Introduction to Wine Judging

A preparatory course for AWS Certified Wine Judge Training

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Objective:

“To be a better wine evaluator and to be prepared to take the AWS CWJT I
WINE JUDGMENT

• OBJECTIVE
  – Objectivism: external, real, worthwhile things rather than thoughts or feelings; tasting or judging for competition
  – Based on ability, experience, communication
  – Must identify differences in wine
  – Serious business!!

• SUBJECTIVE
  – Personal taste and preference, like-dislike criteria
    • Personal “like - dislike” criteria is not the objective standard of judging.

*Subjective evaluation is the main stumbling block in becoming a good wine judge.*
CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD WINE JUDGE

• Establish, know, and understand sense abilities and thresholds
• Know wines including grapes, types and styles
• Develop philosophy that all grapes can make good wine
• Consistent application of objective qualitative factors
• DO NOT USE LIKE-DISLIKE CRITERIA
• Communicative knowledge and application of accepted standard nomenclature
  – Aroma Wheel
Appearance

• Factors:
  – Clarity (tilt glass - look at edge white background)
    • Clear, Hazy, Cloudy/Dull Brilliant
  – Color
    • Hue, Saturation, Purity
    • straw to golden; purple to red; oxidized; age
  – Intensity
  – Reflectance
  – Body – density or “legs”
Aroma and Bouquet

- **Aroma**: Odor of the grape variety
- **Bouquet**: Odor of winemaking, aging
  - Yeast selection
  - Oak: Vanilla, toasty, smoky, etc.
  - Malo-lactic: Buttery, sometimes “cheesy”
  - Bottle Aging: Time in the bottle, storage conditions

  - UC Davis AROMA Wheel
Physiology of the Nose
olfaction and taste

- **Olfactory epithelium**: roof of nasal passage.
- Olfactory receptors respond to gas molecules
- Taste and smell **chemoreceptors** respond to molecules that are dissolved in mucus fluid
  - Careful with decongestants!

- **Two routes of smells, nose and post-nasal**
  - Most taste actually “smell perceived on the tongue.”

- **40 million smell receptors vs. 1 million for taste**
- Receptor cells die and regenerate 30-60 days
  - Certain viruses kill cells
Aroma Thresholds

- **THRESHOLD:** concentration level in air above which we sense the aroma.

- Odor unit = concentration (ppb)/threshold
  - > 1, you smell it!

- Thresholds not constant, good days/bad days, colds, etc.
  - Chemoreceptor health

Learn your thresholds!!!
Smell Testing a Wine

- **Sniff** quickly and deeply -- aroma of volatile compounds
- **Swirl** one or two quick revolutions -- increase surface area for less volatile compounds (bouquet)
- **Hold wine in mouth** -- warming releases odor molecules, draw air through the wine to release still more volatiles.
- Trust FIRST IMPRESSIONS
- DON’T HOLD TOO LONG in mouth
- AVOID FATIGUING taste receptors
Wine Aroma Wheel - Fruity Section
Taste

• Four Basic Taste Sensations
  – Sweetness - sugar, alcohol, glycerin (short)
  – Acid - malic, citric, tartaric (lingers)
  – Salt
  – Bitter – astringency; phenols

• Quality Components
  – Balance
    • Sweet/acid;
  – Body
    • Tactile, fullness, alcohol
  – Flavor (combination with aroma)
    • Fruit flavors
“Making Sense of Taste”

Smith, D.V.
Margolskee, R.F.

Scientific American
March, 2001


Tongue

- Palatine Tonsil
- Lingual Tonsil
- Foliate Papillae
- Filiform Papillae
- Fungiform Papillae
- Circumvallate Papillae
Flavor = Smell + Taste
What is in Wine?

- Water 85-90%
- Ethanol – preserve, flav enhan, psych 7-14%
- Sugars – sweetener, enhancer 0.1-15%
- Acids – Organic, inorganic; crisp sour 0.6-1%
- Tannins – pigmnts, phenols; health; pres; 0.6-1%
- Volatile compounds – aroma, bouquet +200
- Proteins vitamins, minerals little
Flavor = Taste + Smell

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<th>Chemical</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>bitter</td>
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<th>Smell</th>
<th>Chemical</th>
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**Spit**

- Need only small volume to evaluate
  - Coat mouth
- Moderation
Aftertaste
- Quality *finish* usually is what distinguishes quality wines
  - Length of finish
  - Type
    - fruity/descriptors
    - acid or sugar
    - smooth/rough/bitter
    - tannin level (primarily for reds)
Taste

- Four Basic Taste Sensations
  - Sweetness - sugar, alcohol
  - Acid
  - Bitter – astringency; phenols

- Wine Quality Evaluation
  - 3 wines
    - 20 point AWS Scoring sheet
AWS 20 Point Scale

- **Appearance**
  - 3 - Excellent
  - 2 - Good
  - 1 - Poor
  - 0 - Objectionable

- **Aroma and Bouquet**
  - 6 - Extraordinary
  - 5 - Excellent
  - 4 - Good
  - 3 - Acceptable
  - 2 - Deficient
  - 1 - Poor
  - 0 - Objectionable

- **Taste and Texture**
  - 6 - Extraordinary
  - 5 - Excellent
  - 4 - Good
  - 3 - Acceptable
  - 2 - Deficient
  - 1 - Poor
  - 0 - Objectionable

- **Aftertaste**
  - 3 - Excellent
  - 2 - Good
  - 1 - Poor
  - 0 - Objectionable

- **Overall Impression**
  - 2 - Excellent
  - 1 - Good
  - 0 - Poor
Home study

• Four Components
  – Sweetness - sugar, alcohol
  – Acid
  – Bitter – astringency; phenols

• Wine Quality Evaluation
  – Americans, French Hybrids, Fruit, Specialty, Vinifera
  – Flaws

  Practice Practice Practice

• Read
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