

Using the wine aroma wheel*

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www.winearomawheel.com

The purpose of the wine aroma wheel is to facilitate communication about wine flavor by providing a standard terminology. The requirements for words to be included in the wheel are that the terms are specific and analytical and not hedonic or the result of an integrated or judgmental response. 'Floral' is a general but analytical descriptive term, whereas "fragrant", "elegant" or "harmonious" are either imprecise and vague (fragrant) or hedonic and judgmental (elegant and harmonious).

The wheel has very general terms located in the center, going to the most specific terms in the outer tier. These terms are NOT the only terms that can be used to describe wines, but represent ones that are often encountered. Novice tasters often complain that they "cannot smell anything" or can't think of a way to describe the aroma of wine. Fortunately, it is very easy to train our noses and brains to connect and quickly link terms with odors. The fastest way is to make physical standards to illustrate important and major notes in wine aroma.

To do this, with few exceptions, materials available from the grocery store are all you need. (One of the few standards that cannot be provided is the **linalool** aroma of Riesling, Gewürztraminer or Muscat wines. For this distinct floral, citrus aroma get handi-wipes®. Put an opened handiwipe into an empty covered glass. alternatively, bring some FROOT LOOPS® (a breakfast cereal) and put them dry into an empty wine glass. Sounds silly, but either makes a good linalool standard.

WHITE WINES

If you are just beginning then it is easier to evaluate white wines; start by selecting some wines with large differences in flavor. For example, include an oaky, buttery Chardonnay (most Australian, or California ones will do), For a "vegetative" (bell pepper, asparagus) Sauvignon blanc, wines from Sancerre or a Sauvignon blanc from New Zealand or cool parts of California will suffice. A floral Riesling or Gewürztraminer from cooler parts of California (North or Central Coast), Oregon, Germany, Alsace (France) will provide a further contrast. If you wish to use a fourth wine, you could try an unoaked Chardonnay (IF you can find it), non-vegetative Sauvignon blanc or add include another variety such as Viognier.

Make some standards in a neutral white wine (usually an inexpensive jug white will work well). For the most commonly encountered white wine aromas, the approximate recipes are provided below,

but they all need to be tweaked so the aroma is detectable but not overwhelming. Add more "stuff" if the aroma is not identifiable; dilute with the base wine if it is too strong. Put the standards in wine glasses, covered with disposable plastic petri dish lids, watch glasses or even saran wrap. Covering the glass increases the intensity of the aromas and prevents the odors of the references from permeating the entire room. Be sure to smell your creations to be sure that you can detect the desired aroma and that it is not too strong. It is helpful to include the unadulterated base wine for comparison with the other standards.

*This may be downloaded from <http://www.winearomawheel.com/#howToUse>

To obtain a colored, laminated plastic version of the wine aroma wheel (or Sparkling wine aroma wheel) or wine aroma tee shirts, go to

www.winearomawheel.com or contact
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White wine aroma standards

(in 1 oz neutral white wine*)

Asparagus (several drops of brine of canned asparagus)
Bell Pepper (tiny piece of bell pepper; don't leave in too long)
Vanilla (Drop of vanilla extract)
Butter (drop of butter extract)
Clove (One clove, don't leave in long)
Citrus (~ 1 teaspoon of *fresh* orange and grapefruit juice)
Peach (several teaspoons of peach or apricot puree or juice)
Pineapple (1 teaspoon juice)
Honey (1 – 2 Tablespoons)

From this point on, anything goes: smell the wines first, smell the standards, start to see which terms describe which wine. If you come up with NEW terms such as lichee/lychee—make the standard!. Smelling the BASE WINE makes it really easy to identify the spiked aromas by contrast.

RED WINES

For the first red wine tasting choose wines with very different aromas such as a Pinot noir (Carneros or very cool central coast area of CA, Oregon, or red Burgundy), a Cabernet Sauvignon (for vegetative, get a wine from a cooler CA region) for less vegetative, try Napa, Sonoma, Washington, a black peppery Zinfandel (CA) . The standard “recipes” for most frequently encountered red wine aromas are below.

Red wine aroma standards

(in 1 oz neutral red wine*)

Asparagus (several drops of brine of canned asparagus)
Bell Pepper (tiny piece of bell pepper; don't leave in too long)
Vanilla (Drop of vanilla extract)
Butter (drop of butter extract)
Clove (One ~~long~~ clove, don't leave in long)
Soy sauce (few drops, great for older reds)
Berry (Mix of fresh/frozen berries and/or berry jams)
Berry jam 1-3 tablespoons OLD straw-berry jam) (for older Pinot noirs)
Artificial fruit (add few crystals red koolaid ® powder)
Black pepper (few grains black pepper)
Anise, black licorice(use few drops of anise extract)

SPARKLING WINES

Sparkling wines need different terms than those on the wine aroma wheel. In addition to citrus and berry standards, here are some of the most relevant ones, especially those with long aging on the yeast lees before being disgorged.

Sparkling wine aroma standards

(In 1 oz neutral white still wine*)

Lime (A few drops of Rose's lime Juice or squeezed lime juice)
Apple (Sniff freshly cut apple)
Toasted hazelnuts (Crushed nuts alone)
Sour cream/yogurt (1Tbsp. in empty glass or wine)
Vegemite (tiny amount of Vegemite

Cherry/strawberry (Few drops of flavored juices or extracts)
Nutmeg (few grains)
Caramel (crush one Kraft caramel)
Vanilla (as for table wines).

DEFECTS

Some of the commonly encountered wine defects can also be illustrated by making standards.

Moldy Cork the BEST standard is the actual example of the defect. The cause, TCA, trichloroanisole will leave a lingering odor in your home!

Volatile acidity (VA) Few drops of Ethyl Acetate (or nail polish remover) and a few drops vinegar

Oxidation

Acetaldehyde few drops of sherry

Sulfur

H₂S Hydrogen sulfide boiled egg or black sand from Japanese food store
Ethyl mercaptan Smell of natural gas (tell people to experiment on their own carefully)
S₀2 Sulfur dioxide Dried apricots (which were treated with sulfite)

Brettanomyces (A wild yeast) Drop of creosote or piece of old fashioned Band-Aid (a horsey , barnyard smell)

*"Neutral wine" has no defects or distinctive aroma. Cheap Jug wines or wine in a box work well.