

SEE: CLARITY, COLOR, INTENSITY, LEGS

SEE: Clarity, Color, Intensity, Legs

- Most wines should be clear.
 - A pronounced haze may indicate that a wine is spoiled.
1. Set your glasses on the table before you and, looking through the wines from the side, examine them for clarity. You can give them a little swirl; particles are easier to spot when they're moving.
 2. Is each wine clear, or do you see haziness in one or both?
 3. On your Tasting Journal, circle the clarity that most closely matches each wine.

SEE: Clarity, Color, Intensity, Legs

- A wine's color is determined largely by the grape variety: White wines can be green, straw, gold or amber.
- Color can also indicate a wine's age and health. A young white wine's color should be lighter rather than darker, and may have a greenish tinge.
- Over time, the color of a white wine evolves toward amber. A young white wine that is amber-colored is probably spoiled.

Pinot Grigio

1. Pick up your glass of Pinot Grigio and tilt it away from you at a 45-degree angle.
2. Look at the core -not the rim- of the wine. Make sure the backdrop is white: a napkin, tablecloth or sheet of paper all work.
 - What color is the wine?
 - Do you detect a greenish tinge, indicating a younger or leaner wine? Or is the wine more straw/gold, indicating some age or a fuller body?
 - Circle the color on your Tasting Journal that most closely describes your wine.

Chardonnay

1. Now pick up your glass of Chardonnay and tilt it away from you at a 45-degree angle.
2. Look at its core.
 - What color is it?
 - Does it have a green tinge? Or is it more straw or gold colored?
 - Circle its color on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Are they the same color? Or are they different?
- In general, wine made from Pinot Grigio will be toward the green or yellow end of the spectrum; wine made from Chardonnay is more frequently straw or gold in color.
- Since these wines are both young, differences in color are due mainly to the different grape varieties and to the effects of age (which causes whites to darken) or how they were made (oak aging can darken wines).

SEE: Clarity, Color, **Intensity**, Legs

Illustrating Intensity

1. Imagine a pitcher of Concord grape juice.
2. Now, add a cup of water to it and see what happens: The juice is still purple, but now it's a paler shade of purple; it's not as dark as before.
3. Add another cup of water, and the juice becomes even paler.
 - Intensity refers not to color itself, but to the concentration of color: The more concentrated a wine's color, the greater its intensity.
 - A wine with high intensity of color is referred to as "dark"; low intensity, "pale"; in between, "medium."
 - Intensity is important because it offers a visual cue to the wine: Generally, the more intense a wine's color, the more flavorful and full-bodied it is.

Pinot Grigio

1. Stand up and look down through your glass of Pinot Grigio.

Chardonnay

1. Now look down through your glass of Chardonnay.
 - Which wine is more intense? How intense is each wine? Mark your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which wine has the more intense color?
- Based on intensity, which wine would you expect to be more full-bodied?
- In general, the Chardonnay will be more intense than the Pinot Grigio because the grapes are usually harvested riper.

SEE: Clarity, Color, Intensity, **Legs**

"Legs" or "tears" refer to the rivulets of wine that form on the inside of a wine glass after swirling.

Like intensity, legs provide wine cues: The more pronounced the legs and the longer they last, the higher the alcohol content and the more full-bodied the wine.

Legs are always fun to look at, but they do not tell us anything about wine quality; a fuller-bodied wine is not necessarily better than a lighter-bodied wine nor is a wine with more alcohol better than a wine with a less alcohol.

How to Swirl Refresher

Swirling is important because it releases wine's aromas from the liquid.

1. Resting your glass on the table, lightly hold the stem at the base with your fingertips. Begin "drawing" small circles on the table.
2. Now increase the speed of these circles until the wine is swirling around inside your glass.
3. Stop and let the wine come to rest.
4. Now it's time to look at the legs.

Pinot Grigio

1. Swirl your glass of Pinot Grigio for a moment and then stop.
2. Are the legs faint and short-lived, or pronounced and long lasting?
3. Make a note on your Tasting Journal.

Chardonnay

1. Now take your glass of Chardonnay and swirl it.
2. Are the legs faint and short-lived? Pronounced and long lasting?
3. Mark your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which wine has the longer lasting, more pronounced legs?
- Which wine would you expect to have a higher alcohol content and be more full-bodied?
- Look at each bottle's label and find the alcohol content.
- Does the label confirm what you've observed?

SNIFF: AROMA INTENSITY AND IDENTIFICATION

Sniffing involves using your sense of smell to judge the intensity of a wine's aromas and to identify the aromas.

Aromas

- Wine aromas come from fragrant chemical compounds.
- If you detect the aroma of lemon in your glass of Chardonnay, it is because the same – actually, nearly the same -- combination of chemicals that gives a lemon its distinctive aroma is present in the wine.
- Wine is perhaps the most aromatically complex food we consume; a single wine can have many aromas. For example, apple, peach, pear, grapefruit and honey are just a few of the aromas found in white wines.

Swirl and Sniff Refresher

1. With your wineglasses still on the table, choose one and swirl it.
2. Swirling aerates the wine by increasing its surface area. This accelerates the evaporation of alcohol, which carries aromas into the air where they can be smelled.
3. Pick up the glass, and placing your nose just inside the rim, where the aromas will be most concentrated, take a quick sniff or two, and put the glass down.
4. Don't inhale the wine's aromas for more than a few moments at a time or your nose will become desensitized.

SNIFF: Aroma Intensity and Identification

Some wines are more intensely aromatic than others.

- Intensity answers the question "How powerful - or faint - are the aromas?"
- Try to do the following process in just one or two sniffs per wine; form an impression and go on to the next step.

Pinot Grigio

1. Swirl and sniff your Pinot Grigio.
 - Do the aromas come pouring out of the wine, or are they reticent?
2. Note the intensity of the Pinot Grigio on your Tasting Journal.

Chardonnay

1. Swirl and sniff your Chardonnay.
 - Do the aromas come pouring out of the wine, or are they reticent?
2. Note the intensity of the Chardonnay on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Is one wine more intensely aromatic than the other? If so, is it the Pinot Grigio or the Chardonnay?

SNIFF: Aroma Intensity and Identification

The Zen of Tasting

Swirl and sniff, but before you try to identify any of the aromas, allow an image of the wine to form in your brain. Give yourself at least 10 seconds to develop the image.

Having an overall image of the wine helps you remember it better. It also allows you to see wine as a whole right from the beginning. Otherwise, you immediately focus on individual features.

Think of this as the gestalt of wine or perhaps the Zen of tasting. If nothing else, the pause gives you time to relax and take a breath before you embark on the most difficult part of tasting: identifying aromas.

Practice, Practice, Practice vs. Instant Gratification

Identifying aromas takes a lot of practice. This is worth restating: Gaining expertise takes years of practice.

But, since we all want to get better faster, use your Pinot Grigio-Chardonnay Tasting Journal as you work through this tasting. The aromas listed are characteristic of each grape varietal. We've tried to be fairly exhaustive, but if you detect an aroma that isn't listed, that's fine; go ahead and write it in (and tell us what we've missed!).

- You can identify an aroma by its general category or by its specific name. It's okay if you can only identify the general category -- with some wines, that's as close as you can get. Because many wines contain combinations of aroma molecules that are similar to--but not exactly the same as--those found in many foods, the aromas may not be specific
- Each time you nose a wine, limit yourself to two or three sharp sniffs. This is enough to identify the major aromas without inducing "nasal fatigue."

Pinot Grigio

1. Swirl and sniff your Pinot Grigio.
2. Pause for 10 seconds as you form a mental image of the wine.
3. Try using free association. Memories involving sense of smell can be very strong. Does an aroma recall some past event or place or your grandmother's lemon meringue pie or...?

Chardonnay

1. Swirl and sniff your Chardonnay.
2. Pause for 10 seconds as you form a mental image of the wine.
3. Try using free association. Do the aromas recall a walk in the country or fresh-mown hay? Apple pie or cinnamon or nutmeg? Baking bread or yeast? A movie or buttered popcorn?
 - Based on this first impression, which wine do you prefer?

Pinot Grigio

1. Swirl and sniff your Pinot Grigio again.
2. What is the first or most prominent aroma that comes to you? Try to name it.
3. Look at the scents listed for Pinot Grigio on Tasting Journal. Do any of the possible aromas jump off the page at you?
 - Limit yourself to two or three sniffs.
4. When you identify an aroma, circle it on your Tasting Journal.

5. Do you pick up any scents that are typically associated with oak barrels, such as vanilla, spice and toast?

Chardonnay

1. Swirl and sniff your Chardonnay again.
2. What is the first or most prominent aroma that comes to you? Try to name it.
3. Look at the scents listed for Chardonnay on your Tasting Journal. Do any of the possible aromas jump off the page at you?
4. When you identify an aroma, circle it on your Tasting Journal.
 - If an aroma reminds you of tropical fruit but nothing more specific, circle "Tropical."
5. Do you pick up any scents that are typically associated with oak barrels?

Comparison

- Which wine has more intense aromas, the Pinot Grigio or the Chardonnay?
- What aromas do the two wines have in common?
- Do the fruit aromas in one wine smell riper than those in the other wine?
- What aromas are unique to each wine?
- Which wine has more aromas? Or did you circle the same number for each wine?
- Based on the aromas, which wine do you prefer?
- When it comes to scents derived from oak, you probably didn't get any from the Pinot Grigio since that wine is usually not made using new oak. On the other hand, you may have noted some oak-derived scents in the Chardonnay, which marries well with wood and is frequently fermented or aged in new oak.

SIP: TASTE, BODY, FLAVOR

SIP means using your senses of taste, touch and smell to evaluate a wine's **Taste, Body** and **Flavors**.

Sipping and Aerating Refresher

1. Put the glass to your lips and take a small sip, just enough wine to wet the insides of your mouth.
2. Slosh the wine around in your mouth to make sure it reaches all your taste buds.
3. You may even choose to aerate the wine. With the wine resting just behind your lower front teeth, purse your lips as if to blow out a candle, but, instead of exhaling, gently draw air into your mouth through the wine. You will hear a gurgling noise as you do. This helps release the wine's flavors.
4. Spit the wine into your spit cup.

Taste and Touch

These two sensations are often confused

1. Tastes ---sweet, sour/tart and bitter---are perceived by the taste buds, and ...
2. Nerve endings in the mouth pick up tactile sensations called mouthfeel

Because both occur simultaneously, we don't always distinguish the sensation of taste from mouthfeel.

SIP: Taste, Body, Flavor

You may find two tastes—sweet and tart—in white wines, along with a tactile sensation that wine people call mouthfeel.

Sweet Sources

- Wine may contain some sweetness, called residual sugar, if not all the grapes sugars were converted to alcohol during fermentation. This remaining sweetness may or may not be perceptible to you, depending on the concentration and your sensitivity to it.
- Sugars can add a sticky, cloying mouthfeel.
- Alcohol can give the perception of sweetness to a wine that isn't actually sweet.
- Flavors of ripe fruit can impart the perception of sweetness.

Tart and Refreshing from Acidity

- Wines contain a number of acids commonly found in food, such as acetic acid (as in vinegar), citric acid (lemon), lactic acid (milk, yogurt) and malic acid (green apples).
- Acidity can add a crisp, refreshing mouthfeel.
- Acidity tends to make a wine's fruit flavors seem fresher and brighter

Pinot Grigio

1. Sip, swish and spit your Pinot Grigio.
2. Check your mouth for the sensations of sweetness. Do you detect any of the following?
 - Sweet taste
 - Cloying or sticky and thick (indicating high sugar)
 - Rich (moderate sugar or alcohol)
 - Thin (low sweetness and alcohol)
3. Check your mouth for the sensations of acidity. Do you detect any of the following?
 - Tart taste
 - Puckering or sharp (indicating high acidity)
 - Mouthwatering (moderate acids increase salivation)
 - A clean, refreshing feeling (moderate acidity)
4. Which taste is more pronounced?
 - Sweetness and acidity balance each other. Think of making lemonade with lemons and sugar; adding more sugar makes the lemons' acidity seem less tart.
 - A wine with low acidity feels flat and lifeless on the palate, much like sparkling water that has lost its fizz. It can be described as "flabby."
 - If a wine doesn't have enough acidity to balance the sweetness, the wine can be described as "cloying."
5. Circle the levels of sweetness and acidity on your Tasting Journal.

Chardonnay

1. Now sip, swish and spit the Chardonnay.
2. Check your mouth for the sensations of sweetness. Do you detect any of the following?
 - Sweet taste
 - Cloying or sticky and thick (indicating high sugar)
 - Rich (moderate sugar or alcohol)
 - Thin (low sweetness and alcohol)
3. Check your mouth for the sensations of acidity. Do you detect any of the following?
 - Tart taste
 - Puckering or sharp (indicating high acidity)
 - Mouthwatering (moderate acids increase salivation)
 - A clean, refreshing feeling (moderate acidity)
4. Which taste is more pronounced?
 - Recall that sweetness and acidity balance each other.
 - A wine with low acidity feels flat and lifeless on the palate.

- If a wine doesn't have enough acidity to balance the sweetness, the wine can be described as "cloying."

5. Circle the levels of sweetness and acidity on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Does either wine taste a little sweet?
- Pinot Grigio is almost always dry; Chardonnay occasionally contains a hint of residual sugar. But remember to pay attention to the mouthfeel of sweetness when evaluating wine; your brain can interpret ripe fruit scents as sweet tastes.
- Do they both have the same alcohol level?
- Which wine has more acidity?
- Which wine do you prefer? Why?

SIP: Taste, **Body**, Flavor

Body is the sensation within the mouth of weight and thickness. Both sugar and alcohol add body.

Body is easily understood by relating it to milk:

- Think of skim milk with its thin, watery sensation in your mouth. It is "light-bodied."
- In comparison, think of whole milk. It is slightly thicker and more viscous. It is "medium-bodied"
- Think of cream with its mouth-filling richness and thickness as "full-bodied."

Pinot Grigio

1. Sip and swish the Pinot Grigio, feeling its weight and thickness as you move the wine around in your mouth.
2. Keeping the milk analogy in mind, how would you describe the wine's body? Is it light? Medium? Full? You can wait to judge the body until you've tested the Chardonnay; the comparison helps you see each wine more clearly.
3. Spit the wine and note its body on your Tasting Journal.

Chardonnay

1. Sip and swish the Chardonnay, noting its weight and thickness.
2. Is it light-bodied? Medium? Full?
3. Spit the wine and mark your Journal.

Comparison

- Which of the two wines has the fuller body?
- Pinot Grigio is normally lighter in body than Chardonnay. Often made from riper grapes, Chardonnay from Australia or California usually contains a little more sugar or alcohol, which add body.
- Which wine do you prefer?

SIP: Taste, Body, **Flavor**

A wine's flavors (or the scents perceived via your mouth) often echo its aromas (scents perceived when sniffing). Sometimes you may be able to identify more flavors than aromas, sometimes not.

- Your Tasting Journal reflects this similarity by combining the descriptors for aromas and flavors into one section under SNIFF.
- When you identify a flavor in your wine, underline the flavor on your Tasting Journal.
- Aromas will be circled and flavors will be underlined.

Pinot Grigio

1. Sip and swish the Pinot Grigio.
2. Spit the wine and underline the flavors on your Tasting Journal.
3. Repeat once or twice, if necessary.
 - Do the flavors you detect match the aromas perceived when sniffing?
 - Do you detect flavors that you didn't find as aromas?
 - How intense are the flavors?
4. Mark your Journal.

Chardonnay

1. Sip and swish the Chardonnay.
2. Spit and then underline the flavors on your Journal.
3. Repeat once or twice, if necessary.
 - Do the flavors match the aromas? Do you find flavors that you didn't detect as aromas?
 - How intense are the flavors?
4. Mark your Journal.

Comparison

1. Look at your Tasting Journal.
 - Do the two wines have any flavors in common?
 - What are their unique flavors?
 - Do you prefer the flavors of one wine to those of the other?

SUMMARIZE: FINISH, BALANCE, COMPLEXITY

SUMMARIZE involves examining a wine's **Finish**, **Balance** and **Complexity**, and coming to a final evaluation of quality and preference.

SUMMARIZE: Finish, Balance, Complexity

Finish refers to the length of time a wine's flavors linger in the mouth after swallowing. The finish can be short, moderate or long. The longer the finish, the better the wine (as long as the flavors and tastes on the finish are pleasing).

Pinot Grigio

1. Swirl, sniff, sip and spit or swallow the wine.
2. Do the flavors slowly diminish on your palate, or do they crescendo before starting to fade?
3. Take another sip. Swish and spit, paying attention to the length of time the flavors linger. Ask yourself:
 - Is the finish "short"? Do the flavors disappear abruptly, within about 5 seconds?
 - Is the finish "long"? Do the flavors linger for 30 seconds or more?
 - Is the finish somewhere in between or "moderate"?
4. Record your impressions of finish on your Tasting Journal.

Chardonnay

1. Swirl, sniff, sip and spit or swallow the wine.
2. Do the flavors slowly diminish on your palate, or do they crescendo before starting to fade?
3. Take another sip, swish and spit.

- Is the finish "short"? Do the flavors disappear abruptly, within about 5 seconds?
- Is the finish "long"? Do the flavors linger for 30 seconds or more?
- Is the finish somewhere in between or "moderate"?

4. Record your impressions on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which wine has the longer finish?
- Do you prefer one wine to the other?

Please note: Although a "short" wine is considered inferior in quality to a "long" wine, it may nonetheless be enjoyable to drink. There are definitely times and places for cheap and cheerful quaffs. But a wine with a short finish simply won't inspire you to poetry or halt dinner conversation.

SUMMARIZE: Finish, Balance, Complexity

A wine is balanced, or harmonious, when no single structural element -- acidity, alcohol, sweetness or tannins -- stands out. (Think of all the instruments in an orchestra playing together in harmony; neither the trumpet nor the snare drum is too loud.)

If one or more of these elements predominates, the wine can be described as "unbalanced," "awkward" or "disjointed."

In white wine, the key elements are acidity, alcohol and sweetness or fruit. ("Sweetness" refers to the taste from sugars in the wine; "fruit" refers to the flavor from ripe fruit.) The elements have the following relationship:

- Acidity is balanced by alcohol and sweetness and fruit flavors.
- A white wine that is in balance will feel refreshing and lively on the palate; not too tart, nor cloyingly sweet, nor too "hot" from alcohol.
- An overly acidic white wine will feel tart and sharp on the palate, even sour.
- A white wine with too much alcohol will feel hot in the mouth and back of the throat in much the same way a distilled spirit such as brandy or Cognac fills the mouth with heat.
- An overly sweet white wine will feel cloying and heavy on your palate.

As with a long finish, balance in a wine is a sign of quality.

Pinot Grigio

1. Sip, swish and spit your Pinot Grigio.
2. Judging by mouthfeel, ask yourself if any element seems too prominent:
 - Does the wine make your mouth pucker from too much acidity?
 - Burn from too much alcohol?
 - Feel coated and cloyed from too much sweetness?
3. If your answer to all the above is no, the wine is probably balanced.
4. Record your impression of its balance on your Tasting Journal.

Chardonnay

1. Sip, swish and spit your Chardonnay.
2. Does the wine seem
 - Puckery from too much acidity?
 - Burning from too much alcohol?
 - Cloying from too much sweetness?
3. Record your impression of balance on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Generally, Pinot Grigio tends to be more acidic, tart and crisp than Chardonnay. Chardonnay tends to be higher in alcohol and body. Do you find this to be the case with your two wines?
- Some people prefer crisper wines to softer wines and some people prefer sour pickles to sweet varieties. What is your preference in pickles? In wine?
- Each wine can be balanced, even though they contain different amounts of sugar and acidity. They simply have different balance points. One may be closer to the sweet end of the balanced range rather than the acid end.

TOO SWEET	Chardonnay	Pinot Grigio	TOO ACID
Unbalanced	Balanced		Unbalanced

SUMMARIZE: Finish, Balance, **Complexity**

By definition, all great wines are complex; each offers many different aromas and flavors.

A wine is particularly complex if, each time you take a sip, you discover another flavor or nuance as the wines evolve in your glass.

In contrast, a wine with few aromas and flavors is called "simple." Wine doesn't have to be complex to be enjoyable -- many simple wines are very pleasurable to drink (sometimes you want simple macaroni-and-cheese for dinner, and not a 7-course extravaganza). A complex wine, however, will usually be considered higher in quality.

Pinot Grigio

1. Sniff and sip the Pinot Grigio.
 - Have you circled more than 2 aromas?
 - Do you notice more and more layers of aroma and flavor, or is it a simple, one-note wine?
2. Circle the Pinot Grigio's complexity on your Tasting Journal.

Chardonnay

1. Sniff and sip the Chardonnay.
 - Have you circled more than 2 aromas?
2. Is the wine complex or simple? Mark your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Does one of the wines seem more complex or are they about the same?

FINAL EVALUATION

- Based on finish, balance and complexity, which would you say is the higher quality wine?
- Which would you prefer to drink?
- Recall your very first impression – is your favorite the same wine that you picked after forming a mental image of each?

A STUDY IN CONTRASTING STYLES

The two wines were chosen because they tend to illustrate opposite ends of the spectrum in dry white wine styles, especially in terms of body and acidity.

- Pinot Grigio from Italy is usually a leaner wine, with a lighter body and more noticeable acidity.
- Chardonnay is usually fuller-bodied with riper fruit flavors and a richer mouthfeel.

Although the difference in style is not a reflection of the wines' quality, you may find that you prefer one style to the other. Or you may prefer different styles at different times; a lighter, more refreshing wine can be perfect on a summer evening and a richer, fuller style can be just the ticket on a late fall evening.

Pinot Grigio

The Italians call this grape variety Pinot Grigio. Wines made from grapes grown outside of Italy are usually called Pinot Gris.

There are usually stylistic differences between the wines. Pinot Grigio tends to be more crisp and refreshing; Pinot Gris tends to be slightly heavier—or medium-bodied—with a rounder, plumper mouthfeel.

Chardonnay

Perhaps the most famous white grape, Chardonnay is most renowned for making white Burgundy wines. It is also used to make Chablis and Pouilly Fuisse.

The wine can be made in many styles, the two prominent styles being crisp and refreshing or big, buttery and perhaps oaky. Chablis and other cool-climate growing areas tend to make lighter, crisper styles with moderate alcohol. Australian Chards and wines from other warmer regions tend to be bigger, more buttery and, sometimes, more oaky with moderate to high alcohol. You can sometimes detect the style from the wine label; note the alcohol content or the description on the back label.

Comparison

General differences between these two varietals are summarized in the chart below

	Color and Intensity	Aromas	Alcohol	Acidity	Body
Pinot Grigio	Straw yellow Paler	Citrus	Low to Moderate	High	Light to medium
Chardonnay	Straw to gold Darker	Citrus, Tropical, Vanilla, Spice	Moderate	Moderate	Medium to full

SEE: CLARITY, COLOR, INTENSITY, LEGS

SEE: Clarity, Color, Intensity, Legs

Because sediment takes time to form, most young red wines won't have sediment. In older reds, sediment is normal.

1. Set your glasses on the table before you and, looking through the wines from the side, examine them for clarity.
2. Is each wine clear, or do you see sediment in either?
3. On your Tasting Journal, circle the clarity that most closely matches each wine.

SEE: Clarity, Color, Intensity, Legs

A red wine's color is largely determined by the variety since the wines get their color from the grape skins.

Color can also indicate a wine's age and health: A young red wine's color should be purple or ruby red. Older reds are likely to be brickish or amber in color.

Pinot Noir

1. Pick up your glass of Pinot Noir and tilt it away from you at a 45-degree angle.
2. Look at the core -not the rim- of the wine. Make sure the backdrop is white: a napkin, tablecloth or sheet of paper all work.
 - What color is the wine?
 - Is the color purple or ruby red, indicating that it's a younger wine? Or is it a brickish or amber color, indicating that it's an older wine?
3. Circle the color on your Tasting Journal that most closely describes your wine.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Now pick up your glass of Cabernet Sauvignon and tilt it away from you at a 45-degree angle.
 - What color is it? Is it more purple or more red?
2. Circle its color on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Are your two wines the same color? Or is one redder and the other more purple?
- Are they both from the same vintage?
- Pinot Noir tends to be slightly redder in color; Cabernet Sauvignon tends to be more purple. This offers another clue that might be useful later in the tasting: Wines that are more red than purple tend to have higher levels of acidity.

SEE: Clarity, Color, Intensity, Legs

Intensity refers not to color itself, but to the concentration of color. A wine with high color intensity will be "dark"; low intensity, and it will be "pale"; in-between, "medium." (Consider the difference between two cups of tea; one that has steeped for ten minutes and one that has steeped for only ten seconds. They are the same color, but

the intensity of the color is quite different; the longer-brewed tea is much darker or much more intense.)

The intensity of a wine's color indicates the extent to which color pigments and flavors have been extracted from the grapes. The greater the intensity, the more extract; and the more extract, the more full-bodied the wine.

Given two wines made from the same grape variety, the darker, more intensely colored wine usually has more concentrated flavors and a fuller body than the paler, less intensely colored wine.

Pinot Noir

1. Tilt your glass of Pinot Noir to a 45-degree angle. Use your Tasting Journal as a background.
 - Can you read through the wine easily? If so, the color intensity is pale.
 - Is the wine opaque, making it difficult to see through it? If so, the color intensity is dark.
2. On your Tasting Journal, circle the level of intensity that best describes your Pinot.
 - What color is the wine?

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Tilt your glass of Cabernet Sauvignon to a 45-degree angle. Using your Tasting Journal as a background, examine the wine's color intensity.
2. Circle the Cab's intensity on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which wine has the more intense color?
- Even though the wines are made from different grapes, you can hazard a guess about body based on color intensity. Which wine would you expect to be more full-bodied? Write your guess down in the margin to the right or on the back of your Tasting Journal.
- Usually, Cabernet Sauvignon is more intensely dark than Pinot Noir.

SEE: Clarity, Color, Intensity, Legs

Legs are the rivulets of wine that form inside a wine glass after swirling.

Legs are indicators of alcohol, but not wine quality. The more pronounced and more persistent the legs, the higher the alcohol content and the more full-bodied the wine.

Pinot Noir

1. Swirl your glass of Pinot Noir for a moment and then stop.
2. Observe the legs.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Now take your glass of Cabernet Sauvignon, swirl it and watch the legs.
2. Are they faint and short-lived? Pronounced and persistent?
3. Note your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which wine has more pronounced and persistent legs?
- Which wine would you expect to have the higher alcohol content?
- Look at each bottle's label and find the alcohol content.
- Do the labels confirm your observation? (They may not always confirm your observation. A slight margin of error in the alcohol level is allowed on wine labels. Furthermore, if the glasses are not equally clean, the legs will form differently.)

SNIFF: AROMA INTENSITY AND IDENTIFICATION

Sniffing involves using your sense of smell to identify wine aromas and to gauge their intensity.

If you put your glass of Pinot Noir to your nose and smell strawberry, it is because the wine has the same --or nearly the same-- combination of esters that makes a strawberry smell like a strawberry.

Wine is capable of great aromatic complexity, and it is possible for a single wine to have many different scents -- for example, currant, plum, herbs, smoke and earth.

SNIFF: Aroma Intensity and Identification

- Intensity answers the question "How powerful - or faint - are the aromas?"
- Try to do the following process in just one or two sniffs per wine; form an impression and go on to the next step. Remember that, like any skill, you will improve with experience.

Pinot Noir

1. Swirl and sniff the Pinot Noir.
2. Are the aromas powerful? Do they pour out of the glass and immediately fill your nose?
3. Are they faint, or hard to detect?
4. Circle the intensity on your Tasting Journal that best describes the intensity of the Pinot's aromas.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Swirl and sniff the Cabernet Sauvignon.
2. Are the aromas powerful, faint, or somewhere in between?
3. Note their intensity on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which has the more intense aromas?

SNIFF: Aroma Intensity and Identification

Identification involves swirling and sniffing the wine and giving a name to each aroma. Of all the steps in tasting wine, identifying scents is the most difficult.

We've repeated the introduction to Aroma Identification here for a couple reasons:

1. It's really important.
2. To make sure that the folks who skipped straight to this tasting don't miss out. (Does this mean you? If so, don't forget to do the white wine tasting at some point.)

The Zen of Tasting

Swirl and sniff, but before you try to identify any of the aromas, allow an image of the wine to form in your brain. Give yourself at least 10 seconds to develop the image.

Having an overall image of the wine helps you remember it better. It also allows you to see wine as a whole right from the beginning. Otherwise, you immediately focus on individual features.

Think of this as the gestalt of wine or perhaps the Zen of tasting. If nothing else, the pause gives you time to relax and take a breath before you embark on the most difficult part of tasting: identifying aromas.

Practice, Practice, Practice vs. Instant Gratification

Identifying aromas takes a lot of practice. This is worth restating: Proficiency takes years of practice.

But, since we all want to get better faster, use your Pinot Noir-Cabernet Sauvignon Tasting Journal as you work through this tasting. The aromas listed are characteristic of each grape varietal. We've tried to be fairly exhaustive, but if you detect an aroma that isn't listed, that's fine; go ahead and write it in (and tell us what we've missed!).

- You can identify an aroma by its general category or by its specific name. It's okay if you can only identify the general category; that is all some wines offer. Because wines contain combinations of flavor compounds that are similar to--but not exactly the same as--those found in many foods, the aromas are not always specific.
- Each time you nose a wine, limit yourself to two or three sharp sniffs. This is enough to identify the major aromas without inducing "nasal fatigue."

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Swirl and sniff your Cabernet Sauvignon.
2. Pause for 10 seconds as you form a mental image of the wine.
3. Try using free association. Memories involving the sense of smell can be very strong.
 - Based on this first impression, which wine do you prefer?

Pinot Noir

1. Swirl and sniff your Pinot Noir again.
2. What is the first or most prominent aroma that comes to you? Try to name it.
3. Look at your Tasting Journal. Do any of the possible aromas jump off the page at you?
 - Limit yourself to two or three sniffs.
4. When you identify an aroma, circle it on your Tasting Journal.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Swirl and sniff your Cabernet Sauvignon again.
2. What is the first or most prominent aroma that comes to you? Try to name it.
3. Look at your Tasting Journal. Do any of the possible aromas jump off the page at you?
4. When you identify an aroma, circle it on your Tasting Journal.
 - If an aroma reminds you of berries but nothing more specific, circle "Berry."

Comparison

- Look at your Tasting Journal. Do the two wines have any aromas in common?
- What are their unique aromas?
- The aromas most commonly associated with Pinot Noir are red berries such as strawberry, tree fruit such as cherry and sometimes a pleasantly earthy smell.
- Aromas found in Cabernet Sauvignon can include black cherry, currant, plum, violets, leather and tobacco.
- Do you prefer one wine's aromas to the other wine's aromas?

SIP: TASTE, BODY, FLAVOR

SIP involves using your senses of taste, touch and smell to evaluate a wine's **Taste, Body** and **Flavors**.

Sipping and Aerating Refresher

1. Put the glass to your lips and take a small sip, just enough wine to wet the insides of your mouth.
2. Slosh the wine around in your mouth to make sure it reaches all your taste buds.
3. You may even choose to aerate the wine. With the wine resting just behind your lower front teeth, purse your lips as if to blow out a candle, but, instead of exhaling, gently draw air into your mouth through the wine. You will hear a gurgling noise as you do. This helps release the wine's flavors so you can smell them.
4. Spit the wine into your spit cup.

Taste and Touch

These two sensations are often confused

1. Tastes ---sweet, sour/tart, bitter, and umami---are perceived by the taste buds, and...
2. Nerve endings in the mouth pick up tactile sensations called mouthfeel

Because both occur simultaneously, we don't always distinguish the sensation of taste from mouthfeel.

SIP: Taste, Body, Flavor

You'll find one or two tastes—tart and sometimes bitter—in this pair of wines and in most reds. You'll also perceive tactile sensations that are called mouthfeel by wine experts.

Tart and Refreshing from Acidity

- Wines contain a number of acids commonly found in food, such as acetic acid (vinegar), citric acid (lemon), lactic acid (milk, yogurt) and malic acid (green apples).
- Acidity can also add a refreshing mouthfeel or tactile sensation.
- Acidity tends to make a wine's fruit flavors seem fresher and brighter. It can also help the finish last longer.

Bitter and Astringent from Tannins

- Reds contain tannins, which can add bitter tastes.
- Tannins can also add an astringent sensation as they dry out your tongue.
- Tannins also add body and act as a preservative, helping wine to age gracefully.

Pinot Noir

1. Sip, swish and spit the Pinot Noir.
2. Check your mouth for the sensations of acidity. Do you detect a:
 - Tart taste?
 - Refreshing mouthfeel?
 - Firmness?
3. Check your mouth for the sensations of tannins. Do you detect a:
 - Bitter taste?
 - Astringency (a drying sensation) on your tongue or the sides of your mouth?
 - Firmness?
4. Now evaluate the mouthfeel of the tannins
 - Are they rough or smooth? This can indicate the quantity as well as the quality of

the tannins. Smoother or fine-grained tannins are preferable.

5. Note the Pinot's acidity and tannins on your Tasting Journal.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Now sip, swish and spit the Cabernet Sauvignon.
2. Check your mouth for the sensations of acidity and tannins.
3. Note your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which wine is more drying, furry or rough?
- Which wine is smoother and has lighter tannins?

SIP: Taste, Body, Flavor

Body is the sensation within the mouth of weight and thickness. Wine components that contribute to body include alcohol, extract, sugar and tannins.

Body is easily understood by relating it to milk:

- Think of skim milk with its thin, watery sensation in your mouth. It is "light-bodied."
- In comparison, think of whole milk. It is slightly thicker and more viscous. It is "medium-bodied."
- Think of cream with its mouthfilling richness and thickness as "full-bodied."

Pinot Noir

1. Take a sip and feel its weight and thickness as you swish it around your mouth, but don't swallow or spit.
2. Would you describe the wine's body as light? Medium? Full?
3. Swallow your sip and pay attention to the sensations in the back of your throat. Do you feel any "warmth" or "heat" from alcohol?
4. Note the body of the Pinot Noir on your Tasting Journal.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Swirl the Cabernet Sauvignon. What do its legs indicate about body and alcohol level?
2. Sip and swish the wine, feeling its weight and thickness as you do; don't swallow or spit.
3. Is it light-bodied? Medium? Full-bodied?
4. Swallow your sip: Is there any "warmth" from alcohol?
5. Note your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which wine is more full-bodied?
- Is the wine with the higher alcohol content more full-bodied?
- Which kind of body—light or full—do you find more appealing?
- When you examined the color intensity of these two wines, you guessed that one would be more full-bodied than the other. Was your guess correct?

SIP: Taste, Body, Flavor

The flavors of a wine (scents perceived when the wine is in your mouth) often echo its aromas (which are scents perceived when the wine is in your glass). Sometimes you may be able to identify more flavors than aromas, sometimes not.

- Your Tasting Journal reflects this similarity by combining the descriptors for aromas and flavors into one section under SNIFF.
- When you identify a flavor in your wine, underline the flavor on your Tasting Journal.
- Aromas will be circled and flavors will be underlined.

Pinot Noir

1. Sip, swish and aerate the Pinot Noir.
2. Spit the wine and underline the flavors on your Tasting Journal.
3. Repeat once or twice, if necessary.
 - Do the flavors you detect match the aromas perceived when sniffing?
 - Do you detect flavors that you didn't find as aromas?
 - How intense are the flavors?
4. Mark your Journal.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Sip, swish and aerate the Cabernet Sauvignon.
2. Spit the wine and underline the flavors on your Tasting Journal.
3. Repeat once or twice, if necessary.
 - Do the flavors you detect match the aromas perceived when sniffing?
 - Do you detect flavors that you didn't find as aromas?
 - How intense are the flavors?
4. Mark your Journal.

Comparison

1. Look at your Tasting Journal.
 - Do the two wines have any flavors in common?
 - What are their unique flavors?
 - Do you prefer one wine's flavors to the other wine's flavors?

SUMMARIZE: FINISH, BALANCE, COMPLEXITY

SUMMARIZE involves examining a wine's **Finish, Balance** and **Complexity**, and coming to a final evaluation of quality and preference.

SUMMARIZE: Finish, Balance, Complexity

Finish refers to the length of time a wine's flavors linger in the mouth after swallowing. The finish can be short, moderate or long. The longer the finish, the better the wine (as long as the flavors and tastes are pleasing). Aftertaste refers to the flavors that can echo on longer finishes.

Pinot Noir

1. Swirl, sniff, sip and swallow your Pinot Noir.
 - Do the flavors slowly diminish on your palate, or do they crescendo before starting to fade?
2. Take another sip, swish and spit, this time paying attention to the length of time the flavors linger.

Ask yourself:

- Is the finish "short"? Do the flavors disappear abruptly, within about 5 seconds?
- Is the finish "long"? Do the flavors linger for 30 seconds or more?
- Is the finish somewhere in between or "moderate"?

3. Record your impressions of aftertaste and finish on your Tasting Journal.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Swirl, sniff, sip and spit or swallow the wine.

- Do the flavors slowly diminish on your palate, or do they crescendo before starting to fade?

2. Take another sip, swish and spit, this time paying attention to the length of time the flavors linger.

Ask yourself:

- Is the finish "short"? Do the flavors disappear abruptly, within about 5 seconds?
- Is the finish "long"? Do the flavors linger for 30 seconds or more?
- Is the finish somewhere in between or "moderate"?

3. Record your impressions on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Which wine has the longer finish?
- Do you prefer one wine to the other?

Please note: Although a "short" wine is considered inferior in quality to a "long" wine, it may nonetheless be enjoyable to drink. A short wine just won't inspire you to poetry or bring dinner conversation to a reverent silence.

SUMMARIZE: Finish, Balance, Complexity

A wine is balanced, or harmonious, when no single structural element—acidity, alcohol, sweetness or tannin—stands out.

If one or more of these elements predominates, the wine can be described as "unbalanced," "awkward" or "disjointed."

When wines are out of balance, the following faults may become evident:

- Overly tannic reds feel rough and astringent and may taste bitter.
- Overly acidic wines feel sharp and taste very tart.
- Overly alcoholic wines feel "hot" in the mouth and can leave a burning sensation in the back of your throat.

As with a long finish, balance is a sign of quality.

Pinot Noir

1. Sip, swish and swallow your Pinot Noir.

2. Judging by mouthfeel, ask yourself if any element seems to be too prominent:

- Does the wine feel rough or excessively drying from too much tannin?
- Puckery from too much acidity?
- Burning from too much alcohol?

3. If your answer to all the above is no, the wine is balanced.

4. Record your impression of balance on your Tasting Journal.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Swirl, sniff, sip and spit or swallow the wine.

- Do the flavors slowly diminish on your palate, or do they crescendo before starting to fade?

2. Take another sip, swish and spit, this time paying attention to the length of time the flavors linger.
Ask yourself: Σ
 - Is the finish "short"? Do the flavors disappear abruptly, within about 5 seconds?
 - Is the finish "long"? Do the flavors linger for 30 seconds or more?
 - Is the finish somewhere in between or "moderate"?
3. Record your impressions on your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

On the whole, Pinot Noir tends to be considerably less tannic and lighter-bodied than Cabernet Sauvignon.

- Is this true for your pair of wines?

Some people prefer smoother, lighter wines and others appreciate a bit more tannin and body.

- Do you prefer the Pinot Noir or the Cabernet Sauvignon?

When dining, a food match could influence your preference: The Cabernet Sauvignon, with its fuller body, would pair well with heavier foods such as beef. The lighter, more delicate Pinot Noir could be overwhelmed by heavier dishes, but would pair beautifully with chicken, veal or salmon. But the best wine to pair with food is the wine that you enjoy drinking.

SUMMARIZE: Finish, Balance, **Complexity**

All great wines are complex. Complex wines have many different aromas and flavors.

A wine is particularly complex if, each time you take a sip, you discover another flavor or nuance; the flavors evolve in your glass.

In contrast, a wine with few aromas and flavors is called "simple." Wine doesn't have to be complex to be enjoyable; many simple wines are very pleasurable to drink.

Pinot Noir

1. Sniff and sip the Pinot Noir.
 - Did you circle more than a couple aromas on your Tasting Journal?
 - Do you notice more and more layers of aroma and flavor, or is it a simple, one-note wine?
2. Circle the wine's complexity on your Tasting Journal.

Cabernet Sauvignon

1. Sniff and sip the Cabernet Sauvignon.
 - Did you circle more than a couple aromas on your Tasting Journal?
2. Is the wine complex or simple? Mark your Tasting Journal.

Comparison

- Does one of the wines seem more complex?
- Or are they about the same?

FINAL EVALUATION

- Based on finish, balance and complexity, which would you say is the higher quality wine?
- Which wine would you prefer to drink?
- Recall your very first impression – is your favorite the same wine that you picked after forming a mental image of each?

A STUDY IN CONTRASTING STYLES

The two wines tasted were chosen because they tend to illustrate different red wine styles.

Pinot Noir

Arguably the star of the hit movie titled *Sideways*, Pinot Noir has been inspiring poetry for hundreds of years. The best-known wines are from Burgundy, but California, Oregon and, more recently, New Zealand are also good sources.

Made from the thin-skinned Pinot Noir grape, the wines tend to be less-intensely colored.

Pinot Noirs tend to offer crisp acidity, with moderate alcohol and low tannins. Characteristic scents include strawberry, red cherry and earth. Most Pinots are light- to medium-bodied, although some are made in fruit-forward, intense styles that are medium- to heavy-bodied.

Cabernet Sauvignon

This grape makes some of the world's most age-worthy wines. It is the main grape in many red Bordeaux wines.

Cabs are usually intensely colored and high in tannin for a couple reasons. First, the grapes skins are quite dark. Second the grapes are fairly small, which means that there's a lot of skin and relatively little pulp. (Colors and tannins are extracted from red grape skins.) Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines offer many scents, including cherry, currant, plum, leather and tobacco.

Comparison

The main differences between these two varietals are summarized in the chart below.

	Color and Intensity	Aromas	Alcohol	Acidity	Tannin	Body
Pinot Noir	More red Pale	Brighter red fruits	Moderate	Moderate to high	Low	Light to medium
Cabernet Sauvignon	More purple Intense	Darker purple fruits	High	Moderate to high	Moderate	Medium to full

We hope that you enjoyed this tasting, which coordinates with Wine Spectator magazine's October 31, 2005 cover story, *Get the Most Out of Tasting Wine*.

How did the tasting go for you? If you have any questions or comments, e-mail us at wss@mshanken.com.

You can learn more about wine—and share more tutored tastings with friends—by taking one of our online courses at WineSpectatorSchool.com.

Cheers!

Gloria Maroti Frazee

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