

A to Z Glossary of Wine Terms

A

ABV (Alcohol by Volume) - A measure of the alcohol concentration of a wine, usually expressed as a percentage.

Acidic - A tart, sour, or fresh feeling in the mouth when you taste the wine.

Aeration - Adding oxygen to the wine to soften tannins.

Aggressive - Wine tasting term describing a wine that is either too tannic, too acidic, or a combination of both.

Alcohol - Ethanol; in wine it is produced via fermentation with yeast and sugar.

Alcoholic - Wine tasting term indicating high alcohol. A wine with a noticeably high alcohol content; perceived as a hotness in the wine.

Angular - Wine tasting term used to describe young wines that display predominately sharp, bitter, or tart flavor characteristics.

AOC (Appellation d'origine contrôlée) - A term in the French wine designation system which means "controlled designation of origin." It identifies the location or region where a wine is made.

Appearance - In general, the term appearance is used to describe the clarity of a wine.

Appellation - A designated wine growing area governed by specific rules regarding the wine grapes grown and wine produced in the specific appellation areas.

Aroma - A wine's scent characteristics; very closely tied in with the flavors.

Aromatic - Varieties of grapes that have especially noticeable aromas. Some aromatic grapes include Viognier, Torrontés, Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Muscat, and Pinot Gris.

Aromatized - A wine that is infused with botanicals. Vermouth is an aromatized wine.

Assemblage - A method of blending wine before bottling.

Astringent - A wine tasting term meaning the wine leaves the mouth feeling overwhelmingly dry. Wines that are highly astringent have a high level of tannins, acids, or a combination of both.

Austere - Wine tasting term describing a wine with crisp but harsh flavor characteristics. Austere wines are generally young wines with high acids, tannins, or both.

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Awkward - Wine tasting term describing an unbalanced wine. This lack of balance may be between fruit and acids, acids and tannins, or all of the above.

B

Backbone - A description that is synonymous with full-bodied and refers to wines that are well balanced.

Backward - Wine tasting term indicating a wine strong in alcohol content and high in tannins.

Balanced - Wine tasting term indicating a wine that is not too acidic, astringent, tannic, or fruity.

Barnyard - Aromas such as dried hay and manure in wine. Can indicate the presence of Brettanomyces.

Barrel - A wooden cask used for fermenting and aging wine.

Barrel tasting - Tasting wines directly out of the barrel before they've been bottled.

Barrique - Oak barrel used for aging and fermenting wine.

Big - Wine tasting term used to describe wine that is full-bodied and well-rounded in flavors.

Biodynamic - Farming and winemaking practices that include certain growing techniques and making wines without intervention such as adding yeast.

Bitter - Bitter flavors are considered a flaw in wines.

Blend - Wine made from more than one type of wine and/or grape.

Blind tasting - Tasting wines without knowing what they are.

Blunt - Wine tasting term describing strong alcoholic tastes and an absence of bouquet.

Blush wine - A pink or rosy wine. See also rosé.

Body - The weight and texture of a wine on the palate. It is most commonly used in terms of full, light, or medium bodied.

Bone dry - A measure of sweetness, bone dry wines have no residual sugar. They may also be highly tannic or have high acidity.

Bordeaux blend - A wine made from Bordeaux grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Malbec, but made outside of the Bordeaux region.

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Botrytis - Also called noble rot, botrytis cinerea is a fungus that affects wine grapes adding complex and tropical flavor profiles to the finished wines. See also noble rot.

Bottle age - How long a wine has spent maturing in the bottle.

Bouquet - The scents and aromas of wine. Some commonly used bouquet descriptions are grassy, vegetal, earthy, and floral.

Brawny - Wine tasting term describing young red wines with harsh tannins and high alcohol content.

Breathing - When wine is decanted, allowing it to react with air.

Brettanomyces - A wine fault; a type of yeast that can add flavors of barnyard or funk to wine.

Briary - Wine tasting term describing wines that are strong in alcohol content and high in tannins.

Bright - Wine tasting term describing wines that are light bodied with plenty of acidity.

Briny - Wine tasting term; another term for salty. Some wines, such as Albariño, have salty flavors.

Brooding - Wine tasting term meaning robust and very complex.

Brix (°Bx) - Sugar levels in wine grapes.

Brut - A term used in sparkling wine to indicate the wine is very dry.



Buttery - Wine tasting term usually reserved for white wines, especially Chardonnay. Buttery flavors often come from malolactic fermentation in the winemaking process. The term is used to describe a white wine with hints of flavors and/or aromas of melted butter and toasted oak.

Butyric acid - A wine fault that results in smells of rancid dairy.

C

Carbonic maceration - Winemaking technique where grapes are fermented in the presence of carbon dioxide.

Chaptalization - Winemaking technique in which sugar is added to a wine during fermentation to increase the final alcohol content.

Charmant - A method for making sparkling wines in which secondary fermentation is done in a stainless steel tank; also called the "tank method."

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Chewy - Wine tasting term describing wines that are intense in flavor characteristics, bold, and full-bodied.

Claret - British term to describe red Bordeaux wines.

Clarity - How clear a wine is. Held up to the light it should be clear and not cloudy. Cloudiness can be a result of improper filtering or decanting and can lend an unpleasant taste or texture to the wine.

Classified growth - In Left Bank Bordeaux regions, wines are organized in a hierarchy from the highest quality to the lowest. There are five levels of classified growth - First Growth through Fifth Growth. See also *cru classé*.

Clean - Wine tasting term describing wine that is fresh tasting and void of any off-tastes or odd aromas. Alternatively, it might refer to a wine that is unspoiled or one made without pesticides, sulfites, and fining agents.

Closed - Wine tasting term describing young wines that could use additional aging, as aging helps to develop a wine's character. This term is used to describe wines that are lacking in aroma, color and body. Typical in a closed wine, the tannins are so powerful that all other flavors "hide" behind them; age will soften the tannins and the wines will open.

Cloudy - A clouded appearance, often from sediment or found in an unfiltered wine. In some cases, cloudiness can also be a sign of a tainted wine.

Cloying - A negative description generally given for sweet wines that are not balanced in acid structure, residual sugars, and tannins.

Coarse - Wines described as coarse have decent weight and texture (body) but are lacking everywhere else.

Color - The color of the wine; red, white, blush or rosé, orange, tawny, etc.

Complex - Wine tasting term describing wines that display many different, perfectly balanced flavor characteristics and aromas.

Cooked - A wine that has been exposed to high heat or extreme temperature fluctuations; cooked wines have off flavors and taste of stewed fruit.

Cork taint - A condition in which a cork infected with fungus taints the wine; wines with cork taint often smell musty or like wet dog. See also TCA.

Corked - Term describing a wine with cork taint; a wine fault.

Coupage - A method of blending wine before bottling.

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Creamy - Wine tasting term describing wines with a silky and smooth mouth feel.

Crianza - A term used on Spanish wine labels. Crianza indicates the wine has spent at least one year in oak barrels.

Cru - The French word for 'growth'. See also classified growth.

Cru classé - French term for classified growth.

Crush - Breaking the skins and lightly crushing wine grapes to begin maceration. Also, the name for the grape harvest.

Current release - All the wines the winery is currently selling from the most recent available vintages.

Cuvée - Wine blend. This term is most frequently used in Champagne and sparkling wine.

D

Decant - Pouring the wine from the bottle to another vessel such as a decanter to remove sediment and aerate the wine.

Delicate - Wine tasting term describing mild wines or wines with very light flavors and aromas.

Demi-sec - Medium dry.

Dense - Wine tasting term describing wines that display concentrated flavor characteristics and aromas.

Depth - The intensity of a wine's color.

Dessert wine - A sweet wine with high residual sugar; it is consumed during or after dessert.

Dirty - Tasting term describing a wine with muddled flavors; a wine fault.

DO (Denominación de Origen) - Classification used in Spanish wine.

DOC (Denominazione di Origine Controllata) - Quality assurance labeling designation used in Italian wine.

DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita) - The highest quality labeling designation for Italian wine.

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DOP (*Denominación de Origen Protegida*) - Protected denomination of origin; a protected geographical status in Spanish wine.

Dry - Not sweet.



E

Earthy - Wine tasting term used to describe both the bouquet and flavor of the wine. It refers to a rich-soil scent or flavor. Earthy flavors and aromas are often imparted to the wine by the terroir in which the grapes are grown.

Eiswein - Wine made with grapes harvested while frozen; the result is a sweet, concentrated wine. See also ice wine.

Elegant - Wine tasting term describing a refined and delicate wine; balanced and mature.

En Primeur - The French term for "futures." In the Bordeaux region, consumers can purchase "futures" of wines that are still in the barrel and have not yet been bottled. Consumers typically receive the wines after bottling, approximately 18 months later. See also futures.

Enology - The study of wines. See also oenology.

Estate wine - Wines made from grapes grown on the estate where the winemaking facility is located.

F

Fading - Wine tasting term describing a wine that is losing color and flavor. The term is used to describe wines that are considered past their prime.

Fat - Wine tasting term describing wines that are well-balanced and complex with a relatively low acid content. The term fat is generally a positive description.

Fermentation - When yeast converts sugars to alcohol.

Filtration - In winemaking, passing wine through a filter or series of filters to remove particles and polish a wine before bottling.

Fining - A winemaking process where a substance is added to the wine to clarify or soften it before bottling. Common fining substances include egg whites and gelatin.

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Finish - Often described as long, lingering, or crisp, the finish of a wine refers to how long the flavors of the wine linger on the tongue and in the mouth after it is swallowed.

Flabby - Wine tasting term that describes wine lacking in acidity and structure, causing the flavors to taste heavy and flat.

Flagship wine - The winery's premier wine.

Flat - Wine tasting term used to describe a wine that is boring and dull, lacking in flavor and aroma characteristics. It can also refer to a sparkling wine that has lost its bubbles.

Fleshy - Wine tasting term used to describe wines that display smooth and rich flavor characteristics with a velvety mouth feel.

Flight - Also called a "tasting flight", this is the group of wines that will be poured during the tasting. Many wineries offer different flight tastings. For example, they may offer tastings of several of their current releases, they may offer an estate wine or premium wines flight, or they may have tastings of library wines, which are aged wines from the winery's best releases in the past.

Flinty - Wine tasting term describing wines that are generally high in acidity with a slight stony or mineral taste.

Floral - Floral wines have flavors and aromas reminiscent of fresh or dried flowers.

Fortified - A wine that has a neutral distilled spirit added. Port, Sherry, and Vermouth are all fortified wines.

Forward - Wine tasting term describing wines that display their flavor characteristics at the first sip and often do not leave any lingering flavors.

Foudre - A large wooden vat used in winemaking; much larger than a barrel or barrique.

Foxy - A musky, animal scent or flavor; a wine fault.

Fresh - Wine tasting term describing a light wine with refreshing characteristics; usually a dry and acidic wine with bright, clean flavors.

Fruity - Wine tasting term describing a wine with aromas of fresh fruit (other than grapes), such as blackberries or dark cherries.

Futures - In Bordeaux, consumers can purchase "futures" of wines that are still in the barrel and have not yet been bottled. Buyers receive the wines after bottling, approximately 18 months later. See also en primeur.

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G

Grand cru - French term meaning wine of top quality.

Grand cru classé - Classified growth of top quality; this is a definition used in Burgundy.

Gran cru - Premium classification for Spanish sparkling wine, Cava.

Gran reserva - Spanish wine label term indicating the wine was aged at least five years and a minimum of two years in oak.

Grassy - Wine tasting term describing herbal or green flavors, such as those found in Sauvignon Blanc.

Green - Wine tasting term. Green wines are high in acidity and generally have unbalanced flavors. This term is usually reserved for white wines.

H

Harsh - Wine tasting term describing wines with high alcohol content and astringent flavors. Harsh wines are often aged in order for the wine to mellow.

Hearty - Wine tasting term indicating full-bodied and flavorful wines; often used to describe big reds.

Heavy - Wine tasting term describing a wine that is too high in tannins. Heavy wines are considered to be unbalanced.

Hectare - Metric unit of measure equaling 2.471 acres.

Herbaceous/herbal - Wine tasting term describing wines with flavors and aromas of fresh herbs. This term is generally used as a positive descriptive quality in a wine's flavor and aromas.

Hollow - Wine tasting term describing wines that lack overall body and flavor characteristics. Hollow wines often have good flavor characteristics in the beginning and a decent finish, but lack in flavor characteristics in between the first sip and the finish.

Hot - Wine tasting term describing the alcohol burn or warm feeling you get in your mouth and throat when drinking wine high in alcohol content

Horizontal - A flight of the same type of wines from the same vintage but different winemakers.

Hue - Hue describes the actual color of the wine and will be dependent on the type. Wine comes in all sorts of colors from deep purplish red to golden or silvery.

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Hybrid - Grapes that are a cross of two or more species.

Hydrogen sulfide - A wine fault that can result in aromas of sulfur or rotten eggs.

I-J

Ice wine - Wine made from grapes that are frozen, which concentrates flavors and sugars. See also eiswein.

Jammy - Tasting term used to describe red wines that display flavor characteristics of juices and stewed fruits similar to berry jam.

Jeroboam - Large format wine bottle that holds four standard sized (750 mL) bottles of wine or 3.0 liters for sparkling wine or 6 standard sized bottles or 4.5 liters for non-sparkling wine.

L

Lactic acid bacteria - A wine fault that results of wine that smells of sauerkraut.

Late harvest - Wines made from grapes that are picked at the end of the wine growing season. Waiting until the end of the season allows the grapes to ripen further, resulting in a higher sugar content. The most common example of late harvest wines are dessert wines.

Lean - Tasting term describing a wine lacking in fruit flavor characteristics.

Lees - The seeds, stems, and skins of the grape.

Legs - A wine's legs describes the viscosity; how much it clings to the glass.

Left Bank - The Bordeaux region is divided into two areas on the left and right bank of the Gironde Estuary. Left Bank Bordeaux appellations include Margaux, Pauillac, St. Julien, St. Estephe, Pessac-Léognan, and Haut-Médoc.

Length - Wine connoisseurs use the term length to describe how long the flavors of the wine stay in their mouths after it has been swallowed. The longer the length, the better the wine. Length is sometimes used in conjunction with finish.

Light bodied - Tasting term. Wines described as light bodied often lack in flavor and texture and are sometimes considered a little watery tasting. They may also be light in mouthfeel.

Lush - Tasting term used to describe wines that are rich and velvety.

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M

Maceration - The part of the winemaking process in which the lees are steeped and interact with the wine must. This process extracts tannins, phenol compounds, and fruit flavors.

Magnum - A large format bottle that contains 1.5 liters of wine, or two regular (750 mL) sized bottles.

Malolactic fermentation - The process in winemaking of converting malic acid to lactic acid. The result is a softer, buttery wine.

Masculine - Tasting term synonymous with muscular; describes red wines that are big, full-bodied, complex, and well-rounded.

Meaty - Tasting term describing wine that contains hearty, meat-like flavors.

Medicinal - Tasting term describing wines that have aromatic and flavor overtones of chemicals usually found in liquor such as single malt scotch.

Medium bodied - Wines described as medium-bodied have a medium mouthfeel.

Mercaptan - Rotten egg, skunk, or rubber aromas arising from volatile sulfur compounds; a wine fault.

Meritage - A term California winemakers use to describe a Bordeaux blend.

Metallic - Tasting term describing flint or steel characteristics in some wines.

Méthode champenoise - Also called the traditional method, it's how Champagne is made using secondary bottle fermentation. Many sparkling wines are made using the traditional method.

Microclimate - Small variations in climate throughout a region.

Moelleux - Tasting term used to describe white wines that have silky, soft, and mellow flavor characteristics. Also a type of French sparkling wine.

Mouthfeel - How wine feels on the palate.

Must - Freshly crushed grape juice containing the pulp, seeds, skins, and sometimes stems of the grapes.

Musty - Smelling like a dank basement or wet dog; often associated with cork taint; a wine fault.

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N

Négociant - French wine merchant who purchases product such as must, fruit, or wines, from growers and bottles them as wines under his own brand.

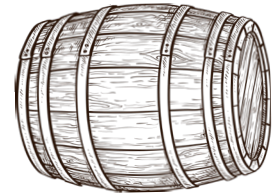
New World - A term often used to refer to wines not produced in Europe.

Noble rot - See botrytis.

Nutty - Flavors of toasted nuts in the wine. Often, older, oxidized wines develop slightly nutty flavors.

NV/non-vintage - Wine made from grapes harvested from a combination of years and/or a combination of vineyards.

O



Oak - Many wines are aged in oak, either in oak barrels or barriques.

Oaky - Tasting term describing wine with flavor notes of oak, often from being aged in oak barrels. Oak notes often incorporate vanilla and sweet spices or a toasty flavor.

Oenology - The study of wine and wine making. See also enology.

Off - A wine with flavors or aromas that demonstrate the wine is flawed, damaged, or tainted.

Off-dry - Containing a trace of sweetness.

Old World - European wines made from vineyards that were established many years ago.

Orange wine - White wine grapes processed in the same manner as red wine grapes where the juice is left in contact with the skin and seeds for a time. The resulting wine has an orange tint.

Oxidation - Wine that has spoiled or gone bad due to exposure to air.

Oxidized - Brownish in color with washed out or overly alcoholic flavors; usually from a wine that has been improperly stored and aged or one that is past its prime; a wine fault.

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P-Q

Palate cleanser - A neutrally flavored food, usually bread or crackers, used between tastes of wine to remove the flavors from your palate.

Peppery - Tasting term used to describe wines that have nuanced spiced flavors. Shiraz often presents peppery flavor characteristics.

Perfumed - Fragrant; often containing aromatic grape varieties.

Pour - A noun describing the small amount of wine poured into a glass for tasting. A typical tasting pour is two to three ounces.

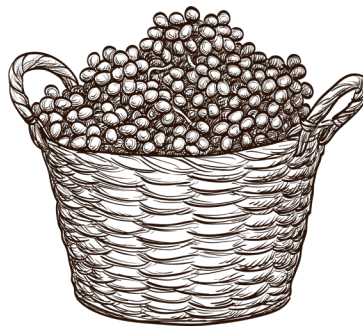
Premier cru - Translated as "first growth," Premier Cru wines are one of the highest classed growth wine in France, second only to Premier Grand Cru.

Premier grand cru - "First great growth", these wines are the highest classed growth wines in France.

Press - Extracting juice from solids.

Pruney - Tasting of dried prunes.

Quaffable - Drinkable but not special.



R

Racy - Tasting term used to describe wine that is high in acid content. It is generally used to describe young white wines.

Raisiny - Tasting of raisins.

Rating - A critic's score for a wine, usually on a 100-point scale, such as a Wine Spectator rating. May also be called a score.

Red wine - Wine with a light to deep red color made from black-skinned grapes.

Reserve - Often indicates a winery's best quality wines.

Residual sugar - The amount of sugar left in wine after the fermentation process. Measured in grams per liter (g/l).

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Rhône blend - A wine blend made with grapes commonly found in wines from France's Rhône region, including Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre, and Viognier.

Rich - Tasting term meaning sweet but not cloying.

Right Bank - See also Left Bank. In Bordeaux, regions are either on the left or right bank of the Gironde Estuary. Right Bank regions include Pomerol and Saint-Émilion.

Robust - Tasting term describing wine that is similar to a big and full-bodied wine, but with stronger flavors and aromas. Robust is a positive descriptive term.

Rosé - See also blush wine. Wine made from red wine grapes or a blend of red and white wines that has a pink tint to it.

Rustic - A wine that is unrefined and hearty.

S

Saignée method - a method of making rosé wines in which wine is bled from the must of a red wine to concentrate the red wine further. The juice bled off is used to make the rosé.

Savory - Tasting term describing a wine that is not fruity or sweet.

Seated tasting - Some wineries offer special seated tastings. At a seated tasting, you'll sit comfortably while servers pour the wines for you and someone from the winery describes their characteristics.

Sec - Dry, not sweet.

Secondary fermentation - A second period of fermentation.

Sediment - Solid material that sinks to the bottom of a bottle of wine; often seen in aged wines.

Short - Tasting term describing a wine in which the flavors disappear off your palate as soon as it's swallowed is described as short. These wines have virtually no finish or aftertaste.

Silky - Characteristic description that refers to wine that has a very smooth and silky texture.

Single vineyard - Wine made from grapes that all come from one vineyard.

Smoky - Tasting term used to describe wine that displays flavors and aromas of smoked or charred wood.

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Spicy - Tasting term describing zippy flavors of spices. Spiciness can occur in either white or red wines. Pinot Noir, Syrah, and Zinfandel are all examples of spicy red wines. Spicy whites include Gewürztraminer and Riesling.

Soft - Tasting term for wines that are easy to drink; not highly tannic or acidic. Merlot is a characteristically soft wine.

Solera - A method for blending and aging certain non-vintage wines such as Sherry involving a grouping of barrels.

Sommelier - A sommelier is a person that has extensive wine knowledge through training, classes and certification.

Sparkling wine - Any wine with bubbles.

Split - A single serving bottle of sparkling wine or Champagne, about 187.5 mL.

Steely - A flavor characteristic used to describe wines that are aged in vats (usually stainless steel) as opposed to wood barrels.

Straw - Descriptive term generally used to describe the color of white wine as opposed to the flavor or aromas.

Structure - The wine's tannins, acidity, and alcohol content.

Structured - Containing tannin and acidity as well as aging potential; wines with higher tannins are considered structured.

Supple - Tasting term describing wine that is well balanced with a soft mouth feel.

Sweet - High sugar content. Sweet can be good in wine when balanced. If a wine is so sweet it masks its flavors, it may be called cloying, which is a winemaker's flaw. Sweet wines are usually reserved for dessert; however, any wine can have nuances of sweet flavor.

T-U

Table wine - A wine that is a decent, drinkable wine that isn't premium or expensive.

Tank - A vat in which wine is aged and fermented.

Tannic - Tasting term describing a wine that has a dry mouthfeel and strong tannins. The tannin level in a wine is caused by the seeds, stems and skins of the grape. Tannins soften as the wine ages.

Tannins - Tannins are caused by the lees (seeds, stems and skins) of the grape.
https://wine.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Wine_Terminology

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Tart - Acidic or pleasantly sour on the palate.

TCA (2,4,6-Trichloroanisole) - The cause of cork taint.

Terroir - Refers to the soil in which the wine grapes are grown. The terroir imparts its flavors into the wine.

Tight - A wine in which the fruit flavors have not emerged from behind big tannins yet. It's another named for "closed" and is often used to describe young tannic wines.

Toasty - Tasting term to describe warm toasted flavors coming from oak.

Umami - One of the five basic tastes, umami is a savory flavor. Meaty flavors in wines add umami.

V

Varietal - The type of grape used in a wine. For example, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are both varietals. In the United States, if a wine is labeled as the varietal must contain at least 75 percent of that grape. In the rest of the world, a wine must be at least 85 percent of the labeled varietal.

Vegetal - Tasting term used to describe wines that portray vegetable characteristics in aromas and flavors.

Velvety - Wines that are well balanced in fruit, acidity and tannic structure.

Vertical - A vertical is a flight of the same wines from different vintages.

Vieilles vignes - A French term that means "old vines".

Vigneron - A person cultivating wine grapes.

Vigorous - Tasting term describing wines with strong, forward fruit flavors.

Vin - French term for wine.

Vinegary - A vinegar scent that indicates the wine has been spoiled by ethyl acetate; the wine has turned, usually from excess oxidation or over aging.

Vinification - Fermenting grapes into wine.

Vintage - Refers to the year the grapes were harvested for a particular bottle of wine and not the year the wine was bottled.



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Viscous - Full-bodied and dense. Wines described as viscous are also well balanced with very intense flavors.

Viticulture - Cultivating grape vines.

Vitis vinifera - A term used for wine grapes.

Volatile - Negative characteristic used to describe wine that has an off-scent like vinegar.

W-Z

White wine - Wine made from bronze skinned grapes.

Wood aging - Refers to when wine is aged in wood barrels.

Yield - Amount of grapes produced per vineyard.

Zesty - Tasting term used to describe a wine with lively flavor characteristics with balanced fruit and acid.

