

# WINE OVERVIEW



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This material was compiled from a number of locations including, but not limited to websites: food&wine, erobertparker, wineanswers, and winespectator, and the other publications including but not limited to Kevin Zraly's Complete Wine Course.

## GLOSSARY



This Glossary is intended to support beginner, intermediate and advanced wine levels, and is not specific to a single course. Please reference this tool when applicable to your reading or to clarify areas of study.

### **Acetic**

Wines, no matter how well made, contain quantities of acetic acidity that have a vinegary smell. If there is an excessive amount of acetic acidity, the wine will have a vinegary smell and be a flawed, acetic wine.

### **Acidic**

Wines need natural acidity to taste fresh and lively, but an excess of acidity results in an acidic wine that is tart and sour.

### **Acidification**

The process of adding acid, usually tartaric or citric, to grape must before fermentation in order to boost low levels of acidity creating a more balanced wine.

### **Acidity**

The acidity level in a wine is critical to its enjoyment and livelihood. The natural acids that appear in wine are citric, tartaric, malic, and lactic. Wines from hot years tend to be lower in acidity, whereas wines from cool, rainy years tend to be high in acidity. Acidity in a wine can preserve the wine's freshness and keep the wine lively, but too much acidity, which masks the wines flavors and compresses its texture, is a flaw.

### **Aftertaste**

As the term suggests, the taste left in the mouth when one swallows is the aftertaste. This word is a synonym for length or finish. The longer the aftertaste lingers in the mouth (assuming it is a pleasant taste), the finer the quality of the wine.

### **Aging**

Intentionally keeping a wine for a period of time so that the flavors harmonize and the wine begins to soften and open up. There is no one correct period of aging for wine, all wines will age differently and at different rates.

### **Alcohol**

A natural result of the fermentation process. When yeast metabolize the sugar in grapes, the two major by-products are alcohol and carbon dioxide. Most table wines in the U.S. have 12 to 14% alcohol by volume.

### **Aggressive**

Aggressive is usually applied to wines that are either high in acidity or have harsh tannins, or both.

### **Angular**

Angular wines are wines that lack roundness, generosity, and depth. Wine from poor vintages or wines that are too acidic are often described as being angular.

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## **AOC**

Abbreviation for Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; the French government agency that controls wine production.

## **Appellation/AVA/DOC**

The French term, Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée, (AOC), refers to a set of comprehensive regulations that specify the precise geographic area in which a given French wine can be made. AOC regulations also stipulate the types of grapes that can be used, the manner in which the vines must be grown and how the wine can be made. The Italian equivalents of France's AOC laws are known as DOC, Denominazione di Origine Controllata, and a slightly more strict set of regulations known as DOCG, Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita. In the U.S., the regulations governing AVAs (American Viticultural Areas) are far less strict than French or Italian appellation laws. AVAs are designated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. There are now more than 130 areas that have been designated as AVAs including such well-known AVAs as the Napa Valley, Stags Leap District, Russian River Valley, Anderson Valley and so on.

## **Aroma**

Aroma is the smell of a young wine before it has had sufficient time to develop nuances of smell that are then called its bouquet. The word aroma is commonly used to mean the smell of a relatively young, unevolved wine.

## **Astringent**

Wines that are astringent are not necessarily bad or good wines. Astringent wines are harsh and coarse to taste, either because they are too young and tannic and just need time to develop, or because they are not well made. The level of tannins (if it is harsh) in a wine contributes to its degree of astringence.

## **Austere**

Wines that are austere are generally not terribly pleasant wines to drink. An austere wine is a hard, rather dry wine that lacks richness and generosity. However, young Rhônes are not as austere as young Bordeaux.

## **AVA**

Abbreviation for American viticultural Area. AVA's are designated wine producing areas in the United States.

## **Backward**

An adjective used to describe (1) a young largely unevolved, closed, and undrinkable wine, (2) a wine that is not ready to drink, or (3) a wine that simply refuses to release its charms and personality.

## **Balance**

One of the most desired traits in a wine is good balance, where the concentration of fruit, level of tannins, and acidity are in total harmony. Balanced wines are symmetrical and tend to age gracefully.

## **Barnyard**

An unclean, farmyard, fecalaroma that is imparted to a wine because of unclean barrels or unsanitary winemaking facilities.

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## **Barrel Fermentation**

As implied, a method of fermentation done in barrels. Fermenting a wine, especially a white wine, in small oak barrels rather than large stainless steel tanks can noticeably affect the wine's flavor and texture. In particular, a wine can become more creamy, round, buttery and toasty after being barrel fermented.

## **Berrylike**

As this descriptive term implies, most red wines have an intense berry fruit character that can suggest blackberries, raspberries, black cherries, mulberries, or even strawberries and cranberries.

## **Big**

A big wine is a large-framed, full-bodied wine with an intense and concentrated feel on the palate. Most red Rhône wines are big wines.

## **BioDynamics**

A type of holistic farming created by Rudolph Steiner in the 1920s based on similar principles of organic farming. Compost and manure are used instead of chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

## **Bitter**

A harsh quality wine can take on. Wine made from grapes that are picked less than optimally ripe, for example, can taste a little bitter.

**Blend** The combining of different lots of wine to make a final wine with certain characteristics. A wine may be a blend of different grape varieties (such as a blend of cabernet sauvignon and merlot, for example), or it may be a blend of the same grape variety from different vineyard sites, or even the same grape variety handled differently in the vineyard or during winemaking. In most cases, the goal of blending is to create a wine that is greater than the sum of its parts.

## **Blackcurrant**

A pronounced smell of blackcurrant fruit is commonly associated with certain Rhône wines. It can vary in intensity from faint to very deep and rich.

## **Body**

Body is the weight and fullness of a wine that can be sensed as it crosses the palate. Full-bodied wines tend to have a lot of alcohol, concentration, and glycerin.

## **Botrytis Cinerea**

The fungus that attacks the grape skins under specific climatic conditions (usually alternating periods of moisture and sunny weather). It causes the grape to become superconcentrated because it causes a natural dehydration. Botrytis cinerea is essential for the great sweet white wines of Barsac and Sauternes. It rarely occurs in the Rhône Valley because of the dry, constant sunshine and gusty winds.

## **Bouquet**

As a wine's aroma becomes more developed from bottle aging, the aroma is transformed into a bouquet that is hopefully more than just the smell of the grape.

## **Brawny**

A hefty, muscular, full-bodied wine with plenty of weight and flavor, although not always the most elegant or refined sort of wine.

## **Briery**

I think of California Zinfandel when the term briery comes into play, denoting that the wine is aggressive and rather spicy.

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## **Brilliant**

Brilliant relates to the color of the wine. A brilliant wine is one that is clear, with no haze or cloudiness to the color.

## **Brix**

A scale that measures the sugar level of the unfermented grape juice.

## **Browning**

As red wines age, their color changes from ruby/purple to dark ruby, to medium ruby, to ruby with an amber edge, to ruby with a brown edge. When a wine is browning it is usually fully mature and not likely to get better.

## **Brut**

A French term used for the driest style of Champagne and/or sparkling wine.

## **Buttery**

A description of a wine, usually a white wine, that has taken on a slight buttery flavor. This often happens as a result of the wine being barrel fermented and then left for a period of time in contact with the yeast.

## **Capsule**

The covering at the top of the neck of a wine bottle that protects the cork. Capsules, which come in many colors and designs, are considered part the wine's overall design. Recently, some wineries have forgone capsules in favor of a small wax dot on the top of the cork.

## **Carbonic Maceration**

This vinification method is used to make soft, fruity, very accessible wines. Whole clusters of grapes are put into a vat that is then filled with carbonic gas. This system is used when fruit is to be emphasized in the final wine in contrast to structure and tannin.

## **Cedar**

Rhône reds can have a bouquet that suggests either faintly or overtly the smell of cedarwood. It is a complex aspect of the bouquet.

## **Chaptalization**

The addition of sugar to the must before fermentation to increase the alcohol level of the finished wine.

## **Character**

Refers to the aspects of the wine typical of its grape varieties, or the overall characteristics of the wine.

## **Chewy**

If a wine has a rather dense, viscous texture from a high glycerin content, it is often referred to as being chewy. High-extract wines from great vintages can often be chewy, largely because they have higher alcohol hence high levels of glycerin, which imparts a fleshy mouthfeel.

## **Coheita**

"Vintage", in Portuguese.

## **Closed**

The term closed is used to denote that the wine is not showing its potential, which remains locked in because it is too young. Young wines often close up about 12-18 months after bottling, and depending on the vintage and storage conditions, remain in such a state for several years to more than a decade.

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## **Cloying**

A sweet wine without a sufficient amount of acidity to balance the sweetness will often taste so sweet as to be cloying.

## **Complex**

One of the most subjective descriptive terms used, a complex wine is a wine that the taster never gets bored with and finds interesting to drink. Complex wines tend to have a variety of subtle scents and flavors that hold one's interest in the wine.

## **Components**

The components of a wine make up its character, style, and taste. Some components are: acidity, alcohol, fruit, tannin, and residual sugar.

## **Concentrated**

Fine wines, whether they are light-, medium-, or full-bodied, should have concentrated flavors. Concentrated denotes that the wine has a depth and richness of fruit that gives it appeal and interest. Deep is a synonym for concentrated.

## **Corked**

A corked wine is a flawed wine that has taken on the smell of cork as a result of an unclean or faulty cork. It is perceptible in a bouquet that shows no fruit, only the smell of musty cork, which reminds me of wet cardboard.

## **Crisp**

Refreshing, thanks to sound acidity.

## **Cru**

Certain vineyards in France are designated grand cru and premier cru, the classification indicating level of quality.

## **Cuvée**

Many producers in the Rhône Valley produce special, deluxe lots of wine or a lot of wine from a specific grape variety that they bottle separately. These lots are often referred to as cuvées.

## **Decadent**

If you are an ice cream and chocolate lover, you know the feeling of eating a huge sundae of rich vanilla ice cream lavished with hot fudge and real whipped cream. If you are a wine enthusiast, a wine loaded with opulent, even unctuous layers of fruit, with a huge bouquet, and a plump, luxurious texture can be said to be decadent.

## **Decant**

The process of slowly pouring wine from the bottle into a glass carafe or other vessel, leaving the wine's sediment behind. Only certain wines, usually older red wines, need to be decanted.

## **Degorgement**

One step of the Champagne method (méthode champenoise) used to expel the sediment from the bottle.

## **Deep**

Essentially the same as concentrated, expressing the fact that the wine is rich, full of extract, and mouth filling.

## **Delicate**

As this word implies, delicate wines are light, subtle, understated wines that are prized for their shyness rather than for an extroverted, robust character. White wines are usually more delicate than red wines. Few Rhône red wines can correctly be called delicate.

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## **Demi-muid**

650-liter Burgundy barrels which are essentially the equivalent of three regular barrels.

## **Diffuse**

Wines that smell and taste unstructured and unfocused are said to be diffuse. When red wines are served at too warm a temperature they often become diffuse.

## **DOC**

(Denominazione D'Origine Controllata The Italian system of laws regulating about 250 different wine zones. Italy's D.O.C. regulations are roughly equivalent to France's Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (see entry).

## **Double Decanting**

This is done by first decanting the wine into a decanter and then rinsing the original bottle out with non-chlorinated water and then immediately repouring the wine from the decanter back into the bottle. It varies with the wine as to how long you cork it.

## **Dry**

A wine that tastes as though it has no remaining natural grape sugar. By law, a minuscule amount (less than 0.2%) of natural sugar can remain.

## **Dumb**

A dumb wine is also a closed wine, but the term dumb is used more pejoratively. Closed wines may need only time to reveal their richness and intensity. Dumb wines may never get any better.

## **Earthy**

May be used in both a negative and a positive sense; however, I prefer to use earthy to denote a positive aroma of fresh, rich, clean soil. Earthy is a more intense smell than woody or truffle scents.

## **Elegant**

Although more white wines than red are described as being elegant, lighter-styled, graceful, balance red wines can be elegant.

## **Enology**

The science of winemaking

## **Estate Bottled**

A term used on wine labels to indicate a wine that is made 100% from grapes growing in vineyards owned

## **Extract**

Essentially the minerals and other trace elements in a wine; sugar-free dry extract is everything in a wine except water, sugar, acids and alcohol. High extract often gives wine a dusty, tactile impression of density. It frequently serves to buffer, or mitigate, high alcohol or strong acidity.

## **Exuberant**

Like extroverted, somewhat hyper people, wines too can be gushing with fruit and seem nervous and intensely vigorous.

## **Fat**

When the Rhône has an exceptionally hot year for its crop and the wines attain a super sort of maturity, they are often quite rich and concentrated, with low to average acidity. Often such wines are said to be fat, which is a prized commodity. If they become too fat, that is a flaw and they are then called flabby.

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## **Fermentation**

The process by which grape juice is chemically converted into wine through the action of yeast. During fermentation, yeast enzymes convert the natural sugar in the grapes into alcohol, giving off carbon dioxide as a byproduct.

## **Flabby**

A wine that is too fat or obese is a flabby wine. Flabby wines lack structure and are heavy to taste.

## **Fleshy**

Fleshy is a synonym for chewy, meaty, or beefy. It denotes that the wine has a lot of body, alcohol, and extract, and usually a high glycerin content. Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Hermitage are particularly fleshy wines.

## **Floral**

Wines made from the Muscat or Viognier grape have a flowery component, and occasionally a red wine will have a floral scent.

## **Filter**

A device used to remove certain large particles such as yeast or bacteria from wine. Wines that are properly filtered suffer no damage to their flavor or aroma.

## **Filtration**

Removal of yeasts and other solids from a wine before bottling to clarify and stabilize the wine.

## **Finish**

The final taste left by a sip of wine after you swallow. Wines can be said to have long or short finishes (see Aftertaste).

## **Firm**

Perceptibly tannic and/or acidic, in a positive way.

## **First Growth**

The five highest quality Bordeaux Chateaux wines from the Medoc Classification of 1855.

## **Floral**

A descriptive term for a wine that has a smell reminiscent of flowers or meadows

## **Focused**

Both a fine wine's bouquet and flavor should be focused. Focused simply means that the scents, aromas, and flavors are precise and clearly delineated. If they are not, the wine is like an out-of-focus picture—diffuse, hazy, and possibly problematic.

## **Forward**

An adjective used to describe wines that are (1) delicious, evolved, and close to maturity, (2) wines that border on being flamboyant or ostentatious, or (3) unusually evolved and/or quickly maturing wines.

## **Foudre**

Large oak barrels that vary enormously in size but are significantly larger than the normal oak barrel used in Bordeaux or the piece used in Burgundy. They are widely used in the Rhône Valley.

## **Fresh**

Freshness in both young and old wines is a welcome and pleasing component. A wine is said to be fresh when it is lively and cleanly made. The opposite of fresh is stale. Fruity: A very good wine should have enough concentration of fruit so that it can be said to be fruity. Fortunately, the best wines will have more than just a fruity personality.

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## **Fruity**

Aromas and flavors that derive from the grape, as opposed to the winemaking process or the barrels in which the wine was aged.

## **Full-bodied**

Wines rich in extract, alcohol, and glycerin are full-bodied wines. Most Rhône wines are full-bodied.

## **Garrigue**

In the southern Rhône Valley and Provence, this is the landscape of small slopes and plateaus. This Provençal word applies to these windswept hilltops/slopes inhabited by scrub-brush and Provençal herb outcroppings. The smell of garrigue is often attributed to southern Rhône Valley wines. Suggesting more than the smell of herbes de Provence, it encompasses an earthy/herbal concoction of varying degrees of intensity.

## **Green**

Green wines are wines made from underripe grapes; they lack richness and generosity as well as having a vegetal character. Green wines are infrequently made in the Rhone, although vintages such as 1977 were characterized by a lack of ripening.

## **Grip**

An emphatically firm, tactile finish.

## **Halbtrocken**

A German term meaning "semidry."

## **Hard**

Wines with abrasive, astringent tannins or high acidity are said to be hard. Young vintages of Rhône wines can be hard, but they should never be harsh.

## **Harsh**

If a wine is too hard it is said to be harsh. Harshness in a wine, young or old, is a flaw.

## **Hectare**

A metric measure of area that equals 2.471 acres.

## **Hectoliter**

A metric measure of volume that equals 26.42 US gallons

## **Hedonistic**

Certain styles of wine are meant to be inspected; they are introspective and intellectual wines. Others are designed to provide sheer delight, joy, and euphoria. Hedonistic wines can be criticized because in one sense they provide so much ecstasy that they can be called obvious, but in essence, they are totally gratifying wines meant to fascinate and enthrall-pleasure at its best.

## **Herbaceous**

Many wines have a distinctive herbal smell that is generally said to be herbaceous. Specific herbal smells can be of thyme, lavender, rosemary, oregano, fennel, or basil and are common in Rhône wines.

## **Herbes de Provence**

Provence is known for the wild herbs that grow prolifically throughout the region. These include lavender, thyme, sage, rosemary, and oregano. It is not just an olfactory fancy to smell many of these herbs in Rhône Valley wines, particularly those made in the south.



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## **Hollow**

Also known as shallow, hollow wines are diluted and lack depth and concentration.

## **Honeyed**

A common personality trait of specific white Rhône wines, a honeyed wine is one that has the smell and taste of bee's honey.

## **Hot**

Rather than meaning that the temperature of the wine is too warm to drink, hot denotes that the wine is too high in alcohol and therefore leaves a burning sensation in the back of the throat when swallowed. Wines with alcohol levels in excess of 14.5% often taste hot if the requisite depth of fruit is not present.

## **Inox Vats**

This is the French term for stainless steel vats that are used for both fermentation and storage of wine.

## **Intensity**

Intensity is one of the most desirable traits of a high-quality wine. Wines of great intensity must also have balance. They should never be heavy or cloying. Intensely concentrated great wines are alive, vibrant, aromatic, layered, and texturally compelling. Their intensity adds to their character, rather than detracting from it.

## **Jammy**

When wines have a great intensity of fruit from excellent ripeness they can be jammy, which is a very concentrated, flavorful wine with superb extract. In great vintages such as 1961, 1978, 1985, 1989, 1990, and 1995, some of the wines are so concentrated that they are said to be jammy.

## **Kabinett**

A light, semi dry German wine.

## **Kieselguhr Filtration System**

This is a filtration system using diatomaceous earth as the filtering material, rather than cellulose, or in the past, before it was banned, asbestos.

## **Leafy**

A leafy character in a wine is similar to a herbaceous character only in that it refers to the smell of leaves rather than herbs. A wine that is too leafy is a vegetal or green wine.

## **Lean**

Lean wines are slim, rather streamlined wines that lack generosity and fatness but can still be enjoyable and pleasant.

## **Lively**

A synonym for fresh or exuberant, a lively wine is usually young wine with good acidity and a thirst-quenching personality.

## **Long**

A very desirable trait in any fine wine is that it be long in the mouth. Long (or length) relates to a wine's finish, meaning that after you swallow the wine, you sense its presence for a long time. (Thirty seconds to several minutes is great length.) In a young wine, the difference between something good and something great is the length of the wine.

## **Lush**

Lush wines are velvety, soft, richly fruity wines that are both concentrated and fat. A lush wine can never be an astringent or hard wine.

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## **Maceration**

The chemical process by which tannin, color, and flavor are extracted from the grape skins into the wine. Temperature and alcohol content influence the speed at which maceration occurs.

## **Malolactic Fermentation**

A natural process during which beneficial bacteria convert the malic (very tart) acid in a wine to lactic (softer tasting) acid. Malolactic fermentation can take place on its own or be prompted by the winemaker.}

## **Massive**

In great vintages where there is a high degree of ripeness and superb concentration, some wines can turn out to be so big, full-bodied, and rich that they are called massive. A great wine such as the 1961 or 1990 Hermitage La Chapelle is a textbook example of a massive wine.

## **Meaty**

A chewy, fleshy wine is also said to be meaty.

## **Mechanical Harvester**

A machine used on flat vineyards. It shakes the vines to harvest the grapes.

## **Meritage**

Trademark designation for specific high quality American wines containing the same blend of varieties that are used in the making of Bordeaux wines in France.

## **Method Champenoise**

The method by which champagne is made. This method is also used in other parts of the world to produce sparkling wines.

## **Middle Palate**

Literally, the part of the tasting experience between the nose of the wine and its finish. The impact of a wine in the mouth.

## **Monopole**

Used to denote a vineyard owned exclusively by one proprietor, the word monopole appears on the label of a wine made from such a vineyard.

## **Morsellated**

Many vineyards are fragmented, with multiple growers owning a portion of the same vineyard. Such a vineyard is often referred to as a morsellated vineyard.

## **Mouth-filling**

Big, rich, concentrated wines that are filled with fruit extract and are high in alcohol and glycerin are wines that tend to texturally fill the mouth. A mouth-filling wine is also a chewy, fleshy, fat wine.

## **Must**

Unfermented grape juice extracted during the crushing process.

## **Musty**

Wines aged in dirty barrels or unkept cellars or exposed to a bad cork take on a damp, musty character that is a flaw.

## **Nobel Rot**

See "Botrytis Cinerea."

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## **Nose**

The general smell and aroma of a wine as sensed through one's nose and olfactory senses is often called the wine's nose.

## **Oaky**

Many red Rhône wines are aged from 6 months to 30 months in various sizes of oak barrels. At some properties, a percentage of the oak barrels may be new, and these barrels impart a toasty, vanillin flavor and smell to the wine. If the wine is not rich and concentrated, the barrels can overwhelm the wine, making it taste overly oaky. Where the wine is rich and concentrated and the winemaker has made a judicious use of barrels, however, the results are a wonderful marriage of fruit and oak.

## **Oenology**

The science and scientific study of winemaking.

## **Off**

If a wine is not showing its true character, or is flawed or spoiled in some way, it is said to be "off."

## **Overripe**

An undesirable characteristic; grapes left too long on the vine become too ripe, lose their acidity, and produce wines that are heavy and balance. This can happen frequently in the hot viticultural areas of the Rhône Valley if the growers harvest too late.

## **Oxidized**

If a wine has been excessively exposed to air during either its making or aging, the wine loses freshness and takes on a stale, old smell and taste. Such a wine is said to be oxidized.

## **Peppery**

A peppery quality to a wine is usually noticeable in many Rhône wines that have an aroma of black or white pepper and a pungent flavor.

## **Perfumed**

This term usually is more applicable to fragrant, aromatic white wines than to red wines. However, some of the dry white wines (particularly Condrieu) and sweet white wines can have a strong perfumed smell.

## **Phenolics**

Chemical compounds derived especially but not only from the skins, stems, and seeds of grapes that affect the color and flavor of wine. Thannin is one example. Maceration can increase their presence in wines.

## **Phylloxera**

A root louse that kills grape vines.

## **Pigéage**

A winemaking technique of punching down the cap of grape skins that forms during the beginning of the wine's fermentation. This is done several times a day, occasionally more frequently, to extract color, flavor, and tannin from the fermenting juice.

## **Plummy**

Rich, concentrated wines can often have the smell and taste of ripe plums. When they do, the term plummy is applicable.

## **Ponderous**

Ponderous is often used as a synonym for massive, but in my usage a massive wine is simply a big, rich, very concentrated wine with balance, whereas a ponderous wine is a wine that has become heavy and tiring to drink.

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## **Precocious**

Wines that mature quickly are precocious. However the term also applies to wines that may last and evolve gracefully over a long period of time, but taste as if they are aging quickly because of their tastiness and soft, early charms.

## **Predikatswein**

The highest level of quality in German wines.

## **Pruney**

Wines produced from grapes that are overripe take on the character of prunes. Pruney wines are flawed wines.

## **Raisiny**

Late-harvest wines that are meant to be drunk at the end of a meal can often be slightly raisiny, which in some ports and sherries is desirable. However, a raisiny quality is a major flaw in a dinner wine.

## **Residual Sugar**

Any unfermented sugar that remains in a finished wine. Residual sugar determines how dry or sweet a wine is.

## **Rich**

Wines that are high in extract, flavor, and intensity of fruit.

## **Riddling**

One step of the Champagne making process in which the bottles are turned gradually each day for weeks until they are upside down, so that the sediment rest in the neck of the bottle.

## **Ripe**

A wine is ripe when its grapes have reached the optimum level of maturity. Less than fully mature grapes produce wines that are underripe, and overly mature grapes produce wines that are overripe.

## **Round**

A very desirable character of wines, roundness occurs in fully mature wines that have lost their youthful, astringent tannins, and also in young wines that have soft tannins and low acidity.

## **Rose**

A pink wine which can be made from any number of red grape varieties. In southern France where rosés are extremely popular, rosés are often made from grenache. Rosés can be made in numerous ways, the most common of which is simply to draw the wine off the red grape skins before the skins have fully tinted the wine red. Rosé wines, like white wines, taste best served chilled.

## **Savory**

A general descriptive term that denotes that the wine is round, flavorful, and interesting to drink.

## **Sediment**

Small particles, mostly of color, that dropout of suspension as a wine ages. With considerable age, many great wines throw off a sediment. Sediment is harmless.

## **Shallow**

A weak, feeble, watery or diluted wine lacking concentration is said to be shallow.

## **Sharp**

An undesirable trait, sharp wines are bitter and unpleasant with hard, pointed edges.

# GLOSSARY

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This Glossary is intended to support beginner, intermediate and advanced wine levels, and is not specific to a single course. Please reference this tool when applicable to your reading or to clarify areas of study.

## **Sommelier**

The French term for a wine steward.

## **Soft**

A soft wine is one that is round and fruity, low in acidity, and has an absence of aggressive, hard tannins.

## **Spicy**

Wines often smell quite spicy with aromas of pepper, cinnamon, and other well-known spices. These pungent aromas are usually lumped together and called spicy.

## **Spritz**

The faint prickle on the tongue of carbon dioxide (pétillance in French), generally found in young, light white wines.

## **Stale**

Dull, heavy wines that are oxidized or lack balancing acidity for freshness are called stale.

## **Stalky**

A synonym for vegetal, but used more frequently to denote that the wine has probably had too much contact with the stems, resulting in a green, vegetal, or stalky character to the wine.

## **Steely**

An almost metallic taste often noted in wines high in acidity and/or made from mineral-rich soil--especially Riesling.

## **Supple**

A supple wine is one that is soft, lush, velvety, and very attractively round and tasty. It is a highly desirable characteristic because it suggests that the wine is harmonious.

## **Sulfur/Sulfites**

A small amount of sulfur dioxide, a preservative, may be used both in the vineyard and during winemaking to protect grapes and wine from soilage. Sulfites are a form of sulfur that occur naturally as a by product of fermentation. Because a tiny percentage of the population is allergic to sulfur, wine labels must carry the message "contains sulfites" if the wine contains more than 10 parts per million (ppm) sulfites (which most wines do.)

## **Sweet**

A term applied not just to wines with significant residual sugar but also to those that show outstanding richness or ripeness.

## **Tannic**

The tannins of a wine, which are extracted from the grape skins and stems, are, along with a wine's acidity and alcohol, its lifeline. Tannins give a wine firmness and some roughness when young, but gradually fall away and dissipate. A tannic wine is one that is young and unready to drink.

## **Tart**

Sharp, acidic, lean, unripe wines are called tart. In general, a wine that is tart is not pleasurable.

## **Terroir**

A French term for all of the elements that contribute to the distinctive characteristics of a particular vineyard site that includes its soil, subsoil, slope, drainage, elevation, and climate including exposure to the sun, temperature and precipitation.

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## **Thick**

Rich, ripe, concentrated wines that are low in acidity are often said to be thick.

## **Thin**

A synonym for shallow; it is an undesirable characteristic for a wine to be thin, meaning that it is watery, lacking in body, and just diluted.

## **Tightly Knit**

Young wines that have good acidity levels, good tannin levels, and are well made are called tightly knit, meaning they have yet to open up and develop.

## **Toasty**

A smell of grilled toast can often be found in wines because the barrels the wines are aged in are charred or toasted on the inside.

## **Tobacco**

Some red wines have the scent of fresh tobacco. It is a distinctive and wonderful smell in wine.

## **Tronçais Oak**

This type of oak comes from the forest of Tronçais in central France.

## **Unctuous**

Rich, lush, intense wines with layers of concentrated, soft, velvety fruit are said to be unctuous.

## **Varietal**

A type of grape variety. Chardonnay, Merlot, Riesling, etc. are all varietals.

## **Vegetal**

An undesirable characteristic, wines that smell and taste vegetal are usually made from unripe grapes. In some wines, a subtle vegetable garden smell is pleasant and adds complexity, but if it is the predominant character, it is a major flaw.

## **Velvety**

A textural description and synonym for lush or silky, a velvety wine is a rich, soft, smooth wine to taste. It is a very desirable characteristic.

## **Vinous**

Literally wine-like, in terms of liveliness and acidity; but often used to describe the overall impression conveyed by a wine beyond simple fruitiness. This can include subtle flavors that come from the soil that produced the grapes, as well as from the winemaking and aging process.

## **Vintage**

The year in which the grapes for a given wine were harvested. Most wines carry a vintage date, though not all. Non-vintage sparkling wines and Champagnes, for example, are blends of grapes from different harvests.

## **Viscous**

Viscous wines tend to be relatively concentrated, fat, almost thick wines with a great density of fruit extract, plenty of glycerin, and high alcohol content. If they have balancing acidity, they can be tremendously flavorful and exciting wines. If they lack acidity, they are often flabby and heavy.

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## **Volatile**

A volatile wine is one that smells of vinegar as a result of an excessive amount of acetic bacteria present. It is a seriously flawed wine.

## **Woody**

When a wine is overly oaky it is often said to be woody. Oakiness in a wine's bouquet and taste is good up to a point. Once past that point, the wine is woody and its fruity qualities are masked by excessive oak aging.

## **Yeasty**

A descriptive term for a wine with the pleasant aroma of bread dough. Many sparkling wines and champagnes have a yeasty aroma.