

Wine Snobbery Debunked

By Ted Adams Group Leader U3A Moraira/Teulada Alternative Wine Group

The Alternative Wine Group was founded because of my dislike of wine snobbery. I have a serious problem with the pretentious utterings of many so-called wine experts who seem oblivious to the financial difficulties many of us are currently dealing with. They disregard the many very drinkable wines available in our supermarkets and bodegas today that cost well under €3.00 a bottle.

In particular two areas of wine description defy any logic or reality. These are 'aroma' and 'taste'. I firmly believe that if you want to sniff the aroma of a blackberry, buy a box of Moras. Likewise, if you want to describe the taste of a wine, use words such as 'dry', 'sweet', 'oaky', because the wine was stored in barrels, 'tannin', from the grape skins, 'fruity', surprise, surprise, wine is made from fruit! 'Resin', if you visit Greece.

Listening to the highly entertaining Jilly Goolden, describing wine aromas and tastes that cannot chemically or by any other analysis really exist, provoked me to examine the claims in the otherwise excellent Repsol Wine Guide 2010. This is printed for the first time in English, and sold with the useful map and food guide, and contains the following descriptions and many more that are equally improbable.

How can it be possible to identify the following aromas from the humble grape?

Intense and marked What on earth does 'marked' mean in the context of a wine aroma?

Complex Dictionary definitions include 'multifaceted' and 'multifarious'.

Red Fruits Of course some grapes are red, but what other fruits do they mean?

Jams What varieties and what fruits?

Spices I am still looking for curry!

Light taste of cocoa A hot bedtime drink, beats Horlicks any night

Citrus Lemon wine?

Now we come to taste, all from the humble grape.

Elegant in the mouth This wine, unlike me, dresses for dinner.

Unctuous Oily, greasy, smarmy. I picture a hang-wringing money lender.

Fruit undertones Shouldn't it be 'fruit overtones'? Unless there is something other than grape juice in the bottle.

Silky

Mrs Beckham's knickers?

Peppery

Why not just say 'a high level of alcohol'?

All of the foregoing from a bottle of wine? I think someone has been drinking too much of the product and seeing the 'Emperors Clothes'.

Our mission is that no wine must cost more than €3.00, either directly or by taking advantage of promotional offers and bodega discounts. Each taster is given complete information on the wine, grape, tienda, bodega and price as they enter the tasting. We taste six wines, with water, biscuits and nibbles, at a cost of €4.00 per head, and when possible, meet monthly.

The Taster numbers have increased from 25 in January 2009 to 84 at our February 2010 tasting. Tasters are asked to make their own judgement. They either like it and will buy it, or don't like, won't buy it. In the latter case, they have saved money by not buying a wine by mistake. We set out to have fun, with jokes, mystery prizes and a raffle. Tasters must be members of U3A Moraira Teulada. There is no further charge to the Wine Group other than entry to tastings.

Ted Adams
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