

DIY Palate Training Wine Tasting

What You'll Need

- 1 bottle of dry red wine (avoid reds like Menage à Trois, Apothic Red and Jam Jar **which contain RS**)
- 1 black tea bag
- 1/2 a lemon
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp vodka
- 4 identical wine glasses + one wineglass per person at the tasting
- a notepad and pen

Prepare the tasting: Pour 3 oz of red wine in each of the 4 wine glasses. Add the tea bag to one glass, the 1/2 squeeze of lemon to the next glass, the sugar to the next glass, and the vodka to the last glass. Fill your own glass with red wine; it will act as your control glass.

The Tasting

This tasting is designed to help you identify your own individual sense of the primary tastes in red wine which are:

1 tannin

2 acidity

3 sweetness

4 alcohol

5

Your goal will be to identify how the above tastes present themselves on your palate. This tasting is designed to improve

the senses on your tongue (smelling is not as important). Below you'll find our notes on each of these 4 tastes to use as guidance for your own tasting.

Tannin black tea bag

The tannin from the black tea should dissolve into the wine in about 10 minutes and then you can take the tea bag out. Take a taste of the control wine and feel it on your tongue by swishing it around before you swallow. Then, take a small taste of the black tea wine without smelling it.

1 What distinct tastes do you notice?

2 How does the wine feel on your tongue?

You should notice 2 primary aspects of tannin: bitterness and astringency. Bitterness will be the most prominent in this experiment (due to the high bitterness of tea) but you should also feel a drying, astringent sensation on your tongue. This is astringency from tannin and it should feel like fine sandpaper when you brush your tongue to the roof of your mouth. In wine, astringency is often described as fine-grained to coarse or grippy tannin. Most tannic wines will have increased astringency, but the bitterness will not be as intense as black tea.

Tips

- If you cannot taste the bitterness as much, it's possible that you are not as sensitive to IBU (International Bittering Units). It might also mean that you have an affinity to **Italian wine** and **bold red wines**.
- If the bitterness is extreme to the point of revulsion, it's possible that you are a **supertaster**. Depending on your level of sensitivity, this could mean that you have an affinity towards **sweet wines** or **white wines**.

Acidity lemon

The acid in the lemon will increase the acidity in the sample. Take a taste of the control wine and feel it on your tongue by swishing it around before you swallow. Then, take a small taste of the lemon wine without smelling it.

1 Does the wine taste lighter or bolder?

2 How does the increased acidity make your mouth react?

3 Does the wine taste more bitter or less bitter?

Can't get over the lemon? Try using distilled white vinegar instead.

You will notice at least 3 differences with increased acidity.

One, the wine won't taste as bold as your control wine. Two, the increased acidity will make your mouth water and pucker.

And finally three, it will bring out more of the wine's natural bitter notes and astringency. An additional feature that some will notice is the wine will have a longer tart and tingly finish.

Because we used a lemon, you will also taste the lemony flavors; try to ignore this, as it's not a feature of acids in wine.

Sweetness sugar

The sugar should be stirred into the wine. Take a taste of the control wine and feel it on your tongue by swishing it around before you swallow. Then, take a small taste of the sugar wine (you can also smell it and compare it to your control wine's aromas).

1 What does the sugar do to the fruit flavors in the wine?

2 How does the wine feel on the tip of your tongue?

3 What taste sensations do you feel after you've swallowed?

In small amounts, sweetness doesn't taste sweet but it does increase the fruit flavors of a wine and add an oily texture on the aftertaste. You'll be able to taste the most sweetness right on the initial taste towards the front of your tongue. You'll be able to taste the sweetness again after you swallow as a viscous oily sensation on the middle-back of your tongue.

Alcohol vodka

Take a taste of the control wine and feel it on your tongue by swishing it around before you swallow. Then, take a small taste of the vodka wine without smelling it.

1 Does the wine taste lighter or bolder?

2 What does the alcohol do to the spiciness of the wine? Where do you feel this sensation?

3 What does the alcohol do on the finish (aftertaste) of the wine?

The vodka will flavor the wine a bit, so instead, pay attention to the sensations of the liquid on your tongue and back of your throat when you swallow. You'll notice that the wine will have increased spiciness that will make your tongue have tiny prickles all over. This will make the wine feel thicker (bolder) on your palate. When you swallow, the prickles will slowly subside in a long tingly finish with a hot sensation in the aftertaste.

Last Word: practice each time you drink wine

This wine tasting experiment is designed to help you identify the primary tastes in wine. Since everyone has a different ability to taste, observe how your own senses behave in each one of these experiments.

The next bottle of red wine you taste, take a moment to identify each of the 4 possible traits (tannin, acidity, sweetness, alcohol) and how they express themselves (are they low or high?). As you continue to explore new wines, you will build your own personal repertoire of understanding through a more scientific approach. Remember to **take great notes!**