



WSET
WINE & SPIRIT
EDUCATION TRUST

An introduction to wine

An accompaniment to the
WSET® Level 1 Award
in Wines



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An introduction to wine

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WSET® Level 1 Award
in Wines

A world of knowledge

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Introduction

Welcome to the WSET Level 1 Award in Wines, a one-day wine course designed for those studying wine for the first time.

The world of wine can be very daunting, so how do you know what the differences are between wines, and what information can be used to help you to identify these differences?

This course is designed to offer some simple answers to these questions. You will be introduced to the main styles of wine, principal grape varieties and other examples of wines. This will enable you to read many wine labels and know what to expect from the wine inside the bottle. You will also cover wine service as well as the theory of pairing wine and food: you will discover that some simple rules make this subject easy to understand.

We hope you enjoy the course and in the future you will reap the benefits of your enhanced knowledge – whether you are working in the industry, or simply looking to enjoy a good glass of wine.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ian Harris". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Ian Harris MBE, DipWSET
Chief Executive, Wine & Spirit Education Trust

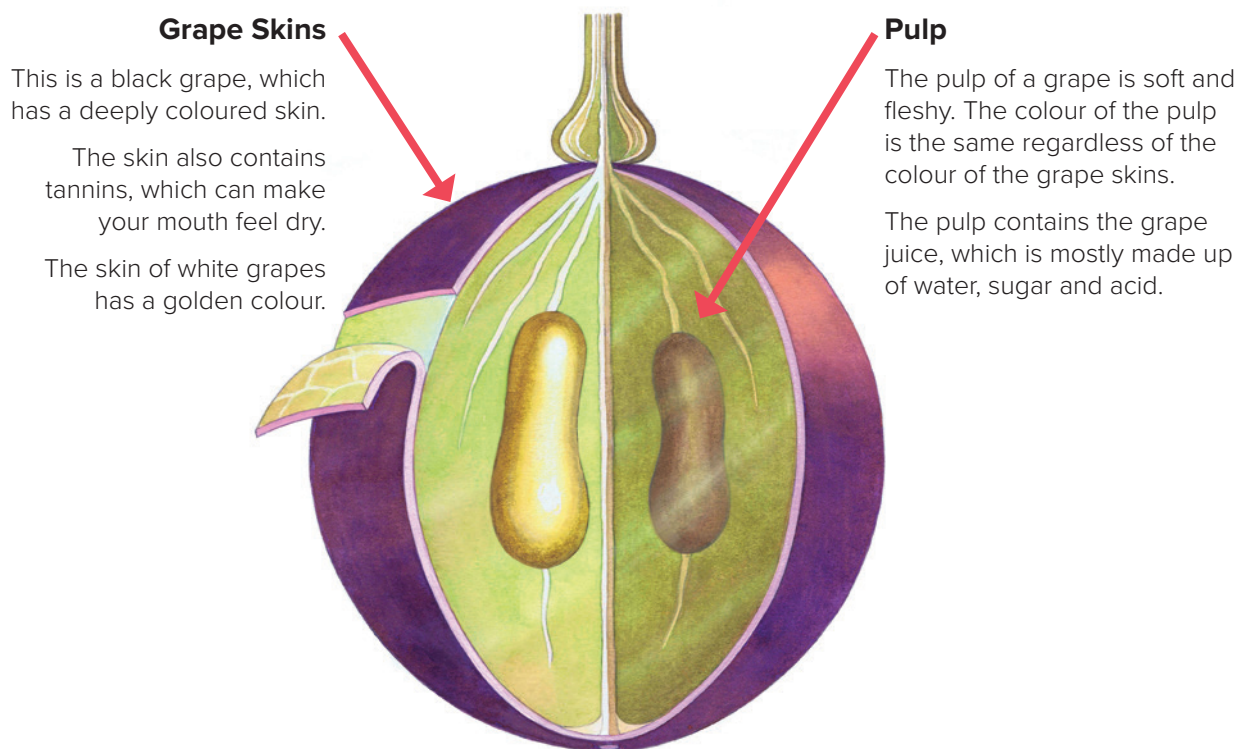


What is Wine?

Wine is fermented grape juice. The grapes are crushed to release their sweet juice. Alcoholic fermentation is needed to change the grape juice into wine.

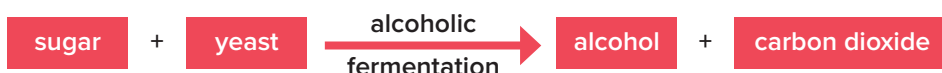
Parts of a Grape

There are two principal types of grapes: white grapes and black grapes. On the inside, these grapes look very similar. The key difference between them is that black grapes have deeply coloured skins that also contain tannins.



Alcoholic Fermentation

In order for alcoholic fermentation to take place, yeast are required. Yeast are microscopic organisms that eat sugar and convert it into alcohol and carbon dioxide gas. In most cases this process continues until the yeast have eaten all of the sugar (but see also section *Sweetness* on p. 10). The alcohol stays in the newly made wine and in most cases the carbon dioxide escapes into the atmosphere.



The level of alcohol within a wine is usually measured as 'alcohol by volume' (abv); in other words, 10% abv means that ten per cent of the liquid is alcohol.



Growing Grapes

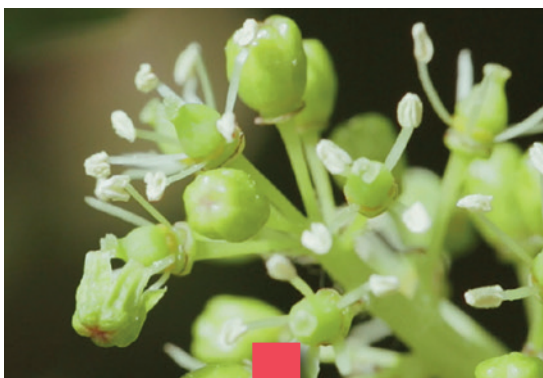
Grapes are the fruit produced by grape vines. Grape vines can live for several decades. Once they reach maturity, a couple of years after they are planted, they produce a crop of grapes every year.

How Grapes Grow

Every year, a grape vine flowers in the spring. The flowers become grapes, which then ripen during the summer. The grapes are picked in late summer.

Flowering

This image shows part of a cluster of grape vine flowers. It is made up of many individual flowers and each flower will become a grape.



Flowers Become Grapes

After flowering, each individual flower is transformed into a small grape. All grapes are hard and green at this stage.



Grapes Ripen

As grapes ripen, a number of changes occur.

- The grapes swell with water.
- Sugar levels in the grapes rise.
- Acid levels in the grapes fall.
- Flavours become riper.
- White grapes change in colour from green to golden.
- Black grapes change in colour from green to purple.



Ripe white grapes



Ripe black grapes

Where Grapes Grow

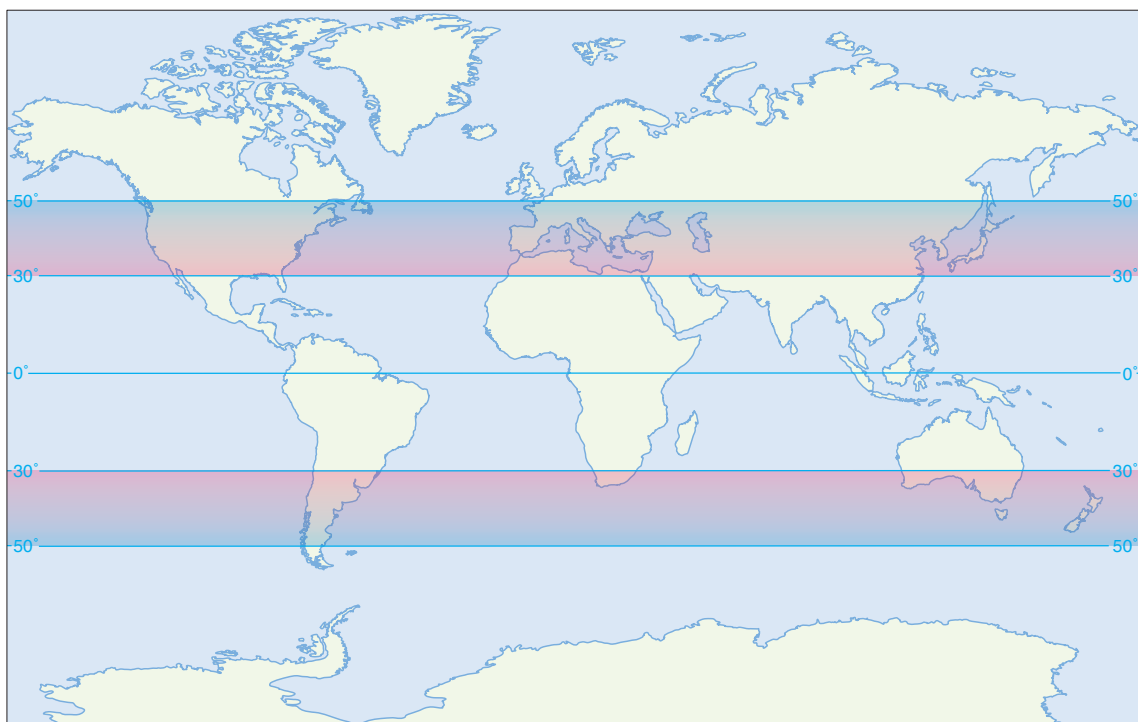
Grape vines need the right levels of sunlight and heat in order to grow and produce good quality fruit. If it is too cold or too hot they cannot do this. Grape vines grow best in areas where the winter is cold enough for them to rest.

As a result, most grape vines grow at latitudes on the globe that provide the grapes with the correct amount of sunlight, heat and water. They are shown on the map below.

North Pole

Equator

South Pole



Cool Climate Regions

Regions with cool climates are closer to the poles. Examples include Germany and northern France. The average temperatures are low and the sunlight can be weaker than in regions nearer the Equator. In some years, grapes can struggle to ripen at all. In cool climate regions it is common to grow white grapes.

Warm Climate Regions

Regions with warm climates are closer to the Equator. Examples include parts of Australia and parts of California. The average temperatures are high, the sunlight is more intense, and grapes ripen consistently. In warm climate regions it is common to grow black grapes.

Effect of Climate on the Grapes

Climate can have a defining impact on the characteristics of the grapes. Generally speaking, the colder it is, the lower the levels of sugar and the higher the levels of acidity in the grapes. At the other extreme, the warmer it is, the higher the levels of sugar and the lower the levels of acidity in the grapes. The grapes' flavours also taste riper in warmer climates.

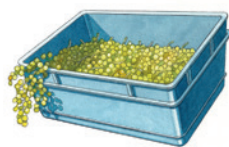


Making Wines*

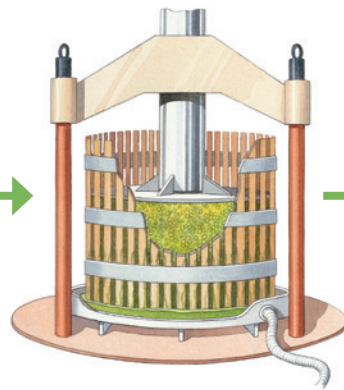
MAKING WHITE WINES

Crushing

After picking, white grapes are crushed. This releases some of the grape juice.



white grapes



Pressing

The crushed grapes are then pressed to release the remaining juice.

Fermentation

Yeast are added to the grape juice and fermentation starts. This can take place in stainless steel tanks or oak barrels.

MAKING RED AND ROSÉ WINES

Crushing

After picking, black grapes are crushed. The grape juice and the skins are put into the fermentation vessel.



black grapes**



Fermentation

Yeast are added to the mixture of grape juice and skins, and fermentation starts. Colour and tannin are extracted from the skins by mixing them thoroughly with the juice.

Draining

Red wines – Once the fermentation is finished, the newly made red wine is drained off the skins.

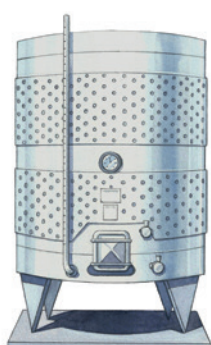
Rosé wines – After only a few hours, the juice is drained from the skins. At this point it is only pink in colour. It finishes fermentation without the skins.

* In this chapter we will be looking at how still wines are made. The production of sparkling wine and fortified wine is covered at Level 2.

** Black grapes can also be used to make white wines. Although the skins of black grapes are coloured, the juice is colourless. Therefore if the grapes are gently pressed before fermentation this can give juice suitable for white wine production.

Maturation

Once fermentation has finished, the wines can be stored in stainless steel tanks or oak barrels.



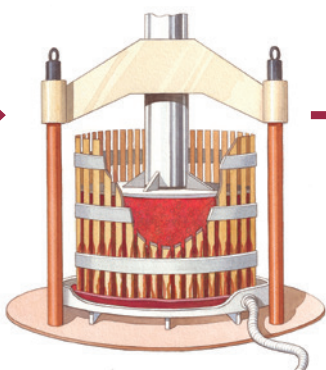
Bottling



white wine

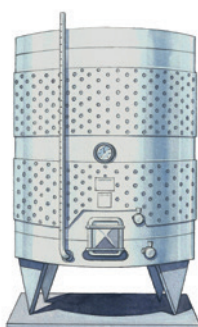
Pressing

Red wines – The grape skins are pressed to release any remaining wine.



Maturation

The wines can be stored in stainless steel tanks or oak barrels. Rosé wines are rarely stored in oak.



Bottling



red wine



rosé wine



Types and Styles of Wine

In the previous chapter, we looked at how still, dry white, red and rosé wines are made. We also indicated that there are other types and styles of wine, and in this chapter we will look at these in more detail.

Types of Wine

There are three types of wine.

Still Wines

The majority of wines fall into this category. These are what you would normally think of when someone says, 'wine'. They are still, that is not sparkling, and are between 8% and 15% abv. The majority are between 11.5% and 14% abv. Many still wines are named after the region in which they are produced. Examples include Sancerre and Burgundy from France, Rioja from Spain and Chianti from Italy. Other wines are named after the grape variety used to make them. An example is Pinot Grigio.

Sparkling Wines

These are wines that are bubbly or fizzy. The fizz is caused by carbon dioxide gas that is produced by fermentation and trapped in the wine. When the bottle is opened, the gas escapes as bubbles in the wine. The best-known example of this type of wine is Champagne from France. Other well-known examples are Cava from Spain and Prosecco from Italy. Sparkling wines are made all over the world.

Fortified Wines

These wines have had extra alcohol added to them and they therefore have higher levels of alcohol ranging from 15% to 22% abv. Examples of fortified wines include Sherry from Spain and Port from Portugal.



Styles of Wine

Any of these three types of wine can come in a variety of different styles. The style of a wine is generally a combination of its colour, structural characteristics, and aromas and flavours.

Colour

The colour of a wine can be determined by the grape variety used as well as the way the wine is made.

White – White wines are typically made using white grapes. Examples of white wines include Chablis from France and wines made from the Riesling grape.

It is possible to make a white wine from black grapes. The colour in black grapes is in the skins. Therefore, if the skins are separated from the juice before fermentation, a white wine can be made.

Red – Red wines must be made using black grapes. The coloured grape skins stay with the grape juice during fermentation, bringing colour to the wine. Examples of red wines include Rioja from Spain and wine made from the Cabernet Sauvignon grape.

Rosé – Rosé wines are made from black grapes. The grape juice is left in contact with the grape skins for a short period before the juice is drained. The juice is only lightly coloured by the skins as a result. White Zinfandel is an example of a rosé wine.



Notable Structural Characteristics

Sweetness – Sweetness is caused by the presence of sugar in the wine. Dry wines have no sugar, or very low levels. Sweet wines have high levels of sugar.

Dry – The majority of wines are dry. In order to make a dry wine, the yeast need to convert all of the sugar in the grape juice into alcohol. Examples of dry white wines include Chablis from France, and wines made from Sauvignon Blanc. Examples of dry red wines include Côtes du Rhône from France, Chianti from Italy and wines made from Cabernet Sauvignon.

Medium – Most wines that have a medium level of sweetness are either white or rosé. There are two key ways of making a wine with a medium level of sweetness.

- The yeast are removed before all of the sugar is converted into alcohol.
- Unfermented grape juice is added to a dry wine.

Examples of wines with a medium level of sweetness include some Riesling wines from Germany and White Zinfandel (rosé) from California.

Sweet – Sweet wines have so much sugar in them that they can feel thick and syrupy. There are two key ways of making a sweet wine.

- The grapes are so high in sugar the yeast stop fermenting before they eat all of the sugar.
- In the case of fortified wines, the yeast are killed by the addition of high-strength distilled alcohol before they have eaten all of the sugar.

Examples of sweet wines include Sauternes from France and some Riesling wines from Germany. Sweet fortified wines include Port and some Sherries.



Acidity – Acidity in wine comes directly from the grape juice. It is important because it gives wines a refreshing characteristic. It is easy to recognise acidity because it makes your mouth water. Too much acidity can make a wine taste unpleasantly acidic. If there is too little acidity, a wine loses its refreshing characteristic.

Examples of wines with high acidity include Chablis, Chianti and wines made from the grape varieties Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon or Pinot Noir.

Acid is very important in sweet wines. It balances out the sweetness, stopping a wine from being unpleasantly sweet.

Tannin – Tannin is a characteristic of red wines that comes from the skins of the grapes. The level of tannin in a wine depends on the grape variety that is used and how the wine is made.

Tannins can taste bitter, but mostly they are a structural characteristic of a wine that you feel rather than taste. Tannins cause your mouth to feel dry.

Examples of red wines with high tannin levels include red Bordeaux from France, and Chianti from Italy. Examples of red wines with low tannin levels are Beaujolais from France and some wines made from Pinot Noir.

Alcohol – The majority of still and sparkling wines have a level of alcohol that is between 11.5% and 14% abv. However, some wines can reach as high as 15% abv. Others can be as low as 8% abv.

An example of a wine with a high level of alcohol is Châteauneuf-du-Pape from France. An example of a wine with a low level of alcohol is White Zinfandel from California.

Body – Body is a term that is widely used to describe the overall feel of a wine in your mouth. There are many factors that contribute towards this effect and so it is easiest to ask yourself how mouth-filling the wine is. Full-bodied wines feel viscous and mouth-filling. Light-bodied wines feel more delicate.

Examples of light-bodied wines include Pinot Grigio from Italy, and Beaujolais. Examples of medium-bodied wines include Sancerre and Côtes du Rhône. Examples of full-bodied wines include Cabernet Sauvignon from California, and Sauternes.

Aromas and Flavours in Wine

The aromas and flavours of wines can come from a variety of sources. Some come from the grapes themselves; others develop during winemaking and maturation. Describing the aromas and flavours of wine can be difficult at first, but it is a skill that comes with practice.

Fruit – The vast majority of wines will have aromas and flavours of fruit. The type of fruit will depend on the grape variety, for example, wines made from the grape variety Cabernet Sauvignon have blackcurrant aromas. It will also be influenced by the ripeness of the grapes. For example, Chardonnay grown in a cool climate shows aromas and flavours of green fruits (apple) and citrus fruits (lemon). Chardonnay grapes grown in a warm climate show stone fruits (peach) and tropical fruits (pineapple).

Oak – Wine can be fermented and/or matured in oak barrels. Sometimes this will be stated on the label. Oak gives wine flavours such as cedar, cloves, coconut, smoke and vanilla.

Other – The variety of aromas and flavours that can be found in different wines is part of what makes them so interesting. These 'other' aromas and flavours can include grass, flowers, herbs, vegetables, earth, mushroom and leather.



Principal Grape Varieties

The grape variety or blend of grape varieties used to make a wine is a key factor influencing the style and quality of wine that is produced. There are hundreds of grape varieties that can be used to make wine, but only a small number of these have established a global reputation.

In this course, we will introduce the following principal white and black grape varieties.

White Varieties

- Chardonnay
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Pinot Grigio
- Riesling

Black Varieties

- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Merlot
- Pinot Noir
- Syrah/Shiraz

Chardonnay

Chardonnay is one of the most popular and widely planted grape varieties. It is capable of producing dry wines in a variety of different styles. In cool climates, Chardonnay wines are high in acidity, light- to medium-bodied and have green fruit (apple) and citrus (lemon) aromas. In warm climates, Chardonnay wines have medium acidity, and a medium to full body, with stone fruit (peach) and tropical fruit (pineapple, banana) flavours.

Chardonnay is the grape used for the white wines of Burgundy in France. The wines are medium-bodied with high acidity and aromas of citrus (lemon) and stone fruits (peach). They may also have vanilla notes from maturation in oak. The wines from Chablis come from the coolest part of Burgundy and have high acidity and a light to medium body with flavours of green fruits (apple) and citrus (lemon). These wines are typically unoaked. Other places well known for producing Chardonnay wines include Australia and California.

Chardonnay can also be used in the making of Champagne, where it is often blended with Pinot Noir.

Flavours



apple



lemon



peach



pineapple

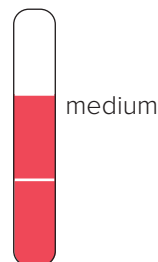
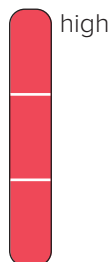


vanilla (oak)

Acidity

cool
climate

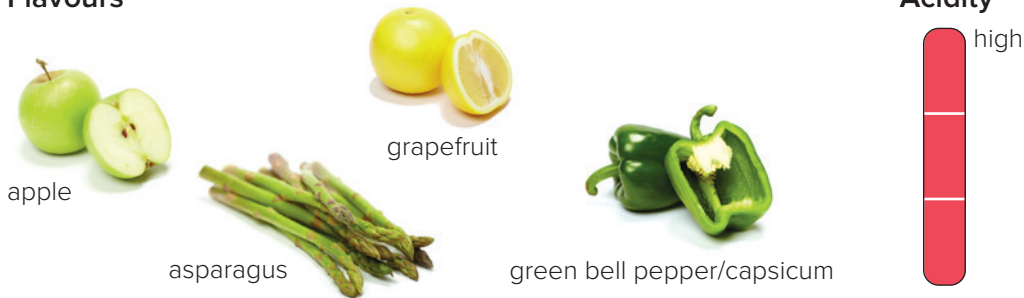
warm/hot
climate



Sauvignon Blanc

Sauvignon Blanc produces dry wines that have a pronounced intensity of aromas and refreshingly high acidity. Sauvignon Blanc wines are light- to medium-bodied with aromas that range from green fruit (apple) to citrus (grapefruit) to tropical (passion fruit). They also tend to have herbaceous notes (asparagus, green bell pepper/capsicum, grass). They are often fermented in stainless steel tanks and are usually not matured in oak, to retain their characteristic Sauvignon Blanc aromas. New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc and Sancerre from France are popular wines made from this variety.

Flavours



Pinot Grigio

Pinot Grigio is a very popular grape variety that produces wines with medium to high acidity, a light body and simple flavours of pear and lemon. Pinot Grigio wines are typically dry. They are usually fermented in stainless steel tanks and not matured in oak, to retain fruity flavours. Pinot Grigio is mainly associated with Italy but is also grown in other countries.

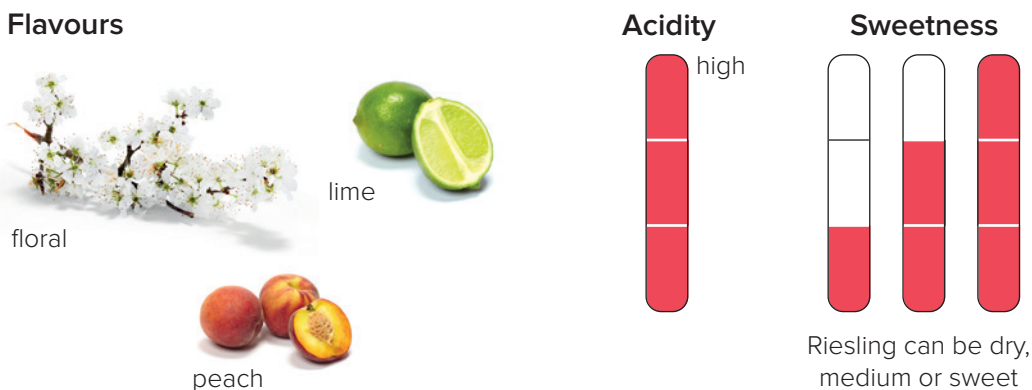
Flavours



Riesling

Riesling produces wines that range from dry through to sweet, but all have high levels of acidity. The high acidity helps to balance any sweetness. The wines have pronounced aromas that can range from floral and green fruits (apple) to citrus (lime, lemon) to stone fruits (peach, apricot). Riesling wines can be light- to medium-bodied. They are often fermented in stainless steel tanks and not matured in oak. Riesling is the classic grape of Germany where it is produced in a range of dry to sweet styles. Alsace in France, and Australia produce Riesling wines in a dry style.

Flavours



Cabernet Sauvignon

Cabernet Sauvignon is widely planted around the world, and produces dry wines with high levels of tannins and acidity. They can range between medium- and full-bodied, and have aromas and flavours of black fruits (blackcurrant, black cherry) and herbaceous notes (green bell pepper/capsicum, mint). The wines are often matured in oak, which adds flavours of cedar and vanilla. Due to its high levels of tannins, Cabernet Sauvignon is often blended with other grape varieties, such as Merlot in Bordeaux, which adds softness and body to the blend. It is also grown widely in California, Australia, Chile and South Africa. In Australia, it is sometimes blended with Shiraz, which adds aromas of spice.

Flavours



blackcurrant



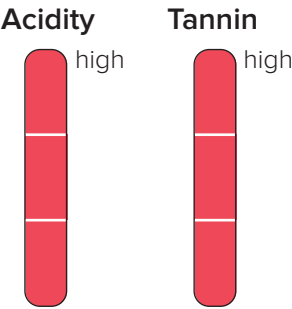
green bell pepper/capsicum



mint



vanilla (oak)



Merlot

Merlot makes wines that are generally dry and medium- to full-bodied with medium acidity and tannins. Merlot wines can have flavours ranging from red fruits (strawberry, red plum) to black fruits (blackberry, black plum). They are often matured in oak, giving aromas of vanilla. Merlot is widely grown in a number of places, such as Chile and California to produce soft, fruity wines. It is also commonly blended with Cabernet Sauvignon, which adds tannin and acidity to the blend. Bordeaux is the most famous region for Merlot-Cabernet Sauvignon blends, but this blend is now common in many other places.

Flavours



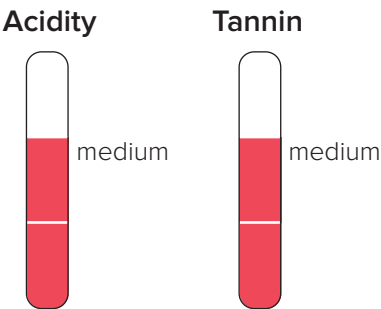
red plum



blackberry



vanilla (oak)



Pinot Noir

Wines made from Pinot Noir tend to be dry and light- to medium-bodied, with low to medium tannin levels and high acidity. They have flavours of red fruit (strawberry, red cherry, raspberry) and are often matured in oak, which can give vanilla and smoke aromas. Pinot Noir is the grape used for red Burgundy and it is the principal black grape in New Zealand. When producing red wines Pinot Noir is not usually blended with any other grape varieties. Pinot Noir can also be used in the making of Champagne, where it is often blended with Chardonnay.

Flavours



strawberry



red cherry



vanilla (oak)

Acidity



Tannin



Pinot Noir
can have low
or medium
tannins

Syrah/Shiraz

This grape variety is known as Syrah in France and Shiraz in Australia. It produces dry wines that are medium- to full-bodied, with medium to high tannins and medium acidity. Typical flavours are of black fruits (blackberry, black cherry), with spice (black pepper, liquorice). Many are matured in oak to give flavours of vanilla or coconut to the wine.

The Northern Rhône in France can produce wines that are medium-bodied with fresh black fruit (blackberry) and black pepper aromas. In comparison, warm regions in Australia can produce full-bodied Shiraz wines with jammy black fruit (black cherry) and liquorice flavours.

Flavours



blackberry

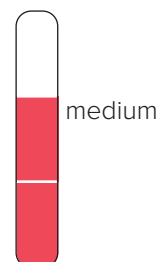


black pepper



vanilla (oak)

Acidity



Tannin



Syrah/Shiraz
can have
medium or
high tannins



Examples of Wines

Examples of Wines Made from the Principal Grape Varieties

In Europe, many wines are named after the region they are produced in. Famous examples of wines made from the principal grape varieties include:

Champagne – This is a French sparkling wine made from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. It is typically dry and has a high acidity with aromas of green fruits (apple) and citrus (lemon) and notes of toasted bread.

Sancerre – This is a dry, medium-bodied French white wine. It is typically unoaked with high acidity and pronounced green fruit (apple) and herbaceous (grass) aromas. It is made from Sauvignon Blanc.

Chablis – This is a dry, light- to medium-bodied French white wine. It is unoaked with high acidity, green fruit (apple) and citrus (lemon) aromas. It is made from Chardonnay.

Burgundy – These wines come from the Burgundy/Bourgogne area of France. They can either be white or red. The white wines are made from Chardonnay and can be oaked or un-oaked. They are dry, medium-bodied, and often show riper fruit flavours than Chablis, such as citrus (lemon) and stone fruits (peach). The red wines are made from Pinot Noir and are dry. They tend to have low to medium tannins and be light- to medium-bodied with high acidity. They have flavours of red fruits (raspberry, red cherry) and sometimes vanilla and smoke from oak. The French word for Burgundy, 'Bourgogne', is sometimes used on wine labels of both white and red wines from Burgundy.

Bordeaux – These wines come from the Bordeaux region in France. They are most often red, with high acidity and tannins. These red wines are dry and medium- to full-bodied with aromas of black fruits (blackberry, blackcurrant) and cedar notes from oak. They are typically a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.



Other Examples of Wines

The following list includes a number of other wines that are not made using the principal grape varieties.

Prosecco – This is a light-bodied, sparkling white wine from Italy, with green fruit (pear) and floral aromas. It can be either dry or medium in sweetness.

Cava – This is a dry, sparkling wine from Spain. It has flavours of green fruit (apple) and citrus (lemon).

White Zinfandel – This is a rosé wine from California. It is unoaked and has low alcohol, a medium level of sweetness and flavours of red fruits (strawberry and raspberry).

Beaujolais – This is a dry, light-bodied red wine from France that is unoaked, with fresh flavours of red fruits (raspberry, red cherry) and low tannins.

Côtes du Rhône – This is a dry, medium-bodied red wine from France, with red fruit (strawberry, red plum) and white pepper flavours. It can be oaked or unoaked.

Chianti – This is a dry, medium-bodied Italian red wine with high tannin and acidity. It has red fruit flavours (red cherry, red plum), dried herb notes and, sometimes, aromas of cloves from oak.

Rioja – This is a dry, medium- to full-bodied red wine from Spain that typically has red fruit (strawberry) and vanilla flavours from oak.

Châteauneuf-du-Pape – This is a dry, full-bodied, high-alcohol red wine from France showing red fruit (strawberry) and clove flavours from oak.

Sauternes – This is a sweet white wine made in Bordeaux. It is full-bodied with flavours of stone fruits (apricot), vanilla (from oak) and honey, and a balancing high acidity.

Sherry – Sherry is a fortified white wine from Spain. It is made in a range of styles and can be dry, medium or sweet.

Port – This is a fortified wine from Portugal. Sweet and high in alcohol, it is made in a range of styles. It is typically red, full-bodied, with high tannins and black fruit (blackberry) flavours.



Wine List Exercise

WINE LIST

White Wines

La Cresta Pinot Grigio, Veneto, Italy

A light-bodied wine with a light intensity of citrus flavours

Pebble Brook Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand

A fruity wine with high levels of acidity

Ali D'Angelo Pinot Grigio, Trentino, Italy

Fresh apple and pear flavours with refreshing high levels of acidity

Cave de Montbellet, Mâcon Villages, Burgundy, France

Lemon and peach flavours with vanilla notes

Domaine Walbach Riesling, Alsace, France

A dry Riesling with lemon, peach and honeysuckle aromas

Domaine Pruvost, Chablis, Burgundy, France

Intense lemon and green apple flavours with refreshing high levels of acidity

Emu Rock Riesling, Clare Valley, Australia

A dry Riesling with aromas of fresh lime juice and blossom

Domaine Picard-Colin, Sancerre, Loire Valley, France

A wine with notes of citrus fruits and grass on the nose and palate

Dr. Schröder, Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Kabinett, Mosel, Germany

Intense fruit flavours of peach and citrus with a medium sweetness balanced by high acidity

Ocean Breeze Chardonnay, Santa Barbara County, California, USA

A full-bodied wine with a ripe tropical fruit and vanilla character

Sunny Sky Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand

A fresh, fruity and beautifully made Sauvignon Blanc

Château Saint-Andelain, Sancerre, Loire Valley, France

Fresh green fruits and herbaceous notes with refreshing high acidity

Jean-Pierre Babineaux, Puligny-Montrachet, Burgundy, France

From a top producer, this wine has intense flavours of fruit and spice, which last on the palate

WINE LIST

Red Wines

La Vid Merlot, Central Valley, Chile

Smooth and easy drinking with black plum and blackberry fruit flavours

Domaine Colbert, Beaujolais, France

A low tannin red wine with strawberry and raspberry character

Carlos Crespo, Rioja Crianza, Rioja, Spain

Strawberry fruit is accompanied by notes of vanilla

El Pionero Cabernet Sauvignon, Colchagua Valley, Chile

A Cabernet Sauvignon with ripe blackcurrant fruit

Maison Sauveterre, Côtes du Rhône, Rhône, France

Intense flavours of strawberry and red plum with white pepper spice

Jolly Jumbuck Barossa Valley Shiraz, Barossa, Australia

A full-bodied red wine with intense black cherry fruit and liquorice flavours

Mountain Peak Pinot Noir, Central Otago, New Zealand

Aromas of strawberry, red cherry and vanilla with a raspberry finish

Villa Castellina, Chianti Classico, Tuscany, Italy

A medium-bodied wine with notes of ripe red cherry and cloves

Chemin des Garrigues, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône, France

A full-bodied wine with strawberry fruit and spice

The Red Bench Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California, USA

A full-bodied wine with intense blackcurrant and cedar flavours

Domaine Traver, Volnay Vieilles Vignes, Burgundy, France

Red cherry and strawberry fruit with notes of oak and spice

Château Hébert, Premier Grand Cru Classé Saint-Émilion, Bordeaux, France

A Merlot-dominant blend with blackberry fruit and cedar notes



Storage and Service of Wine

There are a lot of traditions associated with the storage and the service of wine. However, regardless of their history and local importance, they should all be designed to ensure the wine is served in the best possible condition.

Storing Wine

If a wine is stored incorrectly it can affect the quality of the wine. Initially, wines can start to lose some of their character and ultimately it can result in the wine developing faults.

The three points detailed below should be followed when storing wine.

- For long-term storage, wines should be kept at a cool and constant temperature. Extremes of cold and heat as well as significant changes in temperature can damage a wine.
- Keep wines away from strong sunshine and bright artificial light. The light as well as the heat they both generate can cause a wine to lose its fruity character.
- If a wine is sealed with a cork then it should be stored on its side. This ensures that the cork remains in contact with the wine and stays moist. If the cork dries out it can let air into the bottle, which will make the wine lose its fruity character. Wines sealed with a screwcap can be stored standing up.



Service Temperature

Typically, white, rosé and sparkling wines are served chilled. Red wines are typically served either at room temperature or lightly chilled. Recommended service conditions are given below but they should not be used to override personal preference. If someone prefers to drink a wine at a different temperature, then as a host you should respect their preferences.

White, Rosé and Sparkling Wines

Style of Wine	Example of Style of Wine	Recommended Service Temperature
Sweet wines	Sauternes	Well chilled 6–8°C (43–45°F)
Sparkling wines	Champagne	Well chilled 6–10°C (43–50°F)
Light-, medium-bodied white and rosé	Pinot Grigio	Chilled 7–10°C (45–50°F)
Full-bodied white	Oaked Chardonnay	Lightly chilled 10–13°C (50–55°F)

In order to keep the wine chilled until the bottle is finished, some people use an insulated container. Others use an ice bucket. If you use an ice bucket, remember to fill it with cold water as well as ice. If the bucket is only filled with ice it will not work as efficiently.

Red Wines

Style of Wine	Example of Style of Wine	Recommended Service Temperature
Medium-, full-bodied red	Shiraz	Room temperature 15–18°C (59–64°F)
Light-bodied red	Beaujolais	Lightly chilled 13°C (55°F)

Do not be tempted to heat a wine, for example by placing it close to a radiator, in order to raise the temperature. This can damage the flavours of the wine. Place it in the room where it will be served and allow the temperature to rise naturally.

Note that with modern air conditioning and central heating, room temperatures can vary significantly. As such, the temperature range offers the best guidance.

Glassware

There are hundreds of different designs of glasses but one thing that all of the best glasses have in common is that the bowl of the glass narrows at the rim. This allows the aromas in the wine to be concentrated inside the glass and better appreciated.

Typically, red wine glasses are slightly larger than white wine glasses and sparkling wines are served in flutes.

Preparing Wine Glasses

Wine glasses must be completely clean before they are used. Dirt, or a residue of detergent, can spoil a wine.

Glasses should always be polished before use to ensure that any lingering dirt or finger marks are removed.



Opening a Bottle of Still Wine

This only applies to bottles sealed with a cork.



Remove the top of the capsule. This can be done with a capsule remover or a waiter's friend corkscrew. Then clean the neck of the bottle with a cloth.



Centre the corkscrew in the middle of the cork. Screw it into the cork and draw the cork out gently.



Once you have removed the cork, wipe round the inside and outside of the neck with a cloth.

Opening a Bottle of Sparkling Wine

There is a lot of pressure in a bottle of sparkling wine. Chilling helps to reduce this pressure, but even when the wine is chilled the cork can easily fly out of the bottle and injure someone. From the moment you release the wire cage, you should have the cork in your hand at all times.



Remove the foil and loosen the wire cage. As soon as the wire cage has been loosened, you must keep the cork covered with your hand until it is safely out of the bottle.



Hold the bottle at an angle. Hold the cork in one hand and the base of the bottle in the other. Holding the cork, turn the bottle.



Hold the cork firmly so that the pressure in the bottle does not force the cork out too quickly. Controlling the cork in this way means that the pressure can be released with a quiet 'phut' without any loss of wine.

Serving Wine

When serving wine, you should take the following steps to ensure that the wine looks and tastes its best.

- Check the appearance of the wine. Any haziness could indicate that the wine is faulty.
- Check there are no bits floating in the wine.
- Check the aroma of the wine for any faults. The wine should not smell stale or have aromas of wet cardboard or vinegar.

Keeping a Wine Fresh

Once a bottle of wine has been opened it will slowly start to become stale as it reacts with the air. Keeping a wine in the fridge with the cork in can help to keep the wine fresher for longer. If you need to keep the wine fresher for even longer, there are some simple systems that you can use to extend the life of a wine by keeping it away from the air.

Vacuum Systems

These systems rely on a pump to remove the air from inside the bottle.

Blanket Systems

These systems pump a gas into the bottle which pushes the air out of the bottle. The gas will not harm the wine.



An Introduction to Tasting

In order to get the most out of tasting a wine you need to take a consistent approach with every sample. If you take this approach you will be able to write tasting notes that accurately describe a wine, which you can refer back to in the future.

The WSET Level 1 Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine® will help you to do this, and your educator will show you how to use it.

WSET Level 1 Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine®

APPEARANCE	
Colour	white – red – rosé
NOSE	
Aroma characteristics	e.g. aromas of fruit, oak, other
PALATE	
Notable structural characteristics	sweetness, acidity, tannin, alcohol, body
Flavour characteristics	e.g. flavours of fruit, oak, other

Preparing for a Tasting

Before you start tasting, you should make sure that

- there are no distracting smells
- you have a white surface to help you assess the appearance of the wine
- you have a glass that has a wide bowl that narrows towards the top. This type of glass helps to concentrate the aromas, making it easier to assess the nose
- you have a clean palate that has no lingering flavours such as toothpaste or coffee

Alcohol and Health

When consumed in moderation, alcohol is not regarded as being harmful to your health. However, alcohol can significantly affect the behaviour of anyone who consumes too much (often in very socially unacceptable and dangerous ways). For some people, it can be highly addictive and, when consumed to excess, it can have a negative impact on both short- and long-term health.

Official guidelines are issued by many governments and public health bodies to recommend levels of alcohol consumption that are considered to be 'low risk'. These vary from country to country and can be found on local governmental or public health websites.

Tasting Notes

Wine Name:	
Appearance	
Nose	
Palate	

Wine Name:	
Appearance	
Nose	
Palate	

Wine Name:	
Appearance	
Nose	
Palate	

Wine Name:	
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Wine Name:	
Appearance	
Nose	
Palate	



Pairing Wine and Food

Wine can be a marvellous partner with food. This is often presented as a complex subject but, in reality, it can be simple if you think about personal preference and common interactions between food and wine.

Personal Preference

When recommending a wine to a customer or a friend, the most important thing you should consider is what that person likes or dislikes. You may find a particular food and wine pairing to be exceptional. However, if someone asking for advice does not like that style of wine, then there is no point recommending it to them.

Food and Wine Interactions

For most people, most wines will be an acceptable accompaniment with most foods. However, there are a number of food characteristics that will typically have a positive or a negative effect on a wine.

If you are able to understand these interactions then you will never be limited to recommending a particular wine with a particular dish. So long as you know what most people would typically want to avoid, then your options for food and wine pairing become almost limitless.

Food is...	Wine seems...
Sweet	more drying and bitter, more acidic less sweet and fruity
Umami	more drying and bitter, more acidic less sweet and fruity
Salty	less drying and bitter, less acidic more fruity, more body
Acidic	less drying and bitter, less acidic more sweet and fruity
Highly flavoured	overwhelmed by the food flavours
Fatty/oily	less acidic
Hot (chilli)	to increase the heat from the chilli, alcohol in the wine seems more noticeable

Note: Bitterness in wine can come from tannins or oak.

Food and Wine Interactions

In this exercise, your educator will use food samples and the wines that you have tasted today in order to demonstrate food and wine interaction.

In the grid below, fill in the names of the wines and record your impressions of how the wines changed when you tried them with different food types.

	Salt	Acid	Umami
Wine 1:			
Wine 2:			
Wine 3:			
Wine 4:			
Wine 5:			
Wine 6:			

Food and Wine Pairing Exercise

In this exercise, your educator will ask you to make a wine recommendation for a number of dishes.

Sparkling Wines

Champagne 12.5% abv
This dry sparkling wine has flavours of apple and lemon and high acidity

Prosecco 12% abv
A light-bodied sparkling wine with a medium level of sweetness and pear aromas

White Wines

France
Sancerre 12.5% abv
Classic Sauvignon Blanc, dry, medium-bodied with refreshing acidity and citrus flavours

Riesling, Alsace 13.5% abv
Dry with a citrus and floral character and high acidity

Meursault, Burgundy 13.5% abv
A dry, full-bodied Chardonnay with notes of citrus, peach and oak

Sauternes 13.5% abv
Sweet, full-bodied wine with apricot, honey and vanilla

Germany
Riesling 9% abv
Medium sweet, with a light body and refreshing acidity

Italy
Pinot Grigio 12% abv
Light-bodied, fruity and dry with delicate pear notes and high acidity

Australia
Chardonnay 14% abv
Dry, full-bodied with tropical fruit flavours and vanilla oak

New Zealand
Sauvignon Blanc 13% abv
Dry with refreshing high acidity and grapefruit, lemon and grass aromas

In the grid below, fill in the names of the dishes and your recommendations, using the wine list on these two pages

Dish	Main Food Consideration	Main Wine Consideration

Rosé Wine

USA

White Zinfandel 10.5% abv

Medium sweet with fresh strawberry and raspberry fruit flavours

Red Wines

Australia

Shiraz 15% abv

Dry, full-bodied, medium acidity with ripe black cherry fruit and vanilla notes

Chile

Merlot 13.5% abv

Dry, medium-bodied, with intense flavours of black plum

France

Châteauneuf-du-Pape 14.5% abv

Dry and full-bodied with strawberry and clove flavours

Margaux, Bordeaux 13.5% abv

Dry, medium-bodied with high tannins and concentrated blackcurrant and cedar aromas

Beaujolais 12.5% abv

Dry with low tannin and raspberry and red cherry fruit flavours

South Africa

Cabernet Sauvignon 14.5% abv

Dry and full-bodied with high tannins and lots of ripe blackcurrant fruit

Spain

Rioja 13.5% abv

Dry, medium-bodied with medium tannins, strawberry fruit and a vanilla finish

Fortified Wine

Portugal

Port 20% abv

Sweet, full-bodied with intense blackberry fruit and high tannins

Chosen Wine	Reason for Choice

Notes

[illegible]

[illegible]



WSET
WINE & SPIRIT
EDUCATION TRUST

About WSET

The Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) is the world's leading provider of wine, spirits and sake qualifications. Our courses are designed to inspire and empower anyone looking to develop their drinks knowledge. With four progressive levels of study offered through an extensive network of course providers in more than 70 countries and translated into multiple languages, WSET qualifications are globally recognised as the international standard in wine, spirits and sake knowledge.

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