

WSET® Systematic Approach to Tasting Sparkling Wine

CHECKLIST: EXAMPLES OF TASTING TERMS

APPEARANCE		
Clarity		bright – clear – dull – hazy – (<i>faulty?</i>)
Intensity		water-white – pale – medium (-) – medium – medium (+) – deep – opaque
Colour	white rosé red	colourless – lemon-green – lemon – gold – amber – brown pink – salmon – orange – onion-skin purple – ruby – garnet – tawny – brown
Mousse	bubble size persistence	small – medium – large short – medium – long
NOSE		
Condition		clean – unclean (<i>fault: oxidised – out of condition – cork taint – other</i>)
Intensity		light – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – pronounced
Development		youthful – developing – fully developed – tired/past its best deliberate oxidation?
Aroma characteristics		autolytic – fruit – floral – spice – vegetal – other
PALATE		
Sweetness		dry – off-dry – medium-dry – medium – medium-sweet – sweet – luscious
Acidity		low – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – high
Texture	Mousse Tannins (Reds)	delicate – creamy – aggressive low – medium – high
Alcohol level		low – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – high
Body		light – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – full
Flavour intensity		light – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – pronounced
Flavour characteristics		autolytic – fruit – floral – spice – vegetal – other
Length		short – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – long
CONCLUSIONS		
Quality		faulty – poor – acceptable – good – very good – outstanding
Reasons for quality		eg balance, concentration, complexity, length
Origins/variety /theme		eg - location (country, region) eg - grape variety/varieties eg - production methods/climatic influences etc
Price		(approximate retail price):
Age (in years)		(age in years):
Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing		Needs time to develop (<i>how long?</i>) – ready to drink, but can develop further (<i>how long?</i>) – ready to drink, but can keep (<i>how long?</i>) – at peak/drink soon – tired/past its best

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AROMA AND FLAVOUR CHARACTERISTICS

Floral / Fruit	Floral	acacia, honeysuckle, chamomile, elderflower, geranium, blossom
	Perfume	rose, violet, iris, neroli, honey, soap
	Green Fruit	apple (green/ripe?), gooseberry, pear, custard apple, quince, grapey, amylic
	Citrus Fruit	grapefruit, lemon, lime, citrus peel (orange, lemon)
	Stone Fruit	peach, apricot (fresh/dried?), nectarine
	Tropical Fruit	banana, lychee, mango, melon, passion fruit, pineapple
	Red Fruit	redcurrant, cranberry, raspberry, strawberry, red cherry, plum (fresh/baked?)
	Black Fruit	blackcurrant, blackberry, bramble, blueberry, black cherry
	Dried Fruit	fig, prune, raisin, sultana, kirsch, jamminess, cooked, baked, stewed
Spice / Vegetal	Unripeness	capsicum, grass, white pepper, leafiness, tomato, potato
	Herbaceous	grass, asparagus, blackcurrant leaf, pyrazine
	Herbal	eucalyptus, mint, medicinal, lavender, fennel, dill
	Cooked	cabbage, tinned vegetables (asparagus, artichoke, pea etc), black olive
	Sweet Spice	cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, vanilla
	Pungent	black pepper, liquorice, juniper
Other	Autolytic	yeast, biscuit, bread, toast, lees
	Dairy	butter, cheese, cream, yoghurt
	Mineral	earth, petrol, kerosene, rubber, tar, smoke, stony/steely, wet wool
	Oak	vanilla, butterscotch, toast, cedar, charred wood, smoke, acrid, resinous
	Kernal	almond, marzipan, coconut, hazelnut, walnut, chocolate, coffee
	Maturity	vegetal, mushroom, hay, wet leaves, forest floor, tobacco, gamey, savoury
Faults	Anisoles	mustiness, wet cardboard, TCA
	Brettanomyces	animal, leather, meaty, sticking plaster, vinyl, farmyard
	Oxidation	caramel, toffee, staleness, sherry aromas, aldehydes
	Volatile Acidity	vinegar, solvents, nail varnish remover, 'lifted'
	Reduction	mercaptans, cabbage, eggs, sweat, rubber, onion, garlic, blocked drains
	Other	beetroot/earth (geosmin), rot, mould

TEXTURE AND BALANCE

Component Balance	Sweetness	austere, drying unctuous, cloying, sticky
	Acid	tart, green, sour, acidic, lively, refreshing, zesty flabby, thick, heavy
	Tannin	thick, dense, rough, sinewy, robust, harsh, bitter, hard, dried-out well-integrated, supple, rounded, resolved
	Alcohol	delicate, light, thin warm, generous, hot, heady, spirity, burning
	Fruit	austere, severe, hollow, meagre, neutral well-defined, soft, juicy, fruit-driven, forward, generous
	Texture	Tannin 'grain'
Viscosity		watery, thin, fluid, supple creamy, fleshy, mouthcoating, oily, rich, soupy, thick
Carbon Dioxide		petillant, effervescent, prickly, bubbly delicate mousse, creamy mousse, aggressive bubbles, frothy
Overall Impression	Ripeness	green, stemmy, cool-climate, refreshing over-ripe, baked, cooked, jammy, hot-climate, warming
	Freshness	vivid, well-defined, expressive evolved, tertiary, fading, dull, tired
	Harmony	well-structured, elegant, well-delineated, mellow, harmonious shapeless, angular, clumsy, disjointed