# Tasting Vocabulary — Quick Reference



*Keep this page next to your glass. Words that help you put a smell or taste into language.*

## Colour guide

**Red (young → old)**



purple · ruby · garnet · tawny

**White (young → old)**



lemon-green · lemon · gold · amber · brown

**Rosé**



pink · salmon · orange

## Primary aromas — from the grape

| | |
|---|---|
| **Citrus** | lemon, lime, grapefruit, orange peel |
| **Green fruit** | green apple, pear, gooseberry, grape |
| **Stone fruit** | peach, apricot, nectarine |
| **Tropical** | pineapple, mango, passion fruit, lychee, melon |
| **Red fruit** | redcurrant, cranberry, raspberry, strawberry, red cherry |
| **Black fruit** | blackcurrant (cassis), blackberry, black cherry, plum |
| **Dried fruit** | fig, prune, raisin, dried cherry |
| **Floral** | rose, violet, elderflower, acacia, orange blossom |
| **Herbal / green** | cut grass, bell pepper, mint, eucalyptus, tomato leaf |
| **Spice** | black pepper, liquorice, clove, anise |
| **Mineral** | wet stone, flint, chalk, slate, saline |

## Secondary — from winemaking

| | |
|---|---|
| **Oak** | vanilla, toast, smoke, cedar, coconut, coffee, chocolate |
| **Malolactic** | butter, cream, cheese rind |
| **Yeast / lees** | bread, brioche, biscuit, yoghurt |

## Tertiary — from ageing

| | |
|---|---|
| **Red wine** | leather, earth, forest floor, mushroom, tobacco, game |
| **White wine** | honey, toast, nuts, petrol (Riesling), dried apricot |
| **Oxidative** | almond, hazelnut, caramel, toffee, coffee |

## Structure — how it feels

| | |
|---|---|
| **Acidity** | makes your mouth water; crisp, fresh, zesty — or flat, soft |
| **Tannin** | drying grip on gums and teeth; silky, fine, firm, coarse |
| **Body** | weight in the mouth: like skimmed milk (light) to cream (full) |
| **Finish** | seconds the flavour lasts after swallowing: <5 short, 5–10 medium, >10 long |

## Scoring guide (100-point scale)

| | |
|---|---|
| **95 – 100** | outstanding — balanced, complex, intense, very long |
| **90 – 94** | very good — great character and length |
| **85 – 89** | good — well made, enjoyable, some interest |
| **80 – 84** | acceptable — correct but simple |
| **below 80** | poor or faulty |

## Readiness for drinking

| | |
|---|---|
| **Too young** | harsh tannin or acidity, closed nose — wait |
| **Can age** | enjoyable now, but fruit and structure will carry it further |
| **Drink now** | at its peak or made for early drinking |
| **Past its best** | fruit faded, dried out, dull or oxidised |

## Common faults — and how to spot them

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cork taint** | wet cardboard, damp cellar, musty — fruit is muted |
| **Oxidation** | brownish colour, bruised apple, sherry-like (in a wine not meant to be) |
| **Volatile acidity** | vinegar or nail-polish remover |
| **Reduction** | struck match, rotten egg, cabbage — often fades after swirling or decanting |
| **Brett** | farmyard, sticking plaster, sweaty saddle — a little can add character |

*Tip: a wine is "balanced" when fruit, acidity, tannin, alcohol and sweetness support each other and none sticks out.*