

Acidity

A general term for the fresh, tart, or sour taste produced by the natural organic acids. Wines... owe their attractive qualities to a proper balance between this acidic character and the sweet and bitter sensations of other components. All refreshing drinks contain some acidity, which is typically sensed on the human palate by a prickling sensation on the sides of the tongue.

Body

A tasting term for the perceived 'weight'—the sensation of fullness, resulting from density or viscosity—of a wine on the palate. Wines at either end of the scale are described as full bodied and light bodied. Next to water, alcohol is the major constituent of wines. It has a much higher viscosity than water and is the major component responsible for the sensation of fullness, or body... The more potent a wine the more full bodied it is usually said to be.

Tannins

A diverse and complex group of chemical compounds that occur in the bark of many trees and in fruits, including the grape. Strictly speaking, a tannin is a compound that is capable of interacting with proteins and precipitating them; this is the basis of the process of tanning animal hides (hence the name tannin) and is also a process that is believed to be responsible for the sensation of astringency. Tannins in wine come predominantly from the grapes and, to a much lesser extent, from the wood in which the wine is aged.

Minerality

This is not a technical term; rather, it is one that sommeliers and winemakers frequently use when discussing the mineral presence (taste of minerals) in a wine. Minerals from the soil that are soluble in water actually nourish, and thus flavor, grapes (and thus wine).

Oak

Oak ageing the process of ageing a wine in contact with oak. This typically involves barrel maturation, ageing the wine in a relatively small oak container, although the phrase may also be used for cask ageing in a larger oak container, and can even be used for wines exposed to the influence of oak chips or inner staves. Wines thus treated may be described as oak aged, oak matured, or oaked. (Oaky is a tasting term usually applied to wines too heavily influenced by oak flavor, which smell and taste more of wood than fruit, and may be aggressively tannic and dry.)

Complexity

This refers to an amalgamation of all of the elements together. A wine's complexity considers the amount of flavors within a wine, the elegance of a wine's tannins, aging potential and length, or persistence, upon taking a sip.

** Acidity, Body, Tannins and Oak definitions are quoted from Jancis Robinson, MW, in the Oxford Companion to Wine.