

Sula Wine Dictionary

Acid

Acids occur naturally during the growing of grapes and as part of the fermentation process. In proper proportion, acids are a desirable trait and give the wine character. Too much acid leaves a sharp, tart taste in the mouth, while too little makes wine seem flat and lifeless.

Aftertaste

The flavours that linger in the mouth after tasting or swallowing wine. The aftertaste or finish is one of the most important factors in judging a wine's character or quality.

Aging

The process of maturing wines so that they improve. Not all wines benefit from aging; all rosé wines, most white and light reds are usually best drunk young. Fine red wines (such as those from France's Bordeaux & Rhône regions, good Cabernet Sauvignons and Zinfandels, and the big Italian reds) and many white wines (including some Californian Chardonnays) need some aging to reach their full potential.

Alcohol

A critical component of wine, alcohol is a natural by-product of fermentation, and one of the mainstays of perceived flavour. Most wines range from 7% to 14% alcohol by volume.

Apéritif

(ah-pehr-ee-TEEF) A French word that describes an alcoholic beverage served before dinner to stimulate the appetite.

Appellation

Defines the area where a wine's grapes were grown.

Aroma

The simple, fruity smell of the grape variety used in the wine. Young wines tend to exhibit their varietal aroma quite strongly.

Bacchus

(BAH-kus) Another name for Dionysus, The Greek and Roman God of Wine.

Balance

The primary goal of a winemaker. A wine has balance when its elements are harmonious and no single element dominates. Acid balances sweetness; fruit balances against oak and tannin content; alcohol balances against acidity.

Blending

The winemakers task of taking wines from different lots or barrels and blending them together for bottling. Traditional and regional regulations dictate what particular grape varieties may be blended together to produce a specific wine. It is the winemaker's decision on the percentages of each to use, with vintage often playing a crucial role in this equation.

Blush

A term for rosé wine (or any wine that is pink in colour), coined in the United States.

Botrytis

(boh-TRI-tihs) The `Noble Rot` - a beneficial kind of mould or fungus that may appear on late-harvested grapes, causing them to shrink and dry so the natural sugars become highly concentrated.

Bottle Shock; Bottle Sickness

A temporary condition affecting wines immediately after bottling or shipment, characterized by muted or disjointed fruit flavours. A few days of rest, proper storage, and decanting are the cure.

Bouquet

The perfume of wine, often the first indicator of a wine's quality. Most appropriate for mature wines that have developed complex flavours beyond basic young fruit and oak aromas.

Brix

A measurement system for the sugar content of grapes and wine, indicating the degree of the grapes' ripeness (meaning sugar level) at harvest. Most table-wine grapes are harvested at between 21 and 25 Brix. To get an alcohol conversion level, multiply the stated Brix by .55.

Brut

A French term meaning `raw` used to designate a dry finish Champagne or sparkling wine. Can be the driest wine made by a producer.

Cabernet Sauvignon

(ka-behr-NAY soh-vihn-YAWN) One of the noblest of the red wine grape varieties, used in Bordeaux, and successfully grown in many countries. Often referred to as the king of red wines.

Cabernet Shiraz

(ka-behr-NAY sher-AHZ) Shiraz or Syrah is a dark-skinned grape grown throughout the world and used primarily to produce powerful red wines. Syrah is used as a varietal and blended into other wines.

Capsule

The metal (or sometimes plastic) protective sheath over the cork and neck of a wine bottle. A capsule protects the cork from drying out and letting air into the bottle.

Champagne

(sham-PAYN) Sparkling wine made in the region of the same name, some 70 miles northeast of Paris, using a traditional process in which the wines are bottle-fermented, and made only from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and/or Pinot Meunier grapes.

Chaptalization

The process of adding sugar to the fermenting wine to raise the final alcohol level. Because the sugar is converted to alcohol, it does not add sweetness to the finished wine, but the process is forbidden in some regions.

Character

A wine's distinctive personality that stems from a combination of a region's wine-making traditions, soil, and grape varieties.

Chardonnay

(shar-doh-NAY) One of the world's most well known and noble white grape varieties that produces possibly the most popular medium to full-bodied white wines. Varies widely in style from crisp lemon-lime-mineral flavours to rich, oaky, buttery wines. Apple and green apple aromas are classic although vanilla and tropical often show up, especially in U.S. and Australian Chardonnays.

Chenin Blanc

(SHEN-in BLAHNK) A versatile, noble, French white wine grape used to make the famous dry, slightly sweet whites of the Loire Valley. Can be found in California and other regions too, and is somewhat variable, although pleasant honey overtones along with cantaloupe and honeydew melon flavours and light muskiness are common.

Cognac

(kon-yak) Named after the town of Cognac in France, it is the most famous variety of brandy. It is produced in the wine-growing region surrounding the town from which it takes its name.

Cooked

A term sometimes used to describe wines that are overripe or wines of very hot growing regions.

Cork

Traditional bottle stopper produced from the bark of cork trees.

Corked

Describes a bottle of wine that is `off` due to air spoilage, a tainted cork or improper cellaring.

Corkscrew Worm

The helical piece of metal found on most corkscrews, used to insert into and extract the cork from a wine bottle.

Crush

A noun used to describe the time when grapes are harvested and crushed to make wine.

Decant

To pour aged bottled wine carefully into a larger vessel, often a glass decanter for the purpose of leaving any accumulated sediment behind. Decanting also lets a wine breathe, and almost always pertains to red wine.

Dessert Wine

(1) A Sherry or other fortified wine. (2) Sweet wine customarily drunk with - or in place of - dessert, usually in small amounts or single portions.

Dindori

A town and taluka in Nashik district in the Indian state of Maharashtra. Dindori is known for its grape farming.

Disgorgement

A step in the traditional process of sparkling wine or champagne production of removing frozen sediment from the neck of the bottle after secondary fermentation.

Dry Style

Description of a wine produced specifically to possess little or no sweetness, whereby the sugars have been almost totally fermented. Commonly defined as containing less than about 0.5% residual sugar.

Élevage

From the French meaning `bringing up` or `raising`, the process of improving a recently fermented wine by functions such as blending, fining, filtering, and aging.

Enology

(ee-NAWL-uh-gee) The science and study of wine and winemaking. Also spelled oenology.

Fermentation

The primary chemical process in winemaking by which yeast converts sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide, thus turning grape juice into wine.

Full-Bodied

A wine with a generous proportion of flavour and alcohol; feels weighty on the tongue.

Grape Must

Mixture of grape juice, skins and pulp that is fermented into wine.

Grassy

The pleasant, herbaceous aromas and flavours reminiscent of newly cut grass. Often used to describe the overall character of Sauvignon Blanc. British or European tasters sometimes use the word 'gooseberry' to describe this flavour.

Grenache

(gren-ash) One of the most widely planted red wine grape varieties in the world. It ripens late, so needs hot, dry conditions. It is generally spicy, berry-flavored and soft on the palate with a relatively high alcohol content, but it needs careful control of yields for best results.

Jammy

A natural berrylike taste, most often used to describe wines such as California Zinfandel.

Late Harvest

Wines made from grapes picked later than normal with high sugar levels, usually affected with noble rot or botrytis, thus producing sweet dessert-style wines.

Malic Acid

The source of the green apple flavour found in young grapes which diminishes as they ripen and mature.

Malolactic Fermentation

A secondary fermentation occurring in most bottled wines. This process converts the naturally occurring malic acid into softer lactic acid plus carbon dioxide gas, thus reducing the wine's total acidity. Adds complexity to whites such as Chardonnay and softens reds such as Cabernet and Merlot.

Merlot

(mair-LOE) Merlot is a red wine grape that is used as both a blending grape and for varietal wines. Merlot-based wines usually have medium body with hints of berry, plum, and currant. Its softness and fleshiness, combined with its earlier ripening, makes Merlot a popular grape for blending

Méthode Champenoise

French term for the costly, labour intensive method to make champagne, whereby wine undergoes a secondary fermentation inside the bottle, creating bubbles. The monk Dom Pérignon is credited with inventing this method.

Noble Rot

A beneficial kind of mould or fungus that may appear on late-harvested grapes, causing them to shrink and dry so the natural sugars become highly concentrated. Also called Botrytis Cinerea.

Oenology

The science and study of wine and winemaking. Also spelled enology.

Oenophile

(EE-no-FIL-ee) originally from Greek . An oenophile is a lover of wine. In the strictest sense, oenophilia describes a disciplined devotion to wine, accompanying strict traditions of consumption and appreciation

Palate

It is the roof of the mouth in humans and other mammals

Pinot Noir

(PEE-noh NWAR) Highly regarded noble red grape variety originally from Burgundy, proven to produce some of the most velvety, voluptuous red wines to be had.

Pinotage

(pee-noh-TAHJ) A red grape that is a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault, grown commercially only in South Africa, where it is fermented at higher temperatures and matured in new oak for finesse and elegant berry flavours.

Pomace

(POH-muss) The skins, seeds, pulp, and stems left in the fermenting vat or cask after wine making, and one of the necessary ingredients in the distillation of French marc and Italian grappa.

Red Wine

Red wines actually vary in colour from dark pink to almost black. The colour comes from a natural organic pigment called anthocyan that is present in the skin of red grapes, and not from the juice of the grapes (which is, in fact, clear).

Riesling

(rees-lihng) It is a white grape variety which originates in the Rhine region of Germany. Riesling is an aromatic grape variety displaying flowery, almost perfumed, aromas as well as high acidity. It is used to make dry, semi-sweet, sweet and sparkling white wines

Rosé

(row-ZAY) A pale pink wine, ranging from dry to sweet and traditionally made by removing the skins from red grapes early on in the fermentation process, before they have the time to impart too much colour. Less traditionally, rosés are made by blending red and white wines.

Sauvignon Blanc

(soh-vihn-yawn BLAHNK) Noble white grape variety grown in the Loire and Bordeaux regions of France, with plantings now in other regions. Generally speaking produces soft, assertive, herbaceous, sometimes complex wines.

Shiraz

A term used mostly in Australia or South Africa; same as Syrah.

Sommelier

(saw-muh-LYAY) French term for the steward or waiter in charge of wine. The sommelier is expected to have extensive knowledge of wines and their suitability with various dishes.

Sparkling

Wine with bubbles, either naturally occurring or created by injecting carbon dioxide gas.

Spicy Notes

Usually a complex red or white wine imparting nuances of pepper, clove, cinnamon, mint or other spices.

Spumante

(spuh-mahn-tee) Spumante means "foaming" and refers to all Italian sparkling wines including dry, sweet and semi-sweet varieties. The types of bubbles can vary in spumantes. Some spumantes have large bubbles that rise to the surface, then fizz and explode, while other spumantes have tiny, sparkling bubbles.

Sweet Wine

Wine containing residual sugar, occurring when all of the grape sugar is not completely converted to alcohol.

Tannin

A naturally occurring substance found in grape skins, seeds and stems or sometimes oak barrels that gives wine its astringency. Most prominent in red wines where it creates a dry, puckering mouth-feel. Tannin acts as a natural preservative that helps wine age and develop, and in the right proportion contributes to the balance of a wine, but considered a fault if present in excess.

Tartaric Acid

The prominent natural acid in wine.

Terroir

(teh-RWAHR) French term meaning `soil` or `earth`, generally referring to all the physical and environmental characteristics in and around a particular vineyard site that are imparted into a wine such climate, soil, topography, etc.

Triage

(TREE-ahge) A term used in the production of Champagne or sparkling wine referring to the first bottling step in the process.

Vanilla Scent

A scent imparted by aging in oak, generally new oak.

Viniculture

The study and science of grape production for the purpose of making wine.

Viticulture

The science, cultivation and study of grape growing.

Vitis Vinifera

The classic, primary grape species used to produce nearly all of the world's best wines.

White Wines

White wines are made with much less grape skin contact than are red wines, and vary in colour from virtually colourless to deep gold or even deep tawny. Most white wines are made from grapes with yellow or green skins, although if the juice is separated from the skins gently and soon enough, white wines can also be made from black-skinned grapes.

Wine Body

The weight of the wine in the mouth and on the palate. Wines are commonly described as full-, medium- or light-bodied.

Wine Breathe

The act of allowing a wine to mix with air by pouring into another container, such as a decanter or wineglass. Breathing is thought to be beneficial for many red wines and also for some young white wines.

Wine Legs

Droplets that trickle down the side of the glass after swirling. A crude indicator of the alcohol content of the wine- the thicker and more slow-moving they are, the higher the alcohol content.

Wine Nose

The character of a wine as determined by smell; the aroma or bouquet.

Yeast

A living, microscopic, single-celled organism responsible for converting sugars in grape juice into alcohol via the process of fermentation.

Zinfandel

(ZIN-fahn-dell) Versatile, red wine grape variety most common in California, producing a wide range of wine styles.