

WSET Level 3 Systematic Approach to Tasting Spirits®

APPEARANCE

Clarity		clear – hazy (faulty?)
Intensity		water-white – pale – medium – deep – opaque
Colour		colourless – lemon – gold – amber – brown pink – red – orange – yellow – green – blue – purple – brown – black
Other observations	louching other	slightly hazy – cloudy and opaque particles

NOSE

Condition		clean – unclean (faulty?)
Aroma intensity		neutral – light – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – pronounced
Aroma characteristics		e.g. raw materials, processing, oak and maturation

PALATE

Sweetness		dry – off-dry – medium – sweet
Flavour intensity		neutral – light – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – pronounced
Texture/other		e.g. rough, smooth, watery, mouthfilling, warming e.g. bitterness
Flavour characteristics		e.g. raw materials, processing, oak and maturation
Finish	length nature	short – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – long neutral – simple – some complexity – very complex

CONCLUSIONS

ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY

Building an argument		e.g. balance, length and intensity, complexity, expressiveness
Quality level		faulty – poor – acceptable – good – very good – outstanding

Notes to students:

For lines where the entries are separated by a hyphen – You must select one and only one of these options.

For lines starting with 'e.g.' where the entries are separated with commas – These are entries that you should consider when writing your tasting note. You may not need to comment on each entry for every spirit.



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SAT Level 3 Spirits-Lexicon: *supporting the WSET Level 3 Systematic Approach to Tasting Spirits*

DESCRIBING AROMA AND FLAVOUR

RAW MATERIALS

Corn	butterscotch, sweetcorn, corn bread, popcorn, caramel, burnt sugar, toffee, menthol
Malted barley	husk, porridge, barley, malt, flour, oatmeal
Rye	rye bread, gingerbread, peppercorn, allspice
Grape	grape, fig, prune, raisin, sultana, citrus elderflower, orange blossom, rose, violet, perfume, lavender, lilac, dried flowers
Agave	agave, peppercorn, root vegetable, olive, capsicum, herbaceous
Sugar cane	grass, herbaceous, caramel, burnt sugar, toffee, treacle, molasses
Fruits	apple, pear, apricot, peach, plum, cherry, marzipan strawberry, raspberry, blackcurrant, blackberry orange, lemon
Botanicals	juniper, citrus peel, root, earthy, cumin, peppercorn aniseed, fennel, liquorice cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, cardamom coriander, basil, rosemary, thyme, sage, lemongrass, mint

PROCESSING (raw material, fermentation, distillation)

Smoke	peat, medicinal, smoked fish, smoky, seaweed, iodine smoke, char, charred vegetables
Esters	banana, apple, pear, floral, pineapple, melon, mango, pear drops, nail varnish
Heads	pungent solvent (prickling sensation on the nose), vinegar
Tails	plastic, cheese, feet, burnt rubber

OAK AND MATURATION

Oak	vanilla, toasted bread, coffee, cedar, char, spice, sherry, sawdust, coconut, coffee, nuts
Age/rancio	fruit cake, candied fruits, leather, tobacco, wet leaves, mushroom, forest floor, meaty, gravy, yeast extract, wood polish

TEXTURE/OTHER

Does the spirit feel:	rough, harsh, sharp? smooth, silky?	mouthfilling, full, oily? watery, thin?	warming?
Other	bitterness, astringency		

Notes to students:

The WSET Level 3 Spirits-Lexicon is designed to be a prompt and a guide which you do not need to memorise. You can pass the tasting examination if you use the descriptors in the Spirits-Lexicon but you do not need to limit yourself to these terms and the examiners will accept other descriptors so long as they are accurate.