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(If you don't know who these three guys are, you're not cool)

127 GREAT THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER AT HOME AND ON THE ROAD

PLUS

HIDDEN TREASURE BEHIND THE SCENES ON STORAGE WARS AND PAWN STARS

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Wine Tasting 101

IF NEW WORLD REDS AND OFF-DRY WHITES HAVE YOU BAFFLED, IT'S TIME TO SHARPEN YOUR WINE SMARTS WITH AN EASY LESSON IN TERMINOLOGY AND TASTING. *By Patrick Barlett*

With warm weather, longer days, and vineyards vibrant with fast growing grapes, it's time to get out there and taste wine. If you've been out tasting lately, you've probably been mesmerized with the many options and have probably heard many phrases and descriptors about wine that you're not totally familiar with. Often it's easier to just nod and keep going than ask questions for clarification. Following is a guide to wine terms and wine tasting. This has been pre-

pared to help maximize your wine tasting experience. Here's to happy and knowledgeable wine tasting.

White Wines

Steel, tank, or stainless fermentation: This means the wine has never been in the traditional oak wine barrel. Most white wines are made this way; these wines usually have descriptions like "clean," "crisp," "mineral" and "bright."

Oaked or barrel fermentation: This means the wine has spent some time aging in oak barrels. Most wines made this way will often use descriptors like "creamy," "spicy," "buttery" and say they offer a "soft mouth feel." The most com-

mon white wines that are at times aged in oak are Chardonnay (mostly California styles), Viognier, and Sauvignon Blanc, often referred to as Fume Blanc when oak is present.

Off-Dry: This means the wine has some sugar remaining. The term commonly used to refer to sugar in wine is "residual sugar" (RS), basically meaning sugar still left in the wine after fermentation is completed. You will often hear the phrase "2 percent RS." This refers to the percentage of sugar to volume left in the wine.

Dry: This means the wine is completely void of any residual sugar. Sometimes the fruit expres-

sion in the wine tricks your nose, but once you taste, it becomes obvious. These wines are lean and crisp, with bright acids.

Malo-lactic Fermentation: This is almost always used in red wines but rarely in white except three major white wines: Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Viognier. When this process is used, it simply means the wine is encouraged to start up a second fermentation after the initial fermentation is complete. This second fermentation doesn't increase alcohol levels but converts the sharper (malo) acids into softer (lactic) acids. You may hear people say, "What is the percentage of ML in this wine?"

Basically, this refers to the amount of aging time it was allowed to undergo in this stage of fermentation. This method is mostly used when white wines have been aged in oak, but there are exceptions.

Red Wines

New World: This term refers to both red and white wines but is more commonly a factor in reds. This simply means the wine is probably more fruit-focused. Often New World wines are single-variety wines, not blends of several different grapes. The New World style was developed with the idea of drinking wine as a stand-alone experience, unlike the old traditions of only drinking wines with food. The hope was to encourage wine drinking as an experience beyond the dinner table. New World wine styles generally come from the USA, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and South America. However, Europe is starting to make more and more New World-style wines to appeal to the New World palate.

Old World: Basically, the concept of the traditional/historic wines from Europe. With these wines, the varietal isn't as important as where the wine comes from and how it evolved with the cuisine in that region. Most Old World style wines are blends rather than single varietals, and have strong rules protecting how they are made, what kinds of grapes can be used, and how long they are aged before release. They are geared for drinking with food. They are often not as enjoyable for stand-alone quaffing like the more "fruit-forward" New World wines. Old World wines are generally from France, Italy, Spain, Germany and other European countries. Like the Europeans making New World-style wines, the New World wine regions are making more and more Old World-style wines to meet the demands of the food and wine pairing consumer.

Tannin: Tannins are the compounds in wine that cause your mouth to feel puckery and dry when tasting. Tannins come from grape seeds, skins, and stems as well as from the oak barrels, especially newer oak. They are important for red wines because they provide flavor, structure, texture and antioxidants needed for aging. When tannic wines are young, they are considered tight and unbalanced. But as they age, the tannins soften and allow the wine to develop more depth in character. If you have a particularly tannic wine, eating foods with extra fat will help coat your palate and tame the tannins, thus allowing the fruit and earth components of the wine to take center stage.

Oak: Unless the red wine you're tasting is a nouveau style wine or a rosé, it will have been aged for some period of time in oak barrels. Oak is an important flavoring and aging factor in red wine. Oak is one of the major spices in a winemaker's wine pantry. Things a winemaker con-

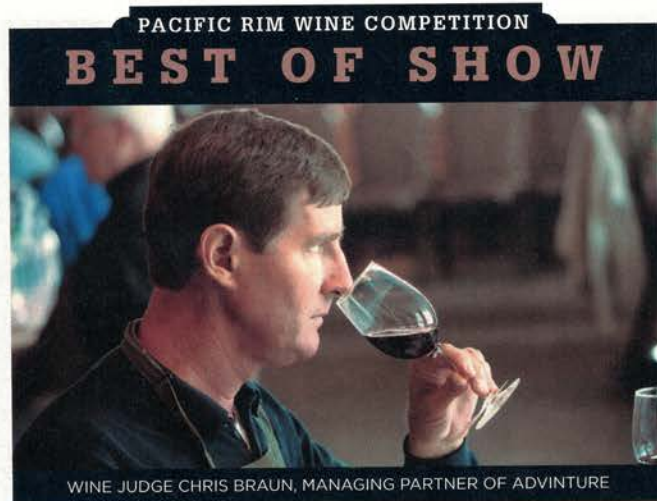
siders are American oak, French oak, and, to a lesser degree, Hungarian oak. All three styles have different flavor enhancers that a winemaker can work with. Toast also factors in. The barrel maker burns (toasts) the inside of a barrel. The level of toast (light, medium, dark) determines how much flavor comes from the toasting.

Oak loses most of its flavor after three to four years. Most wines will say how long they've been aged in new oak and then subsequent time in older oak. Oak contributes tannins and imparts many of the earthy flavors that balance the fruit in wines. Smoke, vanilla, toast, spice, leather, coffee and cocoa are all flavors that are enhanced by the oak.

Miscellaneous Wine Styles:

Rosé Wines: Red wines that are left on their skins for a shorter period of time, thus deterring them from

"NEW WORLD MEANS THE WINE IS PROBABLY MORE FRUIT-FOCUSED."



WINE JUDGE CHRIS BRAUN, MANAGING PARTNER OF ADVINTURE

PHOTO: JIM DORSEY

PACIFIC RIM WINE COMPETITION

BEST OF SHOW

BRIAR ROSE WINERY

Silver: 2008 Estate Zinfandel, Temecula Valley, \$75

Silver: 2011 Estate Riesling, Temecula Valley, \$25

CALLAWAY VINEYARD & WINERY

Silver: 2009 Mouvredre, Special Selection, Temecula, \$28

Silver: 2011 Sangiovese Rose, Special Selection, Temecula, \$18

Bronze: 2009 Syrah, Winemaker's Reserve, Temecula, \$38

Bronze: 2009 Chardonnay, Winemaker's Reserve, Temecula, \$28

Bronze: 2010 Sauvignon Blanc, Special Selection, Temecula, \$18

CARTER ESTATE

Silver: 2009 Touriga, Penrose, South Coast, \$30

FALKNER WINERY

Silver: 2008 Meritage, Special Select, Temecula Valley, \$39.95

Silver: 2010 Sauvignon Blanc, Estate, Temecula Valley, \$18.95

Bronze: 2008 Super Tuscan, Amante Special Select, Temecula Valley, \$39.95

Bronze: 2008 Syrah, Rock Creek Vineyard, \$34.95

GALLEANO WINERY

Gold/Best of Class:

Zinfandel, NVPioneer's Legendary, Rancho Cucamonga, \$17.50

Gold/Best of Class: NV Angelica, Cucamonga Valley

HART WINERY

Gold: 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon, Limited Release, Volcanic Ridge Vineyard, \$40

Silver: 2007 Cabernet Franc, Estate Grown, Limited Release, Temecula, \$24

KEYWAYS VINEYARD & WINERY

Gold: 2010 Riesling, California, \$25

Silver: 2008 Dolcetto, California, \$28

Silver: 2011 Muscat, California, \$22

Silver: NV Dessert Roussanne, Late Harvest, Temecula Valley, \$38

Bronze: 2008 Chabono, California, \$31

Bronze: 2010 Cuvee Du Nord, Temecula Valley, \$35

MAURICE CARRIE VINEYARD & WINERY

Gold: 2010 Sauvignon Blanc, Temecula Valley, \$14.95

Silver: 2011 White Cabernet, Sara Bella, Temecula Valley, \$12.95

RANCHO DE PHILO

Gold/Best of Class:

NV Triple Cream Sherry, Cucamonga Valley, \$36.95

SOUTH COAST WINERY

Gold: NV Brut, Temecula Valley, \$18

Gold: NV Asti Spumante Diamonte, California, \$18

Gold: NV Pinot Grigio, Temecula Valley, \$18

Silver: 2008 Blanc de Blanc, Temecula Valley, \$28

Silver: NV Extra Dry Sparkling, Temecula Valley, \$18

Silver: 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon, Wild Horse Peak, South Coast, \$28

Silver: NV Big Red Blend, South Coast, \$14

Silver: 2009 Chardonnay, Wild Horse Peak, South Coast, \$22

Silver: 2011 Sauvignon Blanc, Temecula Valley, \$14

Silver: 2009 Riesling, Late Harvest, Temecula Valley, \$18

Silver: NV Romanza, South Coast, \$18

Silver: NV Black Jack Port, South Coast, \$20

Bronze: NV Gewurztraminer, Temecula, \$18

VAN ROEKEL VINEYARD & WINERY

Silver: 2010 Viognier, Temecula Valley, \$18.95

Bronze: 2010 Gewurztraminer, Temecula Valley, \$14.95

getting dark red. They can be dry or sweet. They generally aren't aged in oak and are considered to be fruity and lively.

Late Harvest Wines: Wines that are left hanging on the vines until the sugar levels are high enough to retain considerable levels of residual sugar after fermentation is completed. These wines are very sweet and generally enjoyed as aperitif or dessert wines.

Ice Wines: Wines that are left on the vines so long they are still hanging during the first freeze of winter. Only continental climates where freezing and snow occurs can produce these wines. Freezing the grapes allows the moisture in the fruit to be dispelled, leaving concentrated amounts of sugar in the fruit.

Port Style Wines: These are wines that include distilled spirits in the winemaking. They are considered fortified. There are two types: tawny and ruby. Tawny is the more time-consuming style blended with several vintages, and ruby is the quicker, less sophisticated version.

Sherry Style Wines: These are wines that are aged in warm conditions rather than cool conditions like most other wines. This allows the wines to take on a more oxidized flavor profile (generally nutty). They are also blended together with several different vintages in one bottle

(fractional blending). They can be light and extremely dry up to dark and extremely sweet.

Sparkling Wines: Wines that have effervescence as a result of CO₂ in the bottles. They can only be called Champagne if they come from Champagne, France. Even in France, if they aren't from Champagne, they are called Cremant. In other countries they are called Cava (Spain), Prosecco and Asti (Italy), and Sekt (Germany).

Methodo Champenoise: The sparkling wine method where the wine goes into a second fermentation in the bottle. Because the bottles are capped, the fermentation gasses can't escape, thus capturing and retaining the bubbles.

Charmant: The sparkling wine method where CO₂ is pumped into the still wine just before bottling rather than letting the CO₂ occur naturally in the bottle.

Miscellaneous Terms Worth Knowing:

Appellation: A designated growing region governed by local regulations, including farming and winemaking practices, types of grapes allowed, and styles of wine produced.

Clone: A grape hybrid usually developed to capture certain desirable flavor profiles and/or suitability to the region the grapes are grown in.

Cuvée: The word is a French derivative of the word *cuve*, which means "vat," denoting the contents in a vat. It has become known as the word for blend. It can be a blend of different grapes and/or vintages depending on the wine.

Estate: The name of the vineyard the grapes came from—usually implies quality since the winery presumably controls the grapes more closely than grapes farmed by others.

Legs: Helps the wine taster determine levels of alcohol or sugar, not quality of the wine. The more pronounced the legs, the higher the level of alcohol or the viscosity of the sugar.

Reserve: Implies quality but can be misleading because anyone can use the term.

Terroir: French word for soil. It refers to the earthy flavor components in wines. Terroir is often used to describe the vineyard soil composition, orientation to the sun, rain run-off, soil drainage and other factors that influence how the grapes grow. For most Old World winemakers, terroir is as important as the quality of the harvested fruit.

Vintage: The year the grapes were harvested. The term can also be used to express a particularly good year for wine. For instance, the '97 Napa Cabernets are considered to be one of the best vintages in Napa's history—96 out of 100 points.

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