

DiWINEtaste

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The Secret of Sensorial Tasting

What is the secret of sensorial tasting? How do you become a wine taster? How can you tell the aromas of wine and describe them? These are just few of the many questions people ask me in occasion of wine events I organize or at which I take part. These questions always remind me about those times when I was getting into wine with an “analytic” approach and I was having quite a hard time in telling aromas, in other words, I was desperately trying to recognize something familiar in a glass. It is not easy: in the beginning it is depressing to try to do your best in order to proficiently analyze the sensorial qualities of wine, most of the time you end up believing those who can do that are just impostors or maybe good speakers. With time, and this means - specifically - practicing a lot, training even more, uncorking an impressive number of bottles, filling and emptying a lot of glasses, you start to understand something, of course, a lot more than “something”.

I supported many times the idea sensorial tasting is an art because it takes all of our senses - just like any artistic expression - and, equally important, our emotional and intellectual involvement. A matter of culture, among the many things, allowing us to understand the expression of certain wines, and maybe not all of them, and this is what happens when we see a painting or listen to a musical composition. Nature and man become artists: their wines represents their works. With wine, in a sense, happens what we sometimes experience in observing a painting or a sculpture, as well as when we listen to a musical composition. It can in fact happen that at first we do not understand the meaning - also because of prejudices, mood and emotional condition of the moment - and we need many “attempts” to understand it.

Maybe the first secret of sensorial tasting is to be free of prejudices. This means, among the many things, to not make the mistake of evaluating a wine exclusively by relying on your personal taste. Everyone undeniably has his or her own preference and our taste affects both our choices and judgment. This approach, although legitimate and understandable, cannot however

significantly affect sensorial and critical tasting when this is done professionally. It depends, of course, on what you want to get from sensorial tasting, while noticing that even the simple statement “I like it, I do not like it” is, on its own, a respectable critical expression. In this case, it is a subjective opinion only, of course indicative for those or the circumstances in which it is being expressed. It becomes a totally different thing when this subjective opinion is expressed with the arrogant pretension it should be considered as objective and reliable.

Then you need training, practicing, the virtually daily use of the glass - always with respect - and the renewed curiosity of learning something new. There is more, of course, including the pleasure of experiencing old emotions again and sensations met in the past which - although they can seem familiar - they are always new. On this regard, an important role is played by memory, not only the evocative one, indeed sensorial memory, that is the skill to associate a stimulus to a well known and recognizable characteristic. Nevertheless to say, memory is formed with the practice of analytic tasting only, a task requiring concentration and attention. This is a very important aspect because it lets you increase your experience, a quality which will always be a loyal companion during tasting and to which you can trust in. Of course, experience and memory can be developed only with a continuous training and practice.

Curiosity is the approach allowing the development of your own sensorial notions, in particular aromas. Sometimes they ask me how you can tell a specific aroma from the rich bouquet of wine emerging from a glass. The answer, in this case, is very simple. You can tell an aroma - or any other sensorial stimulus - only in case you experienced it in the past. It is clear it is impossible to tell the aroma of kiwi - or any other thing - in case you never smelt it and then “memorized”. After all, you can tell what you know. This is why curiosity becomes fundamental in order to build your own knowledge of aromas, or better to say, your

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own olfactory memory. An exercise you can continuously do all day long by simply paying attention - consciously - whenever you smell everything, including those things having no apparent association to wine.

Moreover, it is very important to know tasting techniques and their use. Sensorial tasting is not, in fact, the practice of smelling the content of a glass, to watch it with attention and to *sip it*, indeed it is the result of such tasks done by successfully applying specific techniques. These techniques, when properly used, make the sensorial tasting task easier while favoring the understanding of each phase. In other words, using a method is, like to say, one of the many secrets. To summarize things up, the secret of sensorial tasting is just the sum of many small and big secrets which are everything but not secrets. Practice and training are the main conditions which will make you become a good taster. This does not mean you have to taste fine and excellent wines only: low quality wines having faults are equally important. Defective wines in fact offer an important chance of study you should never miss. Taste and taste over and over, with attention, commitment and awareness: this is the secret.

Antonello Biancalana



WINE TASTING

Contrasts of Gewürztraminer and Pinot Blanc

Aromatic power compared to elegance and character: two completely different varieties however both capable of making great wines

Tasting by contrast done by evaluating wines having very different characteristics is useful to understand the respective qualities for the fact they are emphasized by the comparative element. This is what will happen in the tasting by contrast of this month

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by comparing the opposed qualities of Gewürztraminer and Pinot Blanc. Two varieties protagonists of many important moments of modern wine making history of Europe, each of them having its own peculiarities and, in particular, a versatility in the production of wines. Gewürztraminer is one of the very few varieties belonging to the family of the so called aromatic grapes, which wines express an olfactory character directly recalling the aroma of grape. Pinot Blanc, a variety of very ancient origins, gives wines of character and personality, as well as being successfully used in the production of classic method sparkling wines, that is refermented in bottle.

The use of these grapes is pretty different, of course because of their respective characteristics, however they are both successfully used in the production of dry table wines. Our tasting by contrast will evaluate wines belonging to this category. Gewürztraminer and Pinot Blanc are, in any case, important protagonists of worldwide wine making, they are widely spread in many wine countries of the world, used both alone and blended to other varieties. Both varieties are also used in those magnificent wines made in some areas of Central Europe and called *eiswein*, commonly known as "ice wines". A concentration of explosive sensorial emotions, these magnificent wines are mainly produced in Germany and Austria by using many varieties and, among the many, Gewürztraminer and Pinot Blanc.

Gewürztraminer

Gewürztraminer is an aromatic variety, that is part of the family - a pretty small family indeed - of grapes which wines express aromas directly recalling grape juice. A family made of just three members and including Muscat Blanc and Brachetto as well. A quality, like to say, rare, so rare it is sometimes cause of confusion because some end up believing this characteristic is also found in the vast family of the *semi-aromatic* grapes. In this sense, the aromatic power of Gewürztraminer is absolutely remarkable as to become, in certain wines, even sickly according to the opinion of some. On the other hand, for others it is the explosive aromatic power to make extraordinary wines. Gewürztraminer, of course, is a lot more than this and has other good qualities to offer to the taster's senses, including a remarkable body well supported by alcohol and crispness.

The history of Gewürztraminer is, for certain regards, characterized by a sort of mystery which lasted a quite long time. It is believed Gewürztraminer originated from a genetic mutation of "Traminer", name with which was known Savagnin Blanc grape in South Tyrol, Italy. This variety, originating from France, is used for the production of the renowned "vin jaune" of French Jura and, despite the name could be cause of confusion, it does not have any connection to Sauvignon Blanc. It seems the mutation took place in South Tyrol when the color of the skin got a coppery hue and, for this reason, was therefore called *Red Traminer*, known in France as *Savagnin Rosé*. It is believed Gewürztraminer originated from a subsequent mutation of this variety and developed its strong aromatic character. Its name consists of the German term *Gewürz* - which translates as spicy - and *Traminer*, that is coming from Tramin, the well known town

in South Tyrol, Italy.

Pinot Blanc

Pinot Blanc is a variety rich of charm and history and claims a close connection to Pinot Noir. It is in fact believed Pinot Blanc is a genetic mutation of Pinot Noir, a fate also shared with Pinot Gris. It should be said the connection to Pinot Noir is so close as to have the same genetic profile, a condition therefore not allowing the determination of which of the three is the ancestor from which the other ones originated from. The most common theory supports the idea Pinot Noir is the primary variety from which, because of mutations, originated the other two. Something in which everyone agrees on is the fact the Pinot family is very old, already known since the times of ancient Romans, and its homeland is Burgundy, France. Since those times these grapes were recognized as capable of making prestigious wines, a quality they still have today. A charm, nevertheless, recognized to Pinot Blanc as well.

From Burgundy Pinot Blanc has spread all over the world and today it is virtually found in every wine country of the planet. Of all the territories in which Pinot Blanc is found, Alsace certainly is the most significant one and here are produced the best wines made with this variety. A grape of remarkable enological versatility, Pinot Blanc is successfully used in many wine styles, from table wines to sweet wines made from dried grapes, as well as being an interesting interpreter in classic method sparkling wines. On this regard it should be noticed in the past Pinot Blanc was used for the production of Champagne, a role it however lost with time. Pinot Blanc is still today an appreciated variety for the production of classic method sparkling wines, including Franciacorta. Pinot Blanc - just like its *relatives* Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir - is a variety requiring the highest quality standards both in vineyard and in winery, an essential factor in order to make great wines.

The Tasting

The two grapes of our tasting by contrast give their best in case they are cultivated in pretty cold areas, whereas in warm areas they may give less elegant wines and, sometimes, even ordinary. In Italy the best wines produced with Gewürztraminer and Pinot Blanc come from the North-Eastern areas of the country, in particular from Alto Adige. For this reason, our tasting by contrast will examine two wines coming from this region. In both cases we will make sure the wines are produced with the respective varieties alone and vinified in steel tanks, in order to ensure the least contaminated sensorial expression possible. We will also make sure the wines belong to the most recent vintage, therefore we will evaluate young wines. Gewürztraminer and Pinot Blanc will be poured in their respective glasses at a temperature of 10 °C (50 °F).

Our tasting by contrast starts with the evaluation of the appearance in both wines, let's therefore pour them in their respective glasses. The first wine of which we will evaluate color and



The color of Pinot Blanc

transparency is Pinot Blanc. Let's tilt the glass on a white surface - we simply need a sheet of paper for that - and observe the wine at the base of the glass. In the color of Pinot Blanc can be recognized a pale straw yellow hue as well as greenish yellow. Let's now observe the wine towards the opening of the glass, in the point where the wine is thinner: we will see evident nuances of greenish yellow. By observing Gewürztraminer we will notice a substantial difference from Pinot Blanc: here the color is evidently golden yellow, which could also sometimes be intense straw yellow. The evaluation of nuances, done by tilting the glass, will reveal, once again, a golden yellow color.

The olfactory evaluation of Gewürztraminer and Pinot Blanc will make the difference between the two grapes even more evident. The main reason is, of course, the expressive differences of the olfactory profiles of the two grapes. Gewürztraminer is in fact an aromatic variety - that is its wines directly express the aroma of grape and grape juice - whereas Pinot Blanc does not belong to this category. This does not mean wines produced with Pinot Blanc have no olfactory interest, indeed, it is a grape capable of giving very interesting aromatic finesse. The comparison with an aromatic variety such as Gewürztraminer - powerful and full - will make any other variety seem like not having any olfactory expression, except in case of other aromatic grapes. The discriminating factor is, like we already said, the intense aroma of grape and grape juice, a quality the grapes of this family clearly and evidently keep in their wines.

In case we have to taste two wines having different aromatic intensities, in particular in case one of them is made with an aromatic variety, it is always advised to start from the less aromatic one. For this reason, the first wine of which we will evaluate the olfactory profile is Pinot Blanc. Let's hold the glass in vertical position and, without swirling, evaluate the opening of the wine. We will perceive aromas of apple and pear with evident notes of pineapple and hawthorn. After having swirled the glass, the profile of Pinot Blanc is completed by peach, broom, plum, citrus fruits and, sometimes, evident notes of hazelnut and even almond. Let's now evaluate the opening of Gewürztraminer in which we will perceive a strong aroma of fresh grape, not found

in Pinot Blanc. Besides the characteristic grape aroma, the opening is also characterized by peach, lychee and white rose. After having swirled the glass, the profile of Gewürztraminer is completed by apricot, pineapple, pear, apple, citrus fruits, candied fruits and broom, as well as pleasing notes of aromatic herbs such as sage.

Let's now pass to the gustatory evaluation of the two wines and, also in this phase, we will continue to perceive substantial differences in Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer. Let's take a sip of Pinot Blanc and evaluate its attack, that is the initial sensations perceived to the mouth. The attack of this wine is characterized by an evident crispness produced by acidity, to which follows the appreciable warm sensation of alcohol. Moreover, we will perceive a good structure and a correspondence to the nose, in particular, will be perceived flavors of apple, pear, pineapple and peach. Let's now pass to the gustatory evaluation of Gewürztraminer: let's take a sip of this wine and examine its attack. In the mouth will be clearly perceived the rich structure of the wine, to which follows a pleasing roundness supported by a well balanced acidity. It should be noticed the sensation of roundness can sometimes be origin of confusion for the taster and can make he or she believe the wine is sweet, indeed it is absolutely dry. In the mouth is perceived a good correspondence to the nose, in particular the flavor of grape - intense and powerful - as well as peach and lychee. Finally, it should be noticed the important contribution of alcohol which, besides producing the typical warm and burning sensation, plays a significant role in enhancing the roundness of Gewürztraminer.

The ending phase of our tasting by contrast will focus on the final sensations the two wines leave in the mouth after having swallowed them. In the finish of Pinot Blanc can be appreciated flavors of apple, pear, pineapple, citrus fruits and, sometimes, a pleasing hint of hazelnut. The sensation left in the mouth expresses a pleasing crispness as well as a good structure. The finish of Gewürztraminer is evidently more robust, leaving in the mouth an evident sensation of roundness as well as a good taste-olfactory persistence. In the mouth are perceived, clean and intense, the flavors of grape, lychee, peach and, sometimes, a pleasing and slight bitter flavor well fused to the finish of the wine. Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer are two varieties very different one from each other, however both capable of making wines of remarkable value. The comparison with a non aromatic grape, such as Pinot Blanc, makes very clear, because of the contrast, the powerful aromatic nature of Gewürztraminer.

❖ ❖ ❖

Wines of the Month

Score legend

- ❖ Fair – ❖❖ Pretty Good – ❖❖❖ Good
- ❖❖❖❖ Very Good – ❖❖❖❖❖ Excellent
- ★ Wine that excels in its category
- 🍷 Good value wine

Prices are to be considered as indicative. Prices may vary according to the country or the shop where wines are bought



Piemonte Albarossa Macchiaferro 2011 L'Armangia (Piedmont, Italy)

🍷 Albarossa

Price: € 15.00

Score ❖❖❖❖

- 👁️ Deep ruby red and nuances of ruby red, impenetrable to light.
- 👂 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black cherry, plum and blueberry followed by aromas of violet, black currant, blackberry, vanilla, iris, chocolate, tobacco and menthol.
- 👅 Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.
- 🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, plum and blueberry.
- 📅 14 months in cask.
- 🍴 *Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat with mushrooms, Broiled meat and barbecue, Hard cheese*



Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nizza Vignali 2010
L'Armangia (Piedmont, Italy)

Barbera

Price: € 23.00

Score

Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of cherry, plum and violet followed by aromas of blueberry, raspberry, vanilla, tobacco, cocoa, cinnamon, mace and menthol.

Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Persistent finish with flavors of cherry, plum and blueberry.

13 months in barrique, 12 months in cask, about 36 months in bottle.

Broiled meat and barbecue, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese



Vittoria Frappato 2015
Valle dell'Acate (Sicily, Italy)

Frappato

Price: € 12.00

Score

Brilliant ruby red and nuances of ruby red, moderate transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of cherry, blackberry and raspberry followed by aromas of violet, plum, strawberry, rose, blueberry and black pepper.

Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.

Persistent finish with flavors of cherry, raspberry and strawberry.

6 months in steel tanks, 3 months in bottle.

Cold cuts, Pasta with meat, Sauteed meat, Fish soups



Tané 2011
Valle dell'Acate (Sicily, Italy)

Nero d'Avola

Price: € 30.00

Score

Brilliant ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of plum, blackberry and dried violet followed by aromas of black cherry, blueberry, tobacco, vanilla, chocolate, leather and eucalyptus.

Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Persistent finish with flavors of plum, blackberry and black cherry.

12 months in barrique, 14 months in bottle.

Roasted meat, Broiled meat and barbecue, Stewed and braised meat with mushrooms, Hard cheese





Recioto di Soave Motto Piane 2014
Fattori (Veneto, Italy)


 Garganega


Price: € 15.00 - 50cl


Score 


 Brilliant amber yellow and nuances of amber yellow, transparent.

 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of raisin, candied fruits and dried apricot followed by aromas of honey, lychee, dried fig, peach jam, citrus fruit peel, quince jam, date, almond, vanilla and nail polish.

 Sweet and crisp attack, however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.


 Persistent finish with flavors of raisin, honey and dried apricot.

 A small part ferments in cask. 12 months in steel tanks.

 *Fruit and cream tarts, Hard cheese*





Amarone della Valpolicella 2010
Fattori (Veneto, Italy)

 Corvina (65%), Corvinone (15%), Rondinella (10%), Other Grapes (10%)


Price: € 48.20


Score 

 Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.


 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of blackberry, plum and black cherry followed by aromas of dried

violet, blueberry, iris, vanilla, chocolate, face powder, tobacco, cinnamon, walnut husk, mace and menthol.

 Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

 Very persistent finish with long flavors of blackberry, black cherry and plum.

 36 months in cask.

 *Game, Braised and stewed meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese*





Cilento Aglianico Vigna dei Russi 2011
Cobellis (Campania, Italy)


 Aglianico


Price: € 20.00


Score 


 Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

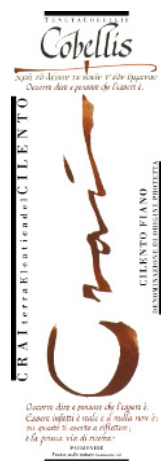
 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of black cherry, plum and blackberry followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, iris, vanilla, cocoa, licorice, leather, mace, tobacco and menthol.

 Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

 Persistent finish with flavors of blackberry, plum and black cherry.

 12 months in barrique, 4 months in steel tanks, 6 months in bottle.

 *Game, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese*



**Cilento Fiano Crai 2013
Cobellis (Campania, Italy)**



Fiano

Price: € 18.00

Score ◆◆◆◆☆

👁️ Brilliant golden yellow and nuances of golden yellow, very transparent.

👂 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of quince, plum and honey followed by aromas of citrus fruits, hazelnut, mature peach, pear, honey, medlar, hawthorn, rosemary and mineral.

👄 Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of quince, plum and honey.

📅 6 months in steel tanks.

🍴 *Stuffed pasta with meat, Roasted fish, Roasted white meat, Mushroom soups*

EVENTS

News

In this column are published news and information about events concerning the world of wine and food. Whoever is interested in publishing this kind of information can send us a mail to the address Events@DiWineTaste.com.



NOT JUST WINE

Aquavitae

Review of Grappa, Distillates and Brandy



**Brandy Italiano Assemblaggio Tradizionale 10 Anni
Villa Zarri (Emilia Romagna, Italy)**

🍷 Wine from Trebbiano Toscano and Trebbiano Romagnolo grapes

Price: € 26.70 - 50cl

Score ◆◆◆◆◆

👁️ Intense amber color, limpid and crystalline.

👂 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant with aromas of dried fig, vanilla, leather, caramel, cocoa, candied fruits, raisin, prune, citrus fruit peel and honey with almost imperceptible alcohol pungency.

👄 Intense flavors with perceptible alcohol pungency which tends to dissolve rapidly, pleasing roundness, balanced sweetness.

🍷 Very persistent finish with long flavors of dried fig, cocoa, raisin and honey.

🍷 Distilled in discontinuous "Charentais" alembic still. Made of a blend of 10 different wine brandies aged in barrels, of which the youngest is 10 years old.

Wine Guide Parade

June 2016

The best 15 wines reviewed in our Guide and voted by DiWine-Taste readers

Rank	Wine, Producer	Votes
1	Bianco delle Regine 2014, Castello delle Regine	7480
2	Rosso di Podernovo 2012, Castello delle Regine	6854
3	Trebbiano d' Abruzzo Calà 2015, Colle Moro	6784
4	Princeps 2005, Castello delle Regine	6593
5	Poggio delle Regine Rosso 2013, Castello delle Regine	6229
6	Falanghina 2015, Villa Raiano	6144
7	Fiano di Avellino Alimata 2013, Villa Raiano	6033
8	Poggio delle Regine Bianco 2014, Castello delle Regine	5831
9	Montepulciano d' Abruzzo Club 2015, Colle Moro	5682
10	Ripa Bassa Metodo Classico, Villa Raiano	5590
11	Cerasuolo d' Abruzzo Club 2015, Colle Moro	5430
12	Pecorino Extra Dry 2015, Colle Moro	5306
13	Chardonnay & Sauvignon 2014, Maso Grener	5224
14	Irpinia Campi Taurasini Rosso 2012, Villa Raiano	5124
15	Rose delle Regine 2014, Castello delle Regine	5025