



WINE TASTING DEMYSTIFIED

STARTER KIT



by Isabelle Lesschaeve, PhD

Hello!

It's easy to be intimidated when you attend a wine tasting for the first time. But it doesn't have to be.

Trying to mimic what wine experts do can be frustrating; it often makes you wonder if you need to take a 10-week class to be good at tasting wine!

Tasting wine should be enjoyable and allow you to create memorable experiences.

By following my step by step process, you will gain confidence in what to do to be able to describe what you smell and what you taste in your own words.

It will take you some practice. You will also find additional tips on my education website winetasting-demystified.com and in my weekly newsletter.



Adopting my step by step process to wine tasting is just the beginning of your journey to become a better wine taster.

Cheers!

*Isabelle L.
Your Wine Tasting Coach*

WINE TASTING TECHNIQUES

Wine appreciation classes are great places to learn about wine and how wines should taste. However, they don't teach you how to taste wine. By following my five-step process, you will start paying more attention to what you perceive using your five senses.

**"Smell, Swirl, Smell again, Sip, and only then
can you See."**

Smelling before and after swirling the glass is an exciting experience to appreciate the full range of aromatic attributes. Aromas are evoked by volatile molecules that we can perceive more easily when swirling the glass. The fluid movement helps these aroma compounds to reach your nose.

Uniformity and consistency are the basics on how to taste wine objectively!

So if you start swirling three times on the first wine glass, then do the same for the other samples in the flight.

If you are a novice wine taster, you may expect to smell the same aromas before or after swirling the glass. That's quite confusing when this doesn't happen.

Maybe you think you are not good enough.

Well NO! It is NORMAL. As you swirl the wine glass, the wine temperature rises, and different aromatic compounds can start reaching your nose and allow you to smell different sensations.

That's why I recommend to swirl the glass as the second step.

Sipping: Always taste the same volume of wine from each wine sample.

Consistency is essential to make a fair comparison between the wine samples.

WINE TASTING TECHNIQUES

Swallow or spit? Whatever your choice is, you have to keep the same way of doing to be consistent in your wine evaluation. I highly recommend expectorating (i.e., spitting) to decrease alcohol intake. It's a good habit to take that will help you stay objective.

You may be uncomfortable spitting out wine in front of others. It doesn't have to be, but it might take some practice.

See: Wine color and appearance provide cues that can mislead you on what the wine should taste.

That's where my method differs from the traditional wine experts — observing the wine appearance first will create true or false expectations of what the wine will taste. This bias is a well known by all sensory scientists. I recommend to evaluate wine appearance independently or after the first four steps for you to remain objective.

Wine color and physical appearance are assessed against a white background and under natural light to remove any other visual interferences.

Tasting wine samples blind, i.e., without seeing any of the wine information, is the best practice.

Keeping tasting notes is essential when you learn how to taste wine. Recent research shows that you memorize better when you write than when you type.

Taking notes helps you refer back to previous tasting and remember particularities of specific wine. This practice is essential to refer back to tasting experiences of the same wine or similar styles or similar regions.

I use a simple tasting sheet that I include in the starter kit.

Notes usually involves describing your perceptions when assessing the wine.

YOUR STARTER KIT INCLUDES

1

CHECKLIST TO PREPARE
YOUR OWN WINE TASTING

1

GLASS PLACEMAT

2

FORMS TO RECORD WHAT
YOU EXPERIENCE

CHECK LIST

Print

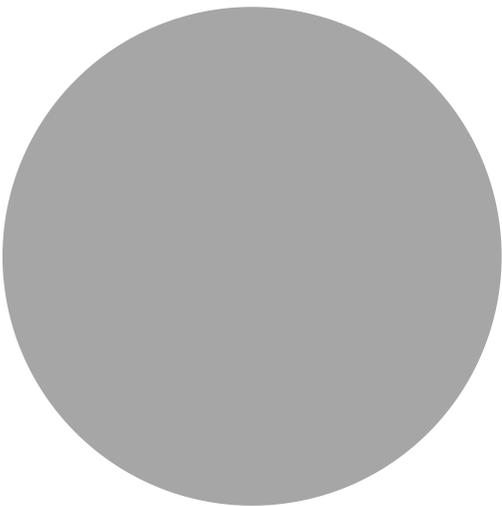
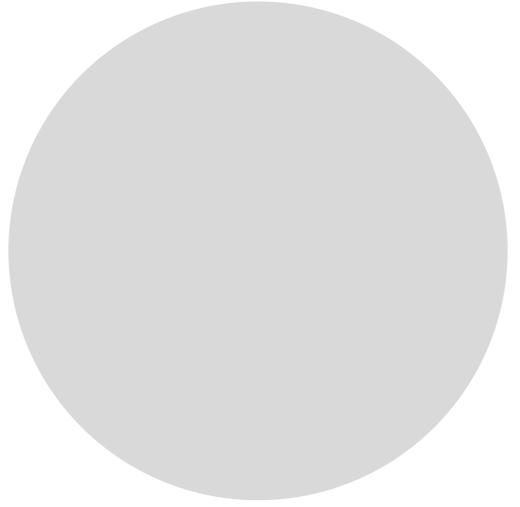
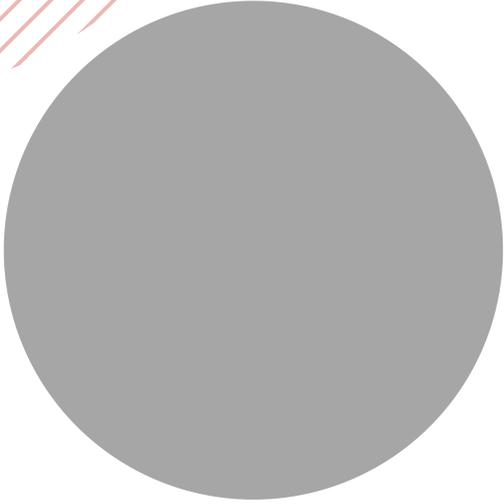
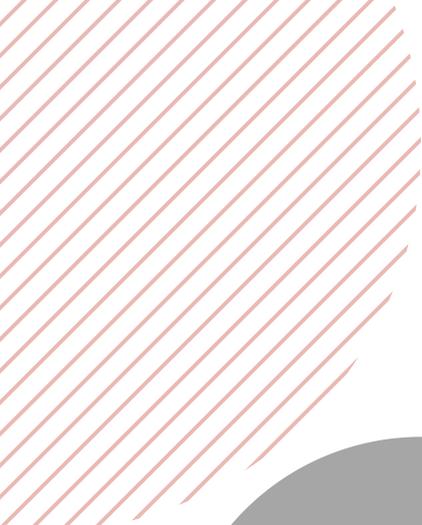
- Placemats for glasses
- Tasting sheets and wine information sheet

Prepare for Tasters

- Pencils, pencil sharpener, rubber
- **6 glasses** per participant (ISO size)
- One water glass per participant
- Napkins
- Spittoons
- Tasteless water
- Snack, e.g. bread, crackers
- Wine aroma wheel

Have handy for host

- Corkscrews
- Towels
- Bottle sleeves, aluminum foil, or brown paper bags
- One 3-digit code per wine



Glass Place Mat



WINE TASTING STARTER KIT

EVALUATION SHEET

Date

Occasion

Here are four wines to evaluate, each coded with a 3-digit number. **Start evaluating the wines from left to right** and describe your perceptions as precisely as you can.

There is no need to write long sentences.

Follow the steps defined in the left column to evaluate each wine. Use the [wine aroma wheel](#) as a guide, if available.

Add one wine code per column

Describe what you perceive at each step

Evaluation steps				
SMELL before stirring the glass				
SMELL after stirring the glass				
TASTE- Describe the basic tastes				
TASTE- Describe the aromas				
TASTE- Describe the mouthfeel				
Other Comments				

WINE TASTING STARTER KIT

WINE CHEAT SHEET

Date

Occasion

On this table, report the wine information.

HOWEVER, only disclose it AFTER all wines are tasted. Otherwise, you will expose yourself and your guests to the expectation bias and maybe a leniency bias.

[Learn more of the ten wine tasting biases.](#)

Add one wine code per column

Winery name, Brand				
Winery location (country, region)				
Varietal(s)				
Vintage				
Price/bottle				
Did you like it? (Yes/No)				
Would you buy it? (Yes/No)				
Other Comments				

ABOUT INNOVINUM

I founded InnoVinum in Canada in 2002 to help the wine industry become more consumer-centric when developing new wine styles and communicating with us, wine enthusiasts.

Since 2017, I operate InnoVinum in Atlanta, GA.

The mission is to demystify wine tasting through our online education platform, [Wine Tasting Demystified](#). I curate resources and offer physical and digital products to help wine enthusiasts become better wine tasters.

I also retail the Wine Aroma Wheel on behalf of Dr. Ann Noble.

Stay connected and join our [private Facebook Group](#).

