

WHY TASTE?

By working through the classes, you'll gain a solid theoretical understanding of wine. But really appreciating wine is more than an intellectual exercise; it means using your senses of sight, smell, taste and touch.

In California Cabernet, all three classes contain tutored tastings that:

- Guide you through the process of conducting your own wine tastings
- Train your senses to recognize the aromas, flavors, tastes and textures commonly found in Cabernet Sauvignon

Finally, wine is a lot more fun when it's shared with friends and consumed in moderation. We hope that you'll use this course to appreciate and enjoy wine to its fullest.

WHEN AND WHERE TO TASTE

Since the tasting materials can be read on-line or printed out, you have a number of options:

- We encourage you to print out the tasting tutorial and share the wine tasting with friends.
- Work through the tastings on-line.
- Take the tasting tutorial to a local wine bar where you can purchase the wines by the glass.

REQUIRED MATERIALS *(besides wine)*

- **Stemware:** one glass per taster, per wine. In California Cabernet, each tutored tasting highlights three or four wines. Each taster should have identical glasses. Ideally, the glasses should be tulip-shaped, with a profile that narrows toward the rim.
- **Corkscrew:** to open the bottles
- **Water:** to cleanse your palate and hydrate
- **Spit container:** opaque cup
- **Tasting Journal:** printed out from the first page of the tasting to record your tasting notes
- **Tasting Mat:** printed out from the first page of the tasting
- **Pen:** to take notes
- **Brown paper bags:** to disguise wines
- **Stickers or erasable pen:** to mark glasses

PURCHASING THE WINES

Wines are not supplied by Wine Spectator School, but these pages contain all the information you need to buy wines for the tasting tutorials.

Learn by doing:

Students find that buying their own wine increases their understanding of wine. Some buy all the wines in a single trip to the store. Many students enjoy taking separate trips for each tasting; they provide the opportunity to build a relationship with a single wine merchant or to compare the service at a few stores.

Cost:

The wine list (on the next page) includes the approximate cost for a good-quality example of each wine. More expensive wines are available should you wish to trade up, but a more expensive wine does not necessarily provide a better illustration of a given point. Always buy at your own comfort level.

The final cost depends on your market, the amount you want to spend and the number of friends participating in the tastings.

Dialog:

To guide your purchase, we've provided a list of specific wines or wine styles along with their approximate prices and the tasting goals. Show the list to your local merchant or explain the following points:

- I'd like some wines for a comparative tasting.
- The three wines are _____, _____ and _____.
- The goal for the tasting is to _____.
- I'd like to stay under _____ dollars a bottle.

The staff at any good wine store will be happy to help you select the appropriate wines from their stock.

Tasters per bottle:

Approximately 2 ounces of each wine are required for a taste, so a standard 750 ml / 25 oz bottle can accommodate 10-12 people.

If you are going to taste with friends, we recommend starting off with a smaller group of 4-6 people, making set up much easier.

CLASS 1 TASTING: What's in a Price Point?

TASTING GOAL

Compare and contrast wines at various price points, paying special attention to the differences in quality, complexity, tannins and age-worthiness.

THE FOUR WINES

Purchase four Cabernets from any growing region within California. They should all be from the same vintage, or within a year or two of each other. One wine should be from each of the following four price categories:

Under \$12

\$13-25, ideally in the middle of this price range, or \$16-19

\$26-39, ideally \$26-29

Over \$40

Make sure to write down the name of each wine and how much it cost!! You will need this information during the tasting.

PURCHASE GUIDELINES

- Wines should be from same vintage and, if possible, from the same producer.
- They should highlight the price/quality relationship.

CLASS 2 TASTING: Napa Valley: Valley Floor vs. Mountain AVAs

TASTING GOAL

Compare and contrast Napa valley wines from valley floor and mountain AVAs. Pay special attention to fruit ripeness, tannin levels, and leanness or elegance.

THE FOUR WINES

Purchase one Cabernet from each of four of Napa Valley's sub-AVAs.

One pair of wines should be from two different valley floor AVAs, which include Yountville, Oakville, Rutherford and St. Helena. (If you choose to get a wine from Stags Leap District AVA, you might find it to be somewhere between a valley floor and a mountain wine in style, maybe leaner than most valley floor wines and more velvety plush than most mountain wines.)

- One pair of wines should be from two different mountain AVAs, which include Mt. Veeder, Spring Mountain, Diamond Mountain, Atlas Peak and Howell Mountain.
- The wines should be from the same vintage, or within a year or two of each other.
- The wines should retail for at least \$30 each or, if it doesn't break the bank, at least \$40 each.
- Generally speaking, Cabs from Napa Valley's sub-AVAs provide more distinct examples of terroir at this price or higher.

PURCHASE GUIDELINES

All four wines should be priced within \$10 to \$15 of each other. Because mountain vineyards are usually harder to cultivate and have lower yields than valley floor vineyards, the mountain wines may be slightly more expensive.

- They should highlight the distinctions between valley floor and mountain wines.

CLASS 3 TASTING: Seeking Regionality

TASTING GOAL

Compare and contrast Cabernets from the major regions in California. Pay special attention to the differences in fruit forwardness, ripeness, tannins and complexity.

THE THREE WINES

Purchase three Cabernets, one from each of these California regions:

1. Napa Valley
2. Sonoma County
3. Central Coast AVA such as Paso Robles, Santa Cruz Mountains or Carmel Valley

PURCHASE GUIDELINES

- From the broadest regional AVA that you can find
- From the same vintage, or within a year or two of each other.
- Retail priced around \$25 each.
- Generally speaking, California's regional Cabs provide more distinct examples of terroir at this price or higher.
- Priced within \$10 of each other.