

PRESQUE ISLE WINE CELLARS

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The Aroma Wheel – An Aid to Wine Tasters

As an aid to novice wine tasters - and experts too - the wine and flavor scientists at the University of California at Davis, one of the US's leading wine-making and grape-growing schools, came up years ago with something called the "aroma wheel."

The oenologists at UC Davis consulted with scores of wine lovers and wine tasters to list all the descriptive terms they could imagine for the smells of wine. Then they organized them, categorized them, eliminated all that seemed ambiguous or less than clear, and ended up with a list of 12 major categories of wine smells, subdivided into 29 subcategories and in 94 specific terms.

The original "wheel" was so called because it was displayed as a circular table, with relatively similar smells placed close together around its circumference. Ann C. Noble was the principal developer of the aroma wheel while a Professor and Flavor Scientist at UC Davis and she is the copyright holder. Very nice colored plastic laminated copies of the copyrighted wine aroma wheel may be obtained from Wine Aroma Wheels, Box 72239, Davis, CA 95616.

You don't need a wheel to get rolling, however: The information is just as useful in the form of a list, starting at noon and moving around the clock from "fruity" through "nutty" and "earthy" around to "floral," "spicy" and back to fruity again.

If you want to get more out of your wine, try your next tasting session with the list at hand, scanning the categories in search of the exact word to describe what you're smelling.

The following list is a sample, leaving out some of the more obscure and technical terms, but you'll find all the usual aromas rounded up here:

Fruity	Citrus - grapefruit, lemon; berry - blackberry, raspberry, strawberry, black currant (cassis); tree fruit - cherry, apricot, peach, apple; tropical fruit - pineapple, melon, banana; dried fruit - strawberry jam, raisins, prune, fig.
Vegetative	fresh - stemmy, cut green grass, bell pepper, eucalyptus, mint; canned-cooked - green beans, asparagus, green olive, black olive, artichoke; dried - haw-straw, tea, tobacco.
Nutty	walnut, hazelnut, almond.
Caramelized	honey, butterscotch, butter, soy sauce, chocolate, molasses
Woody	vanilla, cedar, oak, smoky, burnt toast, charred, coffee.
Earthy	dusty, mushroom, musty (mildew), moldy cork.
Chemical	petroleum - tar, plastic, kerosene, diesel; sulphur - rubbery, garlic, skunk, cabbage, burnt match, wet wool, wet dog; papery - wet cardboard; pungent - acetic acid (vinegar); other - soapy, fishy.
Pungent	hot - alcohol; cool - menthol.
Microbiological	yeast, sauerkraut, sweaty, horsey, mousey.

Floral	orange blossom, rose, violet, geranium.
Spicy	cloves, black pepper, licorice, anise.

Use the "wheel" as a guide when you taste wine for fun ~ you'll be surprised to see how well this list of descriptive terms will help you recognize those elusive characteristics.

