

So, how do I do this whole Deductive Tasting thing?

Well, it's simple.

1. Work on your knowledge of the straights of classic wines from classic places.
2. Collect clues from the wine in front of you.
3. Deduce the most logical conclusion from the clues you've collected.

So, how do you build that knowledge? Read about classic wines, places, and their profiles.

www.guildsomm.com has a fantastic resource for this, but, there are plenty of others. Taste often, and take notes! Taste with others and discuss!

So... let's get some clues:

Look at the wine. What jumps out?

White wines: Does it look a little yellow or like water? Are there bubbles? Is there a hint of green?

Reds: Can you see through it? Is it red or purple? Does the rim turn brown or just fade to clear? Does it stain the glass when you roll the glass?

Now, give it some sniffs:

White Wine:

First Sniff: is it very aromatic? Neutral? Floral? Oak driven?

Second Sniff: What's the fruit like? Apple/Pear? Stone Fruit? Tropical? Citrus? Which type?

What color is the fruit? How ripe is it? Under-ripe? Ripe? Overripe? Bruised? Dried?

Third Sniff: Are there flowers? Herbs? Stones? Dirt? Any winemaking notes like butter, yogurt, sour cream that would indicate Malolactic Fermentation? Yeast, bread dough, white flowers, peanut shell that might indicate lees?

Forth Sniff: Any oak indicators: coconut, Dill, Vanilla, Baking spice, smoke, caramel?

Red Wine:

First Sniff: Does it smell like jammy fruit and oak or like earth, spice and dirt?

Second Sniff: What's the fruit like? Red fruits, black fruits or blue fruits? Which type? How ripe is it? Under ripe? Ripe? Overripe? Bruised? Dried?

Third Sniff: Are there flowers? Herbs? Stones? Dirt?

Forth Sniff: Any oak indicators: coconut, Dill, Vanilla, Baking spice, smoke, caramel?

Now, give it a taste:

First impressions: Is the fruit riper on the palate than it was on the nose, or does the fruit condition turn more tart?

Second Impressions: Go through the same process as above, and see if you find the same things, if they change, or if you find new things...

Third Impression: Look at the texture...Is it creamy? Is it oaky? Is it syrupy?

Now, let's look at structure:

Sweetness- Is it Bone Dry? Dry? Off Dry? Sweet? (remember, this is sugar, not ripeness. Most wines are DRY, but, riper styles may appear sweet because the fruit is ripe, even if there is no sugar.

Acid-how much does it make your mouth water? Is the acid High/Med/Low?

Alcohol-does it warm your chest? Does it burn? Is the Alcohol High/Medium/Low?

Tannins (Red Wine Only)-Tannins will dry your mouth out. Rub your tongue on the roof of your mouth...How dry does it feel? Low/Med/High.

Bitterness (White Wine Only)-Is there a little bitterness, or drying of the mouth? Yes/No

Now-you have all your clues... STOP thinking about the wine. START thinking about what you observed in the wine.

Now, answer these questions:

Is it Old World (Europe) or New World (Not Europe)?

Old world wines tend to focus on earthy/minerally flavors, and have less ripe fruit and often less oak influence (not always).

New world wines tend to focus on ripe fruit, and often more intense oak impression.

Is it from a cold climate, moderate or hot climate?

Cold climate wines give tart under ripe fruits, higher acids, and lower alcohols

Moderate climates create a mix of ripe and tart fruit, mod alcohols and crisp acidity.

Hot climates produce ripe fruit, higher alcohol, and lower acidity.

Grape- Pick one that fits all your clue, remember to use your observations, not your assumptions.

Place- Pick a place that grows that grapes and imbues them with the characteristics you described.

Vintage- If you are familiar with the vintages in the area? Is the wine from a warm vintage (riper than normal) or a cold vintage (Less ripe than normal)?

Now, form a conclusion:

Here are some ideas to do with those clues:

Red Wine Color-Some grapes show certain colors (There are ALWAYS exceptions to the rules...).

Is it red or purple?

Red Color: Pinot Noir, Cab Sauvignon, Merlot, Grenache, Syrah, Zin, Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, Amarone, Tempranillo

Purple Color: Carmenere, Malbec, Gamay, Cabernet Franc, Syrah

Is the wine see-through or not see-through?

See through: Pinot, zin, Grenache, Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, Tempranillo, Gamay, Cabernet Franc.

Not see-through: Carmenere, Malbec, Syrah, Amarone, Cab Sauv, Malbec

Does it brown at the rim?

This indicates oxidation (could be from barrel age (Rioja), bottle age (Brunello), or easily oxidized pigment (Grenache)). Assuming the wine in the glass is current or recent release, browning is often seen in: Grenache, Tempranillo, Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, Amarone.

Aromas:

White:

Floral: Viognier, Gewurztraminer, Muscat, Torontes

Neutral: Chablis, Muscadet, Pinot Grigio, Albarino, Sancerre, Gruner

Oaked: White Bordeaux, Burg, New World Chard, Viognier

High Aromatic (non-floral): Riesling, Chenin, Albarino, NZ Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon

Red:

Red Fruit driven wines: Pinot Noir, Grenache, Sangiovese, Tempranillo, Gamay

Black Fruit driven: Malbec, Carmenere, Cab Sauvignon, Merlot, Nebbiolo, Amarone

Mixed Red and Black Fruit: Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Zinfandel

More questions for your wine...

Is the wine dominated by ripe fruit and Oak? - *Probably New World*

Is the wine dominated by tart fruit and mineral/herbal notes? - *Probably Old World*

Is the fruit ripe and red/orange? - *Probably Warm Climate*

Is the fruit tart and green? - *Probably Cool Climate*

Does the fruit turn tart? – *Probably Old World*

Does the fruit stay ripe? – *Probably New World*

Possible conclusions to be deduced from structure...

White:

High Acid: Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Chenin Blanc, Chablis, Muscadet

Medium: Chardonnay, Gruner, White Bordeaux, Albarino

Low Acid: Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris/gio, Viognier

Sweetness:

Off-Dry: Riesling, Chenin

Dry: All others...

Alcohol:

High: New World/Warm Climate - Gewurztraminer, Viognier.

Mod: Old World/Mod Climate - Most grapes.

Low: Old World or Cool Climate - Riesling. Semillon. Muscadet.

Red:

Alcohol:

High Acid-Cool Climate. Cab Franc. Gamay. Nebbiolo. Sangiovese.

Mod Acid. Mod Climate.

Low Acid-Warm Climate or New World. Chateneuf du Pape

Sweetness:

Most red wines are dry.

Amarone, Zinfandel, and Napa Cabernet Sauvignon may have a touch of RS (residual sugar).

Tannins:

High: Nebbiolo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sangiovese, Amarone

Medium: Chateneuf du Pape, Merlot, Tempranillo, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Carmenere

Low: Gamay, Pinot Noir