

GLOSSARY

Of Words that Frequently Occur in Wine Descriptions

Aroma: The fragrances of wine which come directly from the grapes and the winemaking process. (See also bouquet).

Balanced: Having the acidity, tannin, and other natural components of a wine in pleasing proportions.

Big: Having a very full body. Often refers specifically to high levels of tannin, especially in red wine.

Body: Relates to how the wine feels in your mouth and to the sensations of richness, thickness and heaviness that the wine creates. The fact is some wines just seem fuller, heavier or “bigger” when they are in your mouth

Bouquet: The fragrances that develop in wine through bottle aging.

Complex: Having many different types of aromas or flavors, such as fruit, herbs, spice and wood. Complex wines taste interesting and multi-dimensional. (Wines that do not are called “simple” as in “simple jug wines”)

Creamy: Having a smooth texture in the mouth; can also describe actual aromas and flavors that resemble those of cream. Often used to describe Chardonnay, especially those that have been fermented or aged in oak barrels.

Crisp: Pleasantly tart; having good acidity. Generally, but not exclusively, used for white wines.

Dry: Having little or no sweetness (residual sugar).

Finish: The finish or aftertaste is the final impression that the wine makes after you have swallowed it.

Fruity: Having aromas or flavors of grapes or other fruits, such as apples, cherries, lemons or pineapples. “Fruit” in wine can often give the illusion of sweetness, even when the wine is completely dry.

Herbaceous: Having aromas or flavors that resemble herbs, vegetables, grass or leaves. Often used to describe Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Hot: Having abnormally high alcohol content. Since alcohol creates a feeling of heat in the mouth for many people, high alcohol wines can actually seem “hot”.

Soft: Generally refers to wines with little or no tannin. A textural effect in which the wine feels smooth in the mouth.

Tannin: An astringent substance, found mostly in red wines, which comes from grape skins and seeds and from the barrels used for aging. Tannins give a wine complexity and aging potential, but high levels of tannin can give a harsh “Mouth feel”, actually coating the teeth and tongue to create a rough, gritty sensation. Bottle aging enables tannins to “soften” over time.

Varietal: A specific type of grape, and the wine made from it. Examples: Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel. Used as an adjective, “varietal” refers to the characteristic aromas and flavors of a particular grape or wine.

APPEALING DESCRIPTORS and SELLING TERMS (Great to Use When Discussing Wines with Guests)

Soft Finish
Easy Drinking
Well-Rounded Flavors
Refreshing
Forward Fruit

Approachable Wine
Smooth Finish
Velvety Texture
Complex
Rich