

SENSORY EVALUATION FOR TASTING ROOM STAFF

PATTY HELD

Patty Held Winery Consultant
President, Hermann Wine Trail
Hermann, Missouri

patty@pattyheldconsulting.com 314-795-9770
www.pattyheldconsulting.com

How a wine product is perceived

- Image
 - Bottle shape, label shape, label design, brand name, label information
- Sensory attributes
 - Color, appearance, aroma, taste, mouth feel, aftertaste

Five Basic Tastes

- Sweet - the tip of the tongue
- Salt – the sides of the tongue near the front
- Sour – the sides of the tongue near the back
- Bitter – the back of the tongue
- Savory

The Style of the Wine

- Basic formula of what a winemaker does – bringing all the elements together to make a style of wine
- Style of Wine= Wine Structure (alcohol + sugar + acid + tannin) + Wine Character (all aromas and flavors)

Five S's of Wine Tasting

1. See/sight
2. Swirl
3. Smell
4. Sip/savor
5. Spit/swallow

See

- Look at the wine
 - What color is it? Color changes with age; whites darken, reds lighten
 - Does the wine have clarity? The wine should be bright with no foreign matter floating about. A cloudy wine could indicate a faulty wine.

Swirl

- Swirling opens up the aromas and flavors by mixing in oxygen with the wine, releasing chemical compounds known as esters and aldehydes
- Legs – As the wine hits the side of the glass then falls back down, you notice sheets of wine called “legs” which is an indication of the body of a wine. If wine sheets quickly the wine is light bodied and lower in alcohol. Slow sheeting means a fuller body and more alcohol.

Smell

- Your sense of smell can detect some 10,000 different aromas
- The first sniff triggers recognition; variety and/or defects
- Aroma – the part of the smell of a wine that comes straight from the grapes
- Bouquet – the smell that is derived from fermentation and aging

Sample Aromas of Classic Varieties

- Chardonnay – apple, melon, pear, peach, butter, toast, vanilla
- Riesling – peach, citrus, pineapple, honey, floral, Lycee
- Traminette – peach, apricot, honey, spicy, floral
- Cabernet Sauvignon – Blackberry, cassis, cedar, chocolate, leather, fig, plum and tar
- Merlot – Cherry, plum, raspberry, rose, mushroom

Taste

- Sweetness
 - Hits your tongue first; dry, off dry, semi-dry and sweet
- Acidity
 - Flat, balanced, refreshing, crisp but not tart
- Body
 - The mouth filling capacity of wine – light, medium, full (the mixture of fruit and alcohol)
- Tannin
 - Usually the very last flavor tasted and sensed in the back of the mouth and throat. It is the astringent, puckering sensation in black tea.

Swallow

- Think about what you are tasting
 - Flavor Intensity and Character (all the aromas and flavors)
 - Balanced
 - A wine is balanced if all its components; sugar, fruit, tannin, acid and alcohol are evident but one does not mask or dominate the other
 - Do the flavors linger?
 - Do you want another sip?

Wine Aroma Wheel

- Developed by Dr. Ann Noble, it is used to describe wines in specific terms
- Words are arranged in three tiers, from the most general in the center to the most specific in the outer ring
- Much of the aroma in wine comes from the starting grapes and contributes to their distinctive, varietal flavors
- Use this as a learning tool to help you learn and remember wine aromas and flavors

The Wine Aroma Wheel is a Descriptive Cue Card

- Use it as a guideline for training people to listen to their noses
- Taste blind always
- Don't let your tasters know which variety of wines you are tasting
- Taste your wines and competitors
- Taste, Taste, Taste!

Directions for Evaluating Reference Standards

- Make a list, A thru J (there is no I)
- Smell each standard (no sharing of ideas)
- Write down what you smell for each glass, even if it is silly
- Smell the water cup in between if your nose gets tired
- There are two base wine standards, just so you know what the base wine smells like
- Wait until everyone has finished

Evaluation of Wine Glasses A and B

- Swirl glass A and B with lid on, then smell
- List all the aromas you smell
- Guess varietal if you wish
- Then taste each A and B glasses and determine if the aromas you smell follow through to the palate

The Glass Makes the Difference

- The same wine is used in glass C and D
- Swirl glass C and D with the lids on
- Smell each glass and determine which glass you prefer for that wine
- Guess the varietal if you wish

Are You Using the Right Glass?

- Basic types:
 - Tasting Glasses, usually 6-8 oz, typically taller than round, bigger at the bottom and slightly closed at the top, can be used for serving ports, sweet wines and semi-sweet wines
 - White Wine glasses, for dryer more complex wines, best in the 14 to 20 oz, shape often similar to tasting glasses but larger in size
 - Red Wine glasses, have a traditional “ball” shape and normally larger capacity. The ball shape allows for maximum evaporation area, and being closed at the top, contains the aromas

Summary

- Wine tasting should be fun
- Tasting room staff should know what they are talking about but don't talk above your customers comfort level
- People differ in preferences; the best wine is the one you like
- There are no stupid questions
- It is okay to buy inexpensive wine and learn from it
- Listen to what your customers say about your wine
- Taste, taste, taste

- Thanks to Dr. Ann Noble for her fabulous Wine Aroma Wheel
- Check out her website for directions to do your own aroma tasting at www.winearomawheel.com
- Check out my Arton Product booth to “Choose the Right Glass” or www.artonproducts.com or email me at patty@pattyheldconsulting.com