wood rarely used.

Palate: medium-plus to full-bodied. The palate is rich, viscous and sometimes oily with the hallmark touch of bitterness on the finish; wines commonly have more than a touch of residual sugar even to the point of being slightly sweet.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high alcohol; acidity: medium-minus to medium.

ID Keys: Alsace Gewurztraminer is unmistakably flamboyant with its heady, exotically perfumed nose, succulent off-dry fruit, oily texture, bitter finish, and lack of acidity.

MUSCAT

Alsace

Sight: deep straw to deep yellow.

Nose: can be similar to Alsace Gewurztraminer in style with an exotic floral (orange blossom and rose petal) and spicy nose and lychee, ripe stone fruits and earth-mineral. Wood rarely used.

Palate: medium to full-bodied and dry to bone dry. Once again, like Alsace Gewurztraminer but with relatively higher acidity; often the perception of sweetness on the palate even when dry and still the hallmark bitterness on the finish.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high; acidity: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: very similar to Alsace Gewurztraminer but with a touch higher acidity.

Moscato d'Asti

Sight: very pale straw with medium bubbles.

Nose: intensely grapey nose with peach, apricot, strawberry and other fresh fruits highlighted by bright sweet and tart citrus and touch of mineral.

Palate: light-bodied, slightly sparkling and off-dry to slightly sweet. Fruit punch or fruit bowl in style.

Structure: alcohol: very low (5.5%!); acidity: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: light-bodied and low alcohol; delightfully fruity, off-dry and slightly sparkling. Spring in a glass.

Muscat de Beaumes de Venise—Vin Doux Naturel

Sight: medium to deep yellow.

Nose: spicity (from mutage/fortification), ripe white fruits, honey, floral, orange citrus and bitter citrus peel; oak presence found in some wines.

Palate: full-bodied and medium sweet.

Structure: alcohol: high (15% or higher); acidity: medium-plus.

ID Keys: all the fruity qualities of dry Muscat but with added spirits (and sometimes wood flavours).

PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

Northern Italian Pinot Grigio

Sight: pale to medium straw with a touch of rose/copper.

Nose: tart apple, green pear, citrus, straw, almond and stone/mineral.

Palate: dry to bone dry and light to medium-bodied with tart apple/citrus and mineral notes.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus.

ID Keys: most Pinot Grigios are light and citrusy with tart fruit, almond and mineral notes. The best examples come from Alto Adige and can be much richer with considerable intensity of fruit and minerality. Many of the wines show a brassy/coppery hue in the colour.

Alsace Pinot Gris

Sight: deep straw to medium yellow with hint of copper.

Nose: ripe, smoky yellow apple and melon with sweet and tart citrus, floral, honey, and dark earth-mineral.

Palate: medium-plus to full-bodied and dry to off-dry in style (some wines show noticeably residual sugar). Very ripe fruit with an earthy character; botrytis notes often found even on wines dry in style.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high; acidity: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: full-bodied and off-dry with rich, smoky pear-melon fruit and earthiness. Many wines have residual sugar with a rich, palate-coating mouth feel; the texture is often described as “oily.”

MARSANNE

Rhône

Sight: deep straw to yellow gold.

Nose: ripe golden apple, peach and melon fruit with citrus and jasmine floral notes. Wines are often blended with Roussanne and oak-aged displaying oxidative qualities and a waxy-nutty character similar to some styles of Semillon.

Palate: dry, rich and full bodied.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high; acidity: medium to medium-plus.

ID Keys: ripe fruits, waxiness, high alcohol and earthiness are keys to recognition.

GRÜNER VELTLINER

WACHAU

Sight: pale to deep straw.

Nose: style varies with different regions/climates and even classifications (Wachau). Cool climate wines tend to be lighter in body with tart green apple/pear, bright citrus fruits and herbal-vegetal qualities (celery, caraway, radish, white pepper, lentils) with earth and/or mineral. Wines from warmer regions have much riper fruit with notes of peach-nectarine, rhubarb, yellow apple, honey and more.

Palate: wines are generally very dry and styles range from light and racy to rich, weighty, and grand depending on specific region and producer.

Structure: alcohol: medium to high; acidity: medium-plus to high acidity.

ID Keys: can be light and racy or full-bodied and grand. Ripe fruit and the celery-radish-white pepper combination are unique to Grüner Veltliners.

ALBARIÑO

RIAS BIAXAS

Sight: pale to medium straw.

Nose: white peach, green pear, mandarin/orange and lime-citrus with notes of floral, light herb, hops/Pilsner and wet stone minerality. Wood rarely used.

Palate: light to medium bodied and bone dry to dry.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus.

ID Keys: combination of peach, sweet citrus and herbal-citrusy character with aromas of flowers, beer/hops and mineral; Albariño is often describe as “Viognier nose and Riesling palate.”

MELON BLANC

MUSCADET

Sight: very pale straw with a watery/green hue.

Nose: citrus lemon, tart apple, green pear, yeasty, beer yeast, bread dough and mineral notes (slight saltiness).

Palate: dry to bone dry. Light to medium bodied.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: high

ID Keys: Most Muscadet are light and citrusy with tart fruits. Lees qualities (yeasty, beer yeast, bread dough) are typically added through 6 to 24 months of lees stirring. The best examples from the Sèvre et Maine area (Clisson, Pallet and others) benefit from producing a stronger mineral backbone.

TORRONTES

ARGENTINA

Sight: pale to medium straw.

Nose: orange peel, Meyer lemon, tropical fruits, peach, rose water and other floral Muscat qualities. Usually comes across as being very aromatic.

Palate: wines are generally very dry and styles range from light and racy to rich, weighty, and grand depending on specific region and producer.

Structure: alcohol: medium to medium-plus; acidity: medium-plus to high

ID Keys: Torrontés is aromatic, the flavour profile is usually similar to a Gewürztraminer/Muscat but without the body, residual sugar and with a brighter acidity. The best examples come from Cafayate in the Salta wine region of Argentina.

ASSYRTIKO

SANTORINI

Sight: pale straw.

Nose: citrus lemon, unripe stone fruits, and minerality, but not a powerful aroma. Becomes subdued after the first 2-3 years but blossoms after 6-7 years.

Palate: full-bodied with very mineral notes (slight saltiness), it can have a reductive quality. It is intensely powerful and salty, with a long finish. With age develops an orange skin and roasted pineapple character.

Structure: alcohol: medium-plus to high; acidity: high

ID Keys: it can have a subdued nose and subdued initial attack, but it develops on the palate into an intensely powerful, acidic, salty and minerally complex finish and a long length.



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