



Welcome to Chris' Tasting Group!

Thank you for joining our tasting group—get ready to explore our wines—we can't wait! This first set includes two wines from the same vintage, made in the exact same way, but with one key difference: **where** the grapes were grown. We call it “Mountain and Valley.” But first, before we dive in, please read my “Introduction to Wine Tasting” below, and then the “Steps to Host a Wine Tasting.” See you soon!

—AN INTRODUCTION TO WINE TASTING—

First of all, **Why** Taste Wine? Why not just **Drink** It?

You already know the answer, or you wouldn't be reading this, so I'll just develop the theme.

Wine Tasting has also been called “Wine Appreciation”—not to imply that we always enjoy the wine we're tasting, but rather to suggest that we're taking it in the way we experience art, as in “Art Appreciation.” We're exploring what we see, how we see, and how we react, how it affects us, the memories and emotions it evokes, how we understand beauty.

Yes, Wine Tasting can be an aesthetic experience—one in which we engage **all of our senses**—not only scent and taste, but also touch, sight, and even sound. Although the creation of wine is not fine art—properly understood, wine-making must be seen as a craft, highly dependent on nature: the soil, the weather, etc.—the appreciation of wine is most decidedly an aesthetic experience, just as much as a walk in the forest, a hike in the mountains, or a stroll on the beach.

Getting in touch with our senses is what it's all about.

That's why we Taste wine. That moment when we're **Paying Attention** is when we're truly alive. We can't always do this, but when we can, it is a gift!

Tasting wine is an exploration of the senses, and nothing could be more difficult. We're not used to paying attention to the scents that surround us—in American vernacular, the word “smell” is negative, as in “smells bad.” Most of us can taste quite well, but we have a hard time putting

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—AN INTRODUCTION TO WINE TASTING, CONTINUED—

words like “bitter” and “sour” accurately to the sensations we’re perceiving. Although texture might seem like an easy thing to describe, we’re not used to applying words like “smooth” and “rough” to the things we eat and drink.

It is commonly said that each of us has our own taste, which is true. At first, and sometimes in the end, it may seem that each of us lives in our own world. But for **reality** to have any meaning, we want to be able to see things the same way as others do. We humans learn from one another, we share experiences, we teach one another. Our world would not at all be the same if we did not share the same blue sky, the same bright sun, the same full moon, or if the ocean breeze did not carry the same fresh marine scent.

This is why we taste wine **together**—so that we can **share** our perceptions and **learn** from **each other**.

However, that is just the beginning. Where wine gets interesting is when it evokes memories and emotions—and most of all, when it touches our sense of beauty. Not all wines are beautiful. Some may be jarring, discordant, even challenging any sense of pleasure. But then, many of the most interesting tastes in our lives, at first, may have been unfamiliar, disorienting. How did we learn to love oysters, or anchovies, or truffles, or blue cheese? While these are strong flavors, even subtle flavors, like seaweed or mushrooms, might throw us off balance when we’re new to them.

Then, Wine Tasting is **not about liking the wine**—it’s about **exploring** the wine and our perceptions of it.

And this is best done in the company of people we know and love, people with whom we have shared experiences, shared memories, and shared vocabulary.

So, let’s get started!

Christopher Howell, Wine-Grower

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