

SWIRL YOUR WINE GLASS

搖晃你的紅酒杯

Packed with exquisite illustrations and comprehensive analysis, this is a reference book that every wine lover should keep close to hand.

The scope and complexity of the wine world can make it seem an impenetrable place to the outsider, and many of the commercial books on the topic tend to be overly specialized and difficult to digest. *Swirl Your Wine Glass* is different. The illustrations throughout the book serve as starting points for a thorough analysis of every aspect of the wine world, providing practical advice that will be helpful to beginners and connoisseurs alike.

Cynthia Lee begins by using wine bottle labels as a way of introducing the classification systems of various different countries, enabling the reader to pinpoint their own particular palate and arming them with the knowledge they need to make the right choice at the supermarket wine rack. The book then introduces the five essentials of wine: winemaking process, tincture, nose, sweetness, and place of origin. The book is also threaded with useful tip boxes, offering suggestions on topics like the terminology used to describe the taste of wine. Other helpful guides include wine glass shape, wine pairing, reading a restaurant wine list, and the secrets of sobering up.

Swirl Your Wine Glass provides a complete foundation in the understanding of wine, complementing methodically arranged information with ingenious illustrations.

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Wine Resumés

Every bottle of wine has a “resumé” in the form of its front and back labels. From these labels you can know for sure whether the bottle you’re holding is from the new or old world, and learn information including its origin, vintage, alcohol content, and volume.

Wine Labels Introduction

Every wine-producing country in the world has their own Label Integrity Program; this book will explore both the new world of wine and the old. The old world includes European countries with a long tradition of wine-making such as France, Italy, Greece and Spain, whereas the new world has learnt its techniques from the old and gradually developed its own styles. The main difference between the two is that new-world wine labels are relatively clear and easy to understand, whereas old-world wine labels are more complicated and difficult to understand.

New-World Wine Labels

Australia, New Zealand, USA, Chile, South Africa, and Argentina are all representatives of the new world, and they have relatively clear labels that even a novice can understand. Below is an example taken from the famous Australian Winery Penfolds’ Bin series.

Penfolds Label Example:

1. Winery Name: Usually located in the most eye-catching position on the label, as we see here with the name Penfolds.
2. Collection Name: Grange is Penfolds' top wine.
3. Grape Variety: The type of red grape used – Shiraz.
4. Place of Production: Shows where the grapes were grown and harvested. Taking the Penfolds' Bin as an example: the grapes were grown in Barossa Valley in South Australia.
5. Vintage: 2002.
6. Alcohol Content: Usually marked on the front or back label, and expressed as a percentage.
7. Volume: The volume of a single bottle; often 750ml.
8. Sulphites Content: Sulphites are often added during winemaking, so this is usually marked on the label.

Old-World Wine Labels

Labels on bottles from old-world countries such as France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Hungary, are often only marked with the region the wine was produced. However, if you don't know the specific grape variety grown in that area, it can be difficult to know how the wine will taste. For example, when someone says they bought a bottle of Bordeaux: "Bordeaux" is simply a place name, and in fact the most common grape variety grown in the Left Bank region is Cabernet Sauvignon, whereas in the Right Bank region it is Merlot. This means very little information can be gleaned from an old-world wine label, so we must first learn more facts about these countries, such as the distribution of production regions, and only then learn the corresponding grape varieties grown there. Below is an example taken from a French Chateau Petrus red wine.

French Chateau Petrus Wine Label

1. Producer or Winery: Usually marked in a prominent position. This label shows this wine comes from Chateau Petrus in France.
2. Area of Production: This wine was produced in Pomerol, from the Right Bank of Bordeaux. The soil here is high in iron, which means this area has the best terroir for making Merlot.

All this illustrates how difficult it is to learn about old-world wines by glancing at the label. The grape variety – Merlot – is not directly marked on the label and instead has to be inferred from the area of production. It may seem complicated, but perhaps winemakers are hoping consumers will go and find out more about the terroir in each region of production.

Mandatory Labeling vs Non-Mandatory Labeling

In order to highlight their value, some wines also put non-mandatory information on the bottles. These may include the winery or brand's logo, brewing methods, awards, a winery introduction or drinking suggestions.

1. BAROLO region of production (mandatory).
2. DOCG is the highest classification for Italian wines (mandatory).
3. Grape harvesting year is 2004 (mandatory).
4. Volume is 75cl, equal to 750ml (mandatory).
5. Alcohol content is 14% (mandatory).

Back Labels

The front label is generally more aesthetically pleasing and streamlined. In order to avoid cluttering the front label, some wineries also add a label to the back of the bottle including more detailed information about the wine, such as an introduction to the winery's history, brewing methods, food pairings, drinking suggestions, and so on.

1. Wine Introduction: Introduces the picking, brewing methods, etc. (not mandatory)
2. Food Pairing Suggestions: Suitable with game, red meat and cheese (not mandatory)
3. Ideal Temperature: 16°C-17°C (not mandatory)
4. Cellar Time: 5-7 years (not mandatory)
5. Decanting Time: Decant 1 hour before meal (not mandatory)
6. Other Notes: Icon showing pregnant women must not drink; can also be displayed using text (mandatory)

Five Keywords for Wine Tasting

Countries in the East have a very different drinking culture from those in the West, where mature wine tasting systems and frameworks have developed. By analyzing the sense of balance, you can easily understand your personal taste preferences, and judge the flavor and richness of a bottle of wine. Then you may use a wine's acidity, sweetness, alcohol, tannins, and body to evaluate it and quickly learn wine tasting.

Acidity

The acidity in wine comes from tartaric acid, malic acid, citric acid, etc. and provides a fresh, vibrant taste. A balance in tastes is important in wine, and acidity can make a wine's aroma clearer. The taste-balance of white wine is built between acidity and sweetness, meaning acidity is more important and obvious with regards to white wine than it is for red wine.

Wines produced in areas with a cold climate are more acidic than those produced in areas that are slightly warmer. Less sunshine and lower temperatures mean the grapes do not ripen fully, increasing their acid levels and making the wine naturally more acidic when fermented.

Acidity can be easily determined by the amount and speed of saliva production. Stimulating the secretion of saliva balances the sweetness in wine, and is also the reason white wine tastes lighter. Acidity is essential in sweet white wine, as without it the wine would be overly sweet and so lose its flavor balance.

"Sour" taste buds are situated on both sides of the tongue, and when stimulated, generate a numb feeling and increase saliva production in the cheeks. The right amount of acidity produces a comfortable sensation, but too much generates an intense irritation and sense of nausea.

Sweetness

Sweetness provides a smooth and rounded taste. In the past, people tended to favor sweet wines, but as the number of people learning about wine has gradually increased, so has their appreciation of the details and balance. If the wine is too sweet, people will think it's not delicate enough, so the right amount of acidity is needed to balance and add layers to the taste.

"Sweet" taste buds are located on the tip of the tongue, which is also the first point of contact after taking a sip. Sweetness is not difficult to perceive, but there are some factors that will confuse most people's impression of it:

1. Temperature: Wine at a low temperature will taste less sweet than wine at a normal temperature. This is because acidity is more obvious in cold wine, which lowers effect of the sweetness.

2. **Fruitiness:** Taste and smell interact with each other, so wine with a ripe fruit aroma will give the illusion of a sweet taste, making the wine seem sweeter than it really is.
3. **Acidity:** When drinking a relatively acidic wine, your perception of its sweetness will be confused and your sense of taste will become less sensitive, meaning the actual sweetness will be harder to discern.
4. **Bitterness:** Most of the bitterness in wine comes from the tannins and alcohol. As bitterness and sweet are opposing tastes, the perception of sweetness will be affected.

Alcohol

Alcohol provides wine with its strength, producing a spicy taste in the throat. Alcohol is also the main element affecting the density of the wine: the higher a wine's alcohol content, the heavier and more powerful the taste, but if it is too high it will produce an uncomfortable burning sensation in the throat.

When we hold wine in the mouth, we can feel a volatile stimulating smell in the nose; on swallowing, we can also feel a hot sensation at the bottom of the throat. These are the effects of alcohol.

Tannins

Tannins are the most important and unique element in the taste of wine and are the main source of astringency. Together, astringency, sweetness and acidity form a three-dimensional taste-space, developing a pleasant aroma over time as the wine changes.

As wine is swallowed, the tannins remain in the mouth, producing a puckering sensation and an astringent taste. The tannins feel like a dry, rough layer sticking to the roof of the mouth, lower palate and gums – similar to the way that your tongue often feels dry after drinking tea, since tea also contains tannins.

The texture of tannins can be as smooth as silk or feel like your tongue is being scraped.

Body

The body of a wine refers to its weight and quality in the mouth, and whether it tastes heavy or light. This can sometimes be very subjective. Body is determined by alcohol strength, viscosity, tannins, acidity and sweetness are all interrelated in wine. Though people may differ in their perception of a wine's body, there are generally three categories:

1. **Light Body:** Clean and fresh with a refined flavor, giving a watery kind of sensation. Not very dense and with few tannins, not sweet, slightly more acidic, and with a light taste.
2. **Medium Body:** Balanced and medium taste; doesn't feel too heavy in the mouth. It tends to be a little acidic, not too tannic, with only a slight adhering sensation in the roof of the mouth, and whilst you can taste the alcohol, it doesn't linger.
3. **Full Body:** Solid, heavy and mellow taste, making the mouth feel replete with a weighty and strong taste. Tannins can be felt all throughout the oral cavity; it has a strong fruity taste, the alcohol is conspicuous on the throat, and the liquid is relatively viscous.