



A Basic Guide to Wine Terminology

Learning basic wine terms early on can help enhance your understanding and make it easier to express your impressions and preferences.

Acidic: All wines naturally contain acid, but it should always be in harmony with the other flavors. Acid is necessary for wines to age and gives it a lively, crisp quality.

Aerate: Exposing a wine to oxygen (allowing it to “breathe”) helps it to mellow and develop its full flavors, especially red wines.

Appellation: The specific geographic area from which a wine is produced. Most European wines are named by appellation rather than the specific grape it was created from.

Body: The texture and weight of a wine. Is it thin like water, or does it have more ‘body’ like milk?

Bouquet: All the aromas in a wine collectively make up its bouquet.

Complexity: Having many different flavors and aromas other than just one or two. A good wine should be complex.

Dry: Basically the opposite of sweet in wine speak.

Legs: These noticeable traces of oil left running down the inside of your wine glass after it’s been tipped indicate the amounts of alcohol and sugar.

Oak: The smell, taste and character of a wine stored in oak wine barrels.

Reserve: This term has no legal definition in the United States, it is implied reserve wines are aged longer and made better than regularly bottled wines.

Spicy: Having spicy characteristics such clove, cinnamon, or pepper.

Tannin: Found naturally in the skins, seeds and stems of grapes. Tannins are usually found in red wines and give that dry, lip puckering sensation.

Varietal: Wine that is made from one dominant grape variety (usually indicated on the label such as Chardonnay or Cabernet)

Velvety: Another of the wine definitions for a smooth, silky wine with low acids and tannins.

Vintage: The year the wine was harvested. A wine’s vintage is found on all wine labels.

