

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 Tuscany, 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 found in the range of Tuscany's wines

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 Tuscany, 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.

TUSCANY: CLASS 1 TASTING: Regional Wines and Foods

Tasting Goal

Taste a range of wines from Toscana. Compare regional and international varieties, paying special attention to the differences in flavor and structure and also pair the wines with regional foods.

The Four Wines

Purchase four wines from Tuscany that retail in the \$8-15 price range.

Two wines should be white; one made from the Vernaccia grape and another from Chardonnay.

- The Vernaccia might be from San Gimignano, or both wines might be from the Toscana DO.
- The wines should be from the same vintage, or within a year or two of each other.

The other two wines should be red; one based mainly on Sangiovese and the other on international grape varieties such as Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon.

- They may both be from the Toscana DO.
- They should be from the same vintage, or within a year or two of each other.

Regional Foods

Purchase enough of each item so each person gets a few bites.

- Pecorino Toscano, sheep's milk cheese
- Tomato Crostini: toasted bread crisps with topping of chopped tomato, diced onion optional, olive oil, lemon juice and salt
- Green Olives, preferably from Tuscany
- Cold Meats such as Capocollo, Mortadella and Prosciutto

TUSCANY: CLASS 2 TASTING: Chianti Classico and Montalcino

Tasting Goals

Compare and contrast various quality levels of Chianti Classico and Montalcino wines. Pay special attention to the differences in fruit flavors, concentration, body and the effects of oak and bottle aging.

The Four Wines

Purchase two Chianti Classico wines.

- One wine should be from the Chianti Classico DOCG. It should not be a Riserva. The retail price will be around \$15.
- The second wine should also be from the Chianti Classico DOCG. The difference is that it should be a Riserva. The retail price will be around \$25.
- If possible, both wines should be from the same producer.
- Since Chianti Classico Riservas must be aged at least 24 months, including 3 months in the bottle, the Riserva will probably be a year or two older than the non-Riserva, which can be sold with only 12 months of aging.

Purchase two wines from Montalcino.

- One wine should be a Rosso di Montalcino DOC. The retail price will be around \$15.
- The second wine should be a Brunello di Montalcino DOCG. The retail price will be around \$35.
 - If possible, both wines should be from the same producer.
 - Since Brunello di Montalcino must be aged at least 48 months, including 18 months in cask, it will be a few years older than the Rosso, which is not subject to the same aging requirements.

TUSCANY: CLASS 3 TASTING: Super Tuscan Comparison

Tasting Goals

Compare and contrast three Super Tuscan wines; one Sangiovese, one Bordeaux blend and one Syrah blend. Pay special attention to fruit flavors, tannin levels, leanness or elegance and texture.

The Three Wines

Purchase three Super Tuscan wines.

- One wine should be made mainly from Sangiovese.
- One wine should be a Bordeaux blend, made from some combination of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc.
- One wine should be made mainly from Syrah, which might be blended with Sangiovese.
 - The wines will be fairly pricey, retailing for around \$50-75 each.
 - If possible, the wines should be approximately the same age, or within a couple vintages of each other.