



MERLOTTA
VIGNAIOLI DAL 1962

LESSON 9

**WINETASTING
TECHNIQUES - 2**
(BY FRANCO DALMONTE)



TASTING. TASTING TECHNIQUES

The analysis of the sensory characteristics is completed the wine is in the mouth, when the wine is drunk the taste is evaluated, in other words in the chemical sense linked to specialised receptors situated in the oral- pharyngeal cavity.

But the taste is not the only sense that is stimulated in the tasting of wine (also in food): “ Without the participation of the smell no tasting is complete”.

This saying of Brillat-Savarin, the French magistrate who lived at the turn of the 19th century, suggests that the sense of smell is a necessary part of a correct evaluation of food stuffs. This affirmation is easily verifiable with each one of us: a cold or a blocked nose is enough to noticeably reduce our tasting capacity.

Taste thus becomes (according to the definition of the AFNOR manual) “ a combination of tasting, olfactory sensations and of common chemical sensibility perceived when the food or drink is placed in the mouth”

TASTE

The four main flavours of taste are the sweet, the savoury, the sour and the bitter.

THE SWEET

Felt on the tip of the tongue and in the first instance due to the presence of sugar residues, still present in the wine, but also ethyl alcohol, glycerine (after water the two most important components in wine), inositol and sorbitol.

According to the quantity of sugars present a wine is defined as:

Dry: if it contains 1-5g/l of sugars; sensation of sweetness not perceptible

Medium: if it contains 10-20 g/l of sugars; a slight sensation of sweetness

Amabile: if it contains 20-50 g/l of sugars; definite sensation of sweetness

Sweet: if it contains over 50 g/l of sugars; sweetness dominant

Sugary: sweetness is dominant but not backed up by other sensations

THE BITTER

Felt at the back of the tongue; in wine it is caused by the polyphenol constituents and can take on pleasant connotations (generally bitterness is not a pleasant taste). It's intensity is limited, otherwise symptomatic of a disease. The perception of bitterness has the tendency to increase with tasting procedures.

THE SAVOURY

Felt at the sides of the tongue and amongst the tasting sensations present in wine it is the least intense and important

THE ACIDITY

Felt at the sides and the tip of the tongue; together with sweetness is the most important of the flavours in wine. There are six acids which play a key role, three present in the grape (tartaric, malic and citric) and three produced by the fermentation process (succinic, lactic and acetic).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TASTES

- Alcohol reinforces the sweet and bitter flavours
- Sweetness contrasts the bitter and acidic but has no influence on the savoury
- The bitter contrasts the the sweet, reinforces the acidic and is ineffectual on the savoury
- The acidic reinforces the bitter and savoury and contrasts the sweet
- Sweetness is felt more at high temperatures
- The savoury and bitter are stronger at low temperatures

MOUTHFEEL

ASTRINGENCY

A mouth puckering sensation that is generally felt when eating persimmon, unripe fruit, raw artichoke; causes gums to contract, sensation of dryness and roughness on the tongue and a decrease of saliva. Tannins are responsible.

PUNGENCY

Caused by presence of CO₂ and it is the typical sensation one has tasting sparkling wines; one feels a tingling but also a freshness. If the sensation is too

strong it's not pleasant.

HEAT

The sensation of causticity, corrosiveness and false heat that one can taste in the presence of substances like acids and alcohol.

CONSISTENCY

The sensation the palate perceives as full, fleshy and meaty; if the wine is too fluid it will lack consistency.

TASTING BALANCE

The balance between the suppleness, represented by the alcohol and sugars, and the inflexibility, represented by the acidity, astringency and sapidity is evaluated.

The balance is evaluated according to the type of wine that is being tasted but if one component is dominant and not supported by the other the wine becomes unpleasant.

INTENSITY AND LENGTH

The intensity can be defined as "how many kilos of sensations" the wine is able to transmit to us, the length represents how long the sensations last and

what they are once the wine has been swallowed.

OVERALL EVALUATION

At the end of the tasting the wine is evaluated according to the combination of the observations, visual, sensory and taste. Only the correct correspondence of all the sensory analyses can show us the

quality of the wine being tasted.

THE TASTING

Around 10ml of wine is put into the mouth; this quantity is considered sufficient to involve the whole of oral cavity but at the same time not be diluted by saliva;

Move the wine to the front of the mouth and inhale a small quantity of air through the teeth so as to eva-

porate some components of the wine;

Move the wine with the tongue and press it lightly against the palate and then exhale;

The wine is then swallowed (with repeated tastings the wine is expelled) and after exhaling mastication follows to evaluate the length.

Bibliographic references:

Il sommelier – Tecnica della degustazione - AIS

L'assaggio del vino – ONAV

Il piacere del vino – Slow Food Editore

Fisiologia del gusto – Brillat Savarin

I profili del Vino - Ubigli