

DAVE — ON — WINE

The Elvis of Wine-Tasting Organs

When it comes to tasting wine, your mouth gets way too much credit. It's the diva of tasting organs, whereas the nose is more like "the wind beneath my wings". If you were paying attention in Biology class instead of passing notes, you'll remember that your tongue can only sense four main flavors: Sweet; Sour; Bitter and Chocolate. Not really. The last one is actually Salty.

While the tongue can only deal in generalizations, the nose can differentiate hundreds of aromas, and is thus the Elvis of wine-tasting organs.

Fruity wines carry strong aromas of fruits – which are usually specifically described as tropical, citrus, dark, berries, or white (peaches, pears, apples). Many wines are fruity, including Merlot, Rieslings, California Pinot Noir, and almost everything from the southern hemisphere.

If a wine smells like a quarry, it is said to be **mineral** in nature. These wines are generally whites that exhibit aromas that remind you of flint, slate or schist. Yeah, I know that mineral wines sound disgusting, but they're actually great wines with food. No, really. A great one that you've never had is Gruner-Veltliner, which is Austria's national grape. It's great with fowl, and foul with nothing.

Wines that remind you of the smell of a newly-mown lawn are **herbaceous** or **grassy**. These wines, mostly Sauvignon Blancs from anywhere but New Zealand (grapefruits), are excellent sippers, and accompany seafood very well.

Some wines exhibit **spice** or **pepper** notes. These wines – not surprisingly – go very nicely with spicy foods. While most of them are red wines like Pinot Noir, Zinfandel, and Shiraz. Spicy whites include Gewurztraminer and Torrontes, a South American variety that might be the best wine that you've never tried.

Compared to New World wines, European wines tend to be **earthy**, with aromas of hay, mushrooms, and yes, dirt. Again, drinking these wines is far more pleasant than it sounds.

Many wines are aged in oak barrels of various sizes prior to bottling. Depending upon the type of oak used, and the size and age of the barrel, these wines will absorb compounds from the wood. Wines that taste strongly of wood, smoke, vanilla, coconuts or toast are **oaky**. Oakiness is most easily noticed in Chardonnay, evoking passionate debates upon drinkers of Chardonnay as to whether oaky Chardonnays or Unoaked (aged in stainless steel) are better. While most people seem to prefer the oaky California Chardonnays that they're used to, many like the lighter unoaked style, which better reflects the natural apple and pear flavors of the grape.

Some wines with which to test your Elvis organ: **Aresti Merlot** ~ A Chilean charmer that will smack you upside the head with fruit. (\$12). **Cycles Gladiator Chardonnay** ~ Proof that big, oaky California Chardonnays don't have to cost more than your meal. (\$9) **Lurton Torrontes** ~ A medium-bodied, tropical, spicy white. (\$9) **Morande Sauvignon Blanc** ~ a surprisingly classic-styled Sauvignon Blanc from Chile.

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