



WINE GLOSSARY

Acidity

There is natural acidity that is important to the taste of wine. However, too much acidity in wine may make it taste too tart or sour. Natural acidity occurring in wine are citric, malic, and lactic. In hot climates or during hot years, acidity level of the wine tends to be lower while cool, rainy years tend to be high in acidity.

American Viticultural Area (AVA)

There are U.S. laws that regulate the use of place names on wine labels. An application and approval process is required to designate an AVA. An example of an AVA is Napa Valley.

Aroma

The smell of grapes in a young wine is the aroma. As the wine matures and takes on nuances of smell it is described as the bouquet.

Astringent

This is a term to describe a harsh taste of the wine; sometimes described as a sense of mouth puckering. This can be caused because the wine is still young. The tannins may not matured or mellowed, or it could be a poorly made wine.

Balance

A term used to describe wine that has no single aspect standing out resulting in a pleasing impression. It is a desired wine trait where the tannins, fruit, and acidity are harmonious.

Blanc de Blanc

A French term meaning "white from white" describing white wines made from white grapes.

Blanc de Noirs

A French term meaning "white from black" describing white wines made from red (black) grapes.

Blending

The art of the winemaking process – taking a bit of this combining it with a bit of that similar to what a chef might do. There are several ways to blend wine – different varieties can be blended, different vintages of the same variety, and single varieties made from blends from different barrels or tanks.

Body

A wine tasting term to describe the feel of the wine as it crosses the palate (i.e. the weight and fullness of the wine).

Breath

A term to describe letting wine come in contact with the air either by opening a bottle and letting it rest or forcibly aerating.

Brix

The scale used to measure grape ripeness or sugar levels. For example a grape picked at 22 brix will yield a wine with approximately 12 percent alcohol and no residual sugar.

Cabernet Franc

It is a type of Cabernet grape. It is sometimes blended with other Cabernet grape varieties.

Cabernet Sauvignon

A rich, tannic grape that produces wines that age well.

Cap

During the fermentation process of red wines, the solid parts of the grape (i.e. skins, seeds, and stems) rise to the top and must be broken up regularly. These elements impart a lot of flavor and characteristics.

Chardonnay

A popular white grape variety.

Clone

A plant produced by grafting or cutting so that it retains the identical host genetic characteristics. Specific clones are chosen because they have desired characteristics, appropriate for the climate or soils, or are resistance to disease.

Cloudy

A term that describes a wine with floating particles. This typically is the result of the winemaking process. Many winemakers choose to filter their wines to ensure that the wine is not cloudy.

Cooperage

Anything related to wooden casks and barrels. A cooper is a barrel maker.

Cork

Made from the bark of the cork tree and are stoppers for wine bottles. However, there are corks also made from synthetic materials.

Corkage

A fee paid to a restaurant when you are allowed to bring a bottle of wine to enjoy with dinner. The fee varies from restaurant to restaurant. Regulations related to corkage also varies state to state.

Corked

A term that describes a flawed wine. It is typically the result of an unclean or faulty cork and could smell musty, moldy, or like wet cardboard.

Corkscrew

The device used to remove corks from bottles.

Crisp

A winetasting term to describe a refreshing acid balance in white wines sometimes said to resemble a fresh crisp green apple.

Crush

A term used to refer to the complete process of harvesting, processing, and fermenting grapes.

Decant

Pouring wine from the bottle into a glass container or decanter to let the wine breathe or to remove sediment.

Decanter

A glass or crystal vessel to decant wine into.

Dry

This term refers to wine that has very little residual sugar.

Earthy

A wine tasting term that refers to a wine flavor reminiscent of dirt or soil.

Estate Bottled

Assures that the wine was bottled and produced from grapes that the winery controlled throughout the process.

Fermentation

The process of turning grape must (unfermented grapes or juice) into wine.

Fining

A method to clarify particles out of the wine.

Finish

The last tastes of wine as you swallow (or spit).

Free Run

During the winemaking process, the juice that appears after crushing, but before pressing is considered the highest quality juice.

Garnacha

Spanish name for the grape variety; also known as Grenache.

Grenache

A red wine grape from the Rhone Valley of France.

Lees

Sediment left in the barrel, tank, or vats from young wines. A process called racking removes the wine from the vessel and leaves the lees.

Legs

A wine tasting term that refers to the wine left on the sides of the glass when the wine is swirled.

Magnum

A large wine bottle holding two normal sized bottles of wine (1.5 liters).

Malolactic Fermentation

A second fermentation process that softens the acids in the wine.

Marsanne

A white grape variety from the Rhone Valley in France.

Mourvedre

A French red wine grape variety.

Must

Crushed grapes and juice that are fermented into wine.

Oak

Type of wood used to make barrels. The newer the oak barrel the more flavor into the wine the barrel imparts.

Oxidized

A wine tasting term used to describe wine that has taken on too much oxygen.

Petite Sirah

A red wine grape variety also called Durif.

pH

Measurement for acid in the wine.

Pomace

The by-products (seeds, skins, pulp, and stems) of red wine from the fermenting and pressing processes.

Press

A piece of equipment used to extract the juice from the grapes.

Pruning

When vines are dormant, they are shaped in anticipation of the next growing season. Each vineyard manager has a different approach to maintaining vines and can vary by grape varietal.

Pulp

The center of the grape where the juice is located.

Racking

Refers to the process of transferring wine from one barrel to another leaving any sediment behind. It is a technique for clarifying the wine. Care must be taken because the wine is exposed to oxygen during this process.

Roussanne

A white wine grape from the Rhone Valley in France

Shiraz

The Australian name for the grape variety Syrah.

Sommelier

An expert in wine sometimes called a wine steward normally working in fine restaurants. They are trained and knowledgeable in all aspects of wine service.

Stemmer

A piece of equipment that removes the stems from the grapes before fermentation and pressing.

Stuck

A winemaking term referring to a wine that stops fermenting before the process is complete. It is related to the yeast no longer being able to metabolize the sugar or there is not enough yeast left to complete fermentation.

Syrah

A red wine grape variety from the Rhone Valley in France.

Tannin

The compounds found primarily in the grape's skin and seeds that can cause wine to taste bitter or astringent. Tannin is required for aging red wines.

Tartaric

Main acid found in wine.

Terroir

French term that literally means soil but has been expanded to describe the entire microclimate around a vineyard (soil, weather, water, etc.).

Thief

A glass or metal tube used to extract wine from a barrel. It is also known as a "pipette" by the French.

Topping

Refers to the action of replacing evaporated wine in the barrel so the wine does not oxidize. Topping helps to ensure the wine's quality.

Ullage

The amount of air in a bottle or barrel as a result of evaporation.

Varietal Wine

A wine that takes its name from the predominant grape variety it is made from.

Veraison

The point in the grape maturing process when it begins to turn color.

Vineyard

A group of grape vines.

Viniculture

The cultivation of grape vines for winemaking.

Vinification

Transformation of grape juice into wine by fermentation.

Vintage

The date of the actual grape harvest or harvest year.

Vignier

White wine grape variety from the Northern Rhone region in France.

Viticulture

The study of grape growing.

Yeast

A single cell organism responsible for fermentation.

Yield

The amount of fruit a vine or vineyard produces.