

21 DAYS TO WINE: DAY 8

Intensity and Complexity of Aroma

WINE: Bordeaux Château Fage Graves de Vayres 2016

SCENTS: Bell pepper, Fresh-ground pepper, Different types of wood

SUPPLIES: A white napkin or piece of white paper (to observe)

21 DAYS TO WINE

REVIEW

In the last episode we mentioned INTENSITY. Do the aromas hit you in the face or are they fairly subtle?

We also talked about pouring only a small amount of wine in your glass and taking SHORT, STRONG SNIFFS.

WHAT DO YOU SMELL?

Before getting into the specific scent notes you recognize in a glass of wine, for example: lemon zest, rose petals or strawberry jam, we start with general descriptive terms like: Fruity, Floral, Spicy, Herbaceous or Vegetal, and Mineral.

From there we get more specific.

- *Spice notes like sweet cinnamon and nutmeg.*
- *Herbaceous and Vegetal notes like grass, bell peppers, and fresh leafy herbs.*

You might not be able to figure out exactly what fruit or flowers you smell because that takes a lot of practice, but you can still describe the wine.

For example, *The Moscato d'Asti from DAY 7 has intense fruity notes of apricot, peaches, and floral notes of rose petals and freesia.*

INTENSITY AND COMPLEXITY

Intensity is exactly how it sounds. Is the wine extremely aromatic? Does the scent hit you in the face? Or is it light and subtle? There is a sliding scale, and as usual, practice makes perfect.

Intensity depends on a several factors.

1. Grape variety and ripeness

If you start with an aromatic grape like Moscato or Gwürtztraminer or semi-aromatic grape like Sauvignon Blanc or Vermentino these wines are likely to produce more intense aromas.

Riper, juicy grapes have healthier skin, which is where the aromatic molecules come from, so wines with intense aromas might indicate grapes grown in hot climates or sunny places, like near the sea or on a tall mountainside.

2. Techniques in the winery

Cooler temperatures during pressing and fermentation help preserve aromas, especially in white wines.

Oxidation and wood barrel ageing can both **contribute to and mellow out** aromas, so this one can be tricky.

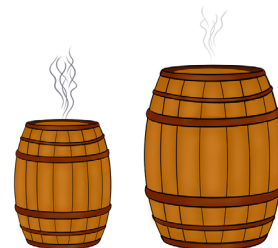
If you get a very intense woody note, what we call “oaky” there’s a good chance the wine aged in barrels. Small barrels and brand new oak barrels impart stronger aromas than large, old oak does.

3. Age/ Vintage

The AGE of a wine can also affect the intensity of aromas. Grapes are plants and wine is alive. Fresh fruit and vegetable notes tend to fade with time, and transition into rich ripe fruit or jammy notes, especially in red wines.

Earthy notes, literally, things like dirt, dry leaves, the damp forest floor...these emerge and become more intense over time as wine begins to breath and oxidize and age. Or become more “mature.”

LARGER AND OLDER OAK BARRELS DO NOT IMPART SUCH AN OAKY AROMA.



COMPLEXITY

Compared to intensity, complexity is pretty simple. It's the difference between smelling one general scent note or clearly identifying many different ones. The more you can decipher, the more you say.

The more scent notes you recognize, the more COMPLEX the wine is.

A younger Cabernet Sauvignon-based Bordeaux might have intense notes of blackcurrants and bell peppers, but after ageing in barrels and resting in the cellar for a decade, aromas might become less intense but more complex, with different herbaceous notes, like mint and sage and cedar wood coming out.

COLOR AND COMPLEXITY

Going back to color, a red wine that is garnet or brick red, especially around the edges, and is not so opaque should indicate that this has aged. You should expect more "mature" and complex notes.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS LANGUAGE MEAN FOR YOU?

As we now know, Cabernet can be young or mature. It can be oaky or not, it can be intensely fruity or more herbaceous and green. Once you figure out the style you like best there is a whole world of wine out there with similar characteristics to discover and share with other people.

WINE NOTES

WINERY

Chateaux Fage is located south of the town of Vayre on a westward bend of the Dordogne River known for significant gravel deposits, hence the AOC designation Graves de Vayres. The property was built in the 1800s, has changed hands a few times and produces both red and white wines.

WINEMAKING

The wine is made from 65% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec and 5% Petit Verdot. Eight months of aging in new French oak barrels.

BORDEAUX

PRONUNCIATION: **Bore-Dough**

Bordeaux is the largest wine growing and producing region and wine appellation in France. Bordeaux is beloved by casual wine producers and connoisseurs alike.

LES GRANDS CRUS CLASSÉS

The complex classification of crus (vineyards) originates with a historic system of wine commerce. In 1855, Napoleon III requested a wine exposition for the World's Fair featuring the best Bordeaux wine. Châteaux (wineries) situated on hillsides and in close proximity to river valleys optimal for wine production had historically garnered higher prices for their wines. All of the wineries were ranked with *Premier Cru* being the top tier for reds, *Premier Cru Supérieur* for whites.

Exceptional land and wealth do not guarantee quality however, and the system has been criticized for ages as valuing reputation over true quality.

There is a lot learn. Consider this an introduction and an invitation to explore further.

RED RED WINE

Bordeaux is famous for red wines. The majority of production is regulated by law and comes from what is called the “Bordeaux Blend” of **Cabernet Sauvignon**, **Cabernet Franc**, and **Merlot** with smaller percentages of **Petit Verdot**, **Malbec**, and **Petit Verdot**.

White Bordeaux Wines (*Bordeaux Blanc*) are typically made with **Sauvignon Blanc** and **Sémillion**, including world famous dessert wine, Sauternes, which we'll discuss on DAY 19 – The Definition of Dessert Wine.

* *Climate change is affecting the viability of many wine regions throughout the world. Many wine governing bodies are considering allowing new grapes into the appellation to support growers and the wine economy.*

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT.

An estuary too. The Garonne and Dordogne rivers as well as the Gironde Estuary irrigate the land and contribute to rich and variegated soil types. These rivers also delineate the sub-appellations of Bordeaux as the soil and microclimates are radically different depending on where the vineyards are located, and this affects the flavor profile and style of the finished wine.

- **Right Bank** – Wineries located to the right of the Dordogne in northern Bordeaux. Pomerol and Saint-Émilion are here. Generally, but not always, **MERLOT** dominates the red blend.
- **Entre Deux Mers** – From the French for “between two seas” - In the middle
- **Left Bank** - Wineries located to the left of the Garonne in the West and South. The Left Bank is further divided into the areas of Graves and Médoc. Graves takes its name for distinctly gravelly soil which not only provides good drainage for vines, but also bestows unique mineral aromas and texture in the wine. Generally, but not always, **Cabernet Sauvignon** dominates the red blend.

BORDEAUX
CHÂTEAU FAGE
GRAVES
DE VAYRES
2016



TASTING NOTES

LOOK: Vibrant ruby red color

SMELL: Relatively intense fruity notes of ripe and brambly red and black berry and piquant spice notes of pepper and licorice

TASTE: Balanced and bright on the palate with a medium, fruity and mineral finish

DISCUSS

This Bordeaux is still young and evolving. The oak notes are present but not too intense and almost translate as sweet spice. Enjoy it now or wait for the bright fruit to mellow into something earthier. Either way, try it with roast chicken or pot roast.

Cheers!
ANNIE

my notes

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