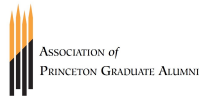


SOMMELIER SECRETS OF BLIND TASTING: A PRINCETON ALUMNI VIRTUAL WINE EVENT



Princeton Club of Hilton Head
Scott Foster Chapter



Sommelier Secrets

What is Blind Tasting and Why Would Anyone Do It?



The Judgement of Paris

In 1976, Steven Spurrier, a British wine professional, engaged a group of distinguished French judges to conduct a blind tasting of high quality French Burgundy and Bordeaux compared to Napa Cabernets and Chardonnays. To the astonishment of the judges and the world, the American wines won in both categories. A French judge was so incensed, she demanded her scorecards back. People lined up around the block in New York to purchase the six-dollar American treasures.

Nevertheless, many experts made the argument that American wines were not high enough quality to stand the test of time, unlike their French counterparts. Ultimately, the tasting was repeated four times, culminating in the 30th anniversary tasting in 2006. The results for the American wines only improved.

What Does This Tell Us About Blind Tasting?

It can help overcome our preconceived notions about wine quality. Skilled tasters can identify wines that are actually superior, not just ones that are supposed to be special. Wine tasting is a great way to identify high value, reasonably priced wines that deliver far more enjoyment than even some of their far pricier counterparts

Blind tasting is also an excellent way to improve your appreciation of the wine you drink. With practice, you can learn to identify flavors and qualities of the wine that will increase your enjoyment. It will help you determine what you really like about wine and identify other wines to try. It's also an entertaining exercise and a great conversation focus.



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Blind Tasting is a Developed Skill

A restaurant or wine shop experience can be absolutely mystifying, with wine professionals throwing around baffling phrases like carbonic maceration and malolactic fermentation.

We will try to demystify this experience by lifting the veil on the blind tasting process. We will learn about the terms wine professionals use and what they mean. Blind tasting is a method for assessing a wine's characteristics by focusing on **appearance, aromas, flavors, and structure**. Wines vary, exhibiting difference combinations of these qualities. Developing blind tasting skills involves building a knowledge base of specific wine's profiles.

Carbonic maceration is fermentation with whole berries, which imparts flavors of kirsch and bubblegum. Wine makers sometimes use this to enhance the flavors of a what would otherwise be a somewhat uncomplicated wine, such as a basic Beaujolais.

Malolactic fermentation softens a wine's acidity and results in the buttery flavors found in many Chardonnays, for example.

Tasting Kit Essentials



Wine flavors and aromas can seem very subtle at first. With practice, you will recognize elements like fruits or oak characteristics. One way to enhance your learning curve is to create a tasting kit. You can sniff and taste these items to help build recognition of the flavors and aromas when you taste a wine.

Consult the attached list of common wine aromas and flavors. Assemble items from the list, like cloves, cinnamon, fresh fruits, or vegetables. Many of these are pantry staples. Some are not. Blackcurrants, a classic flavor of Cabernet Sauvignon, are not well known in the US because they were banned for many years. They are readily available in the UK. Ribena, a popular British juice drink is a great example of blackcurrant flavor. You can purchase this on Amazon and in some grocery stores like Publix and Kroger.



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Wine Flavors and Aromas



Primary Aromas and Flavors

These are the aromas and flavors of the grape and alcoholic fermentation.

Floral	blossom, rose, violet
Citrus fruit	grapefruit, lemon, lime, orange
Stone fruit	peach, apricot, nectarine
Tropical fruit	banana, lychee, mango, melon, passionfruit, pineapple
Red fruit	red current, cranberry, raspberry, strawberry, red, cherry, red plum
Black fruit	blackcurrant, blackberry, blueberry, black cherry, black plum
Herbaceous	green bell pepper (capsicum), grass, tomato leaf, asparagus
Herbal	eucalyptus, mint, fennel, dill, dried herbs
Spice	black/white pepper, licorice
Fruit ripeness	unripe fruit, ripe fruit, dried fruit, cooked fruit



Secondary Aromas and Flavors

These are the aromas and flavors of post-fermentation winemaking.

Yeast (lees, autolysis)	biscuit, pastry, bread, toasted, bread, bread, dough, cheese
Malolactic Conversion	butter, cream, cheese
Oak	vanilla, cloves, cedar, charred wood, smoke, chocolate, coffee



Tertiary Aromas and Flavors

These are the aromas and flavors of matured wine.

Red wine	dried fruit, leather, earth, mushrooms, meat, tobacco, wet leaves, forest floor
White wine	dried fruit, petrol, cinnamon, ginger

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Wine Tasting Parameters

Appearance

Hold glass at a 45-degree angle against a white background.

Intensity

<i>White</i>	Pale	Color only at center if at all, broad watery rim
	Medium	Pigmented 2/3rds
	Deep	Almost fully pigmented



<i>Red</i>	Pale	Read text through glass
	Medium	See text but can't read
	Deep	Opaque - can't see text

Color

<i>White</i>	Lemon	Most common – youthful or cool climate
	Gold	Some brown or orange hues. Shows age or barrel treatment
	Amber	Shows age
	Brown	Extreme age

<i>Red</i>	Purple	Noticeable blue/purple at rim
	Ruby	Most common. No blue or brown tint
	Garnet	Some orange or brown but more red
	Tawny	More brown than red. Very old

Aroma

Swirl and sniff

Intensity

Light	Can barely smell with nose in glass
Medium	Can smell strongly with glass at bottom lip
Pronounced	Can smell strongly with glass at chin



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Wine Tasting Parameters

Flavors

Intensity after spitting or swallowing

Light

Medium

Pronounced



Structure

Sweetness

Dry

No detectable sugar

Off dry

Light sweetness

Sweet

Sugar dominates, min 45g/l

Acidity

Low

No mouth watering

Medium

Slight mouth watering

High

Significant mouth watering

Tannin

Low

Barely noticeable drying sensation

Medium

Some drying

High

Noticeable drying, gums seem to shrink

Alcohol

Low

<11%, No legs

Medium

11-13.9%, May have legs

High

14% and higher, Lots of legs

Finish

Short

Less than 5 seconds

Medium

9-11 seconds

Long

More than 15 seconds

Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc



What is it?

Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc. Benchmark Marlborough, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. Wine Spectator Top 100 – Four times; Wine Enthusiast 91



The Grape

100% Sauvignon Blanc



The Flavors and Pairings

Flavors: Prototypical New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc is dominated by gooseberry or passion fruit, citrus, especially grapefruit, grass, melon and tropical fruit. Sauvignon Blanc is intensely aromatic and flavorful.

Pairings: This is a very crisp high acid wine that pairs especially well with seafood, asparagus, salad, and goat cheese.



The Region

There is significant variation in the Sauvignon Blanc produced around the world. The four major regions and styles include: Loire, France; Bordeaux, France; New Zealand; and California.



When and How to Drink

Drinking pleasure comes from fresh fruity flavors. It should be consumed within one to two years of the vintage.

Serving Temperature: Chilled: 45 to 55°. Put it in the fridge about two hours before you plan to drink it.



Hahn SLH Pinot Noir



What is it?

Classic wine produced from a leading international grape variety in the cool climate of California's Santa Lucia Highlands. Vinous 91

Red wine with fruit forward flavors, soft tannins, and medium plus acidity. Paler than most red wines.



The Grape

100% Pinot Noir



The Flavors and Pairings

Flavors: Typical Pinot Noir Aromas and Flavors: red fruit, especially cherry, raspberry, strawberry, and plum. When treated with oak, vanilla and clove.

Pairings: Versatile — Meats and fish including salmon, tuna, turkey; Cheeses - Manchego, Gouda, Brie



The Region

Key Regions are Burgundy, France; California; and Oregon

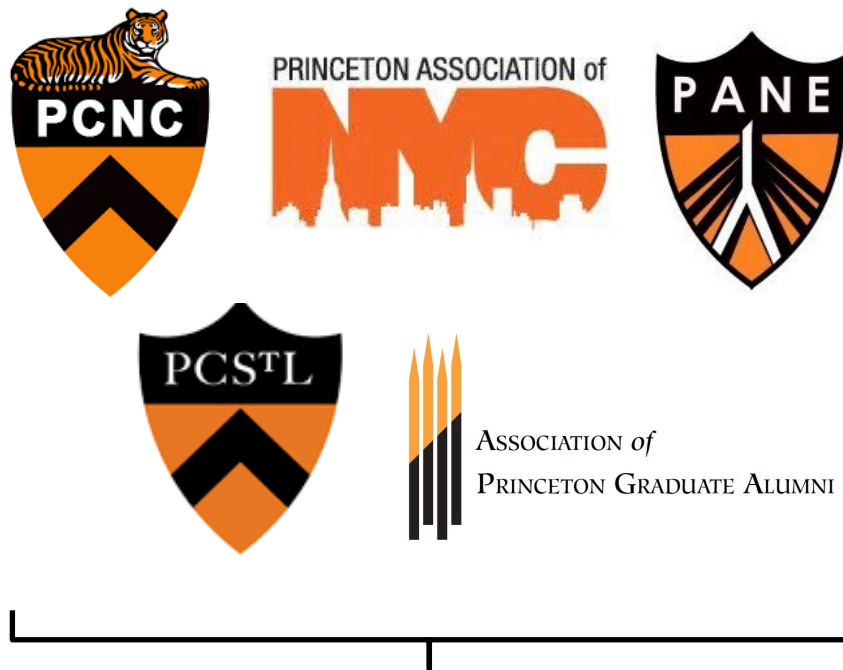


When and How to Drink

Hahn SLH : Within 3 to 5 years from the vintage; More robust Pinot Noirs, such as Grand and Premier Cru Burgundy can drink for 10+ years

Serving Temperature: Lightly chilled, 55 to 60°. If stored at room temperature, refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before drinking.

With Thanks



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