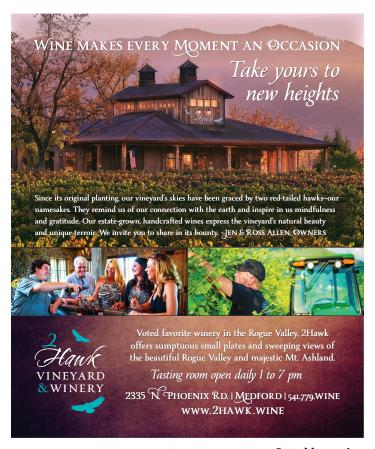
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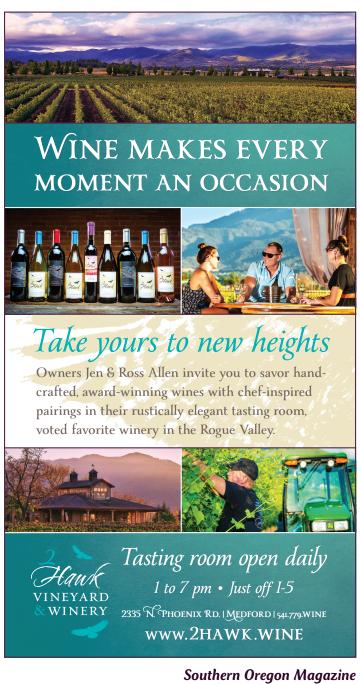
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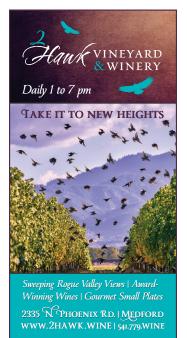
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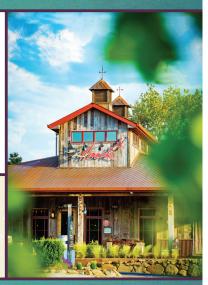
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HOST YOUR OWN WINE TASTING

HOSTING YOUR OWN WINE TASTING with friends and family can be a fun and educational experience. All you need is a variety of wines, a corkscrew, wine glasses and a sense of adventure. We hope the following tips will make your experience richer and more festive.

THE 7 'S'ES OF WINE TASTING

See

HOLD YOUR GLASS at an angle against a white background to judge the wine's appearance. Note the hue of the wine as well as the intensity of the color. Intensely colored wine—a wine in which the color doesn't "lighten up" near the rim or edge of the glass—indicates a more full-bodied wine. A lighter-colored wine will typically have a lighter flavor. Color can also reveal something about a wine's age and, in the case of some reds, the wine's acidity.

Swirl and Sniff

SWIRLING THE WINE opens it up and makes it easier to smell the aromas. After swirling, stick your nose into the glass and breathe in. The acronym FEW can help you remember this part of the tasting. F is for fruit and floral, E is for earth and W is for wood. A wine's aromatic character changes over time, so don't be afraid to come back and smell a wine again. The changes can be profound after only a few minutes.

Fruit is broad and encompasses everything from the apple, pear, citrus and tropicals in white wines to the cherry, blackberry, fig and plum in red wines. Consider the fruits in relationship to the wine's color. Floral notes can include rose, lavender and honeysuckle.

Earth encompasses everything from the smell of minerals and wet rocks to mushrooms and freshly tilled soil. Like other wine smells, it is not always present.

Wood—usually oak—is often used to age wines but not always. These aromas may remind you of your spice cupboard with smells of cinnamon, vanilla, allspice and licorice.



Sip and Swish

TAKE A SIP and swish the wine around in your mouth. Breathe in with your mouth slightly open to pass air over the wine. This aerates the wine and enhances the experience of the aroma as your olfactory system senses smell in both your palate and nose.

Our taste buds are capable of distinguishing five basic flavors: sweet, sour, bitter, salt and umami. In wine, we often taste sweet, sour and bitter elements. Salt is sometimes found but is not common. Also, think about the absence of taste elements.

SWEET

Sweet is the presence of sugar in wine. Dry is the absence of sugar in wine. Medium-dry or off-dry falls somewhere in between. You usually detect sweetness on the tip of your tongue. To simulate dryness in wine, place three glasses of water in front of you. Into the first glass, pour an entire packet of sugar—this corresponds with sweet. A half packet of sugar in the second glass demonstrates medium-dry, or off-dry. The third glass, with no sugar, demonstrates dry.



HOST YOUR OWN WINE TASTING

SOUR

Sour is usually sensed on the sides of your tongue. It refers to the acidity in wine—what makes it taste crisp and refreshing. Let's fill three glasses with water again. Squeeze a whole lemon into the first glass—this would be very crisp. In the second glass, squeeze half a lemon—this represents crisp. Placing a few drops in the third glass provides a low-acid example of crisp.

BITTER

Bitter refers to the flavor created by tannins in wine. It may be sensed all over your palate. While, like sour, it carries a negative connotation, bitter actually refers to the mouth-puckering quality of wine. Wines can be described as light, medium or heavy in tannins. You can sense tannins in grape skins, espresso and overly steeped tea. Tannin is usually found in red wine because of the extended contact with grape skins during wine production.

Don't confuse the flavor of bitterness with astringency. Astringency is a textural element that can mimic tannin's pucker factor but is most commonly associated with acidity and balance.

CUMAMI

Umami refers to a deliciousness factor that takes into account many different elements, including a wine's savory or meaty character. Umami is most commonly found in wines made from very ripe, full-flavored fruit that sees extended aging on wine lees.

Swallow (or Spit) and Savor

WHAT IS THE MOUTHFEEL? Silky or astringent? Is the wine light, medium or full-bodied? What is the aftertaste—the lingering flavor you get after swallowing the wine? A good aftertaste is pleasant and persistent. Aftertaste also speaks to potential longevity. The longer the aftertaste persists, the more likely the wine will evolve with age.

TIPS FOR SETTING UP 'YOUR TASTING 'PARTY

- 1. Chill whites and remove only a few minutes before the wine is poured.
- 2. Open reds an hour before tasting to allow them to breathe.
- 3. Make sure there are no strong smells in the room such as candles or flowers as they interfere with the wines' smells.
- 4. Cover the tasting area with a white cloth so guests can see the color of the wines.
- 5. Using the tasting mat as a guide (you may wish to make copies for future tasting parties), place a wine glass in each spot and pour 2 oz. wine in each.
- 6. Sample three to five wines. Serve from lightest to darkest or driest to sweetest.
- 7. Provide water and plain crackers or bread so guests can cleanse their palate between tastings.
- 8. Give guests an idea of how they should be tasting the wines (reference the 7 'S'es in this guide).
- 9. Guests may wish to make notes on their tasting mats for future reference.





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