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HAVING A GOOD NOSE - PART 2 OF OUR TRILOGY OF TASTING

WE smell wine through the nose and, once the wine is in the mouth, through the channel at the rear of the mouth called the retronasal passage. Thousands of tiny receptors pick up these smells and send messages to the olfactory bulb, which in turn passes them to the brain. Odour increases if you hold the wine in your mouth, warming it up and releasing volatile components.

To begin the process, ensure that you coat the glass surface with wine by rotating it by the stem, or base. This helps release more aromas by exposing more of the wine to the air. Choose a glass that is tapered to the rim so it concentrates the aromas. Avoid over-chilling white wines as this will kill their aroma. Now, put your nose into the glass, concentrate hard and take a couple of deep sniffs. Describe what you really smell. If the wine smells like furniture polish or a lolly bag then say so. These analogies are easier for you to remember and more valuable than

of problems to do with excessive volatile acidity in the wine. And Band-aid, or medicine cabinet, are just two aromas that indicate the presence of *brettanomyces* – a wild yeast that can infest a winery and get into maturing barrels.

Researchers have been able to scientifically identify some of the 800 or more compounds found in a glass of wine. These can originate from the grape itself or come from the maturation process. Vanillin is the natural constituent of vanilla and found in toasted oak barrels, which explains how vanilla bouquets occur in wine. Methoxyprazine gives a green capsicum aroma found in sauvignon blanc, as well as cool-climate cabernet sauvignon. Linalool belongs to a group of compounds called monoterpenes and gives us the common lemon scent in riesling. Cis-rose oxides, another monoterpene, give us that delightful rose water/Turkish delight aroma in some gewurztraminer. The compound phenol 4-Ethylguaiacol produces spice

mint or, some say, crushed gum leaves, while Margaret River cabernet often displays classic leafy, herbaceous aromas. Shiraz has similar regional characteristics. Barossa Valley can provide lashings of black fruit as well as fruit cake and chocolate. Hunter Valley shiraz is more red fruits, spice, leathery and herbal. Syrah from the Rhone Valley displays cooked meats and white pepper.

Secondary aromas develop during the winemaking process. Oak is a common one; others include yeasty/lees aromas as well as the buttery smell derived from the malolactic fermentation employed with chardonnay. Terms such as pencil shavings, smoky and vanilla all indicate oak maturation. Different types of oak impart different flavours into wine: coconut is associated with American oak, while vanilla and more subtle spicy oak characters usually indicate the use of French oak.

As the wine develops in bottle both primary and secondary aromas fade and the tertiary group starts to develop. Bottle-aged white wines develop honey and toasty-bread smells; try a 10-year-old Hunter Valley semillon. Over time, some rieslings develop kerosene or petrol tertiary aromas which signal the presence of trimethyldihydronaphthalene, or TDN. Red wines often develop leathery, cigar box aromas. Magically, coffee, mocha and chocolate aromas can emerge in older cabernet sauvignon and shiraz.

One question that has to be asked about tertiary aromas is whether the wine gets better with time or simply just changes, swapping fruit aromas for aged ones. You might prefer to drink a youthful, fruity red wine rather than a smelly old wine.

Getting to know and recognise the key aromas of each variety is important in deciding whether you like a wine or not. Then identifying a satisfying feature of the wine, whether it is a primary, secondary or tertiary aroma, will build up your preference on which style you prefer.

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what a wine critic says you should smell. Our sense of smell is not a refined tool so practice is the only way to improve it.

Off aromas, such as sulphur, can 'blow off' in the glass, so allow a wine a few minutes to settle in the glass. However, some off-smells will not go away with time. If you smell bruised apple in a white wine it usually indicates oxidation, while red wines develop an unattractive cooked fruit aroma and, as the oxidation worsens, it becomes more vinegar-like. Musty, hessian-bag, wet cardboard are all distinctive signs of the wine being spoiled by cork taint; not much of a problem now that screw caps are dominating the market. Modelling glue and nail polish remover are both signs

and clove aromas found in red wines. Other smells arise from the by-products of the fermentation process. Winemakers can manipulate a wine aroma by choosing aromatic yeasts.

We group aromas under three headings: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. Primary aromas are often the youthful fruit, vegetable, herb and spice aromas that come directly from the particular grape variety. Pinot noir, for example, often smells of cherries and strawberries, while pinot gris/grigio has pear and/or stone-fruits, depending on the ripeness of the grapes.

The aromas of a wine can also reveal regional characteristics. Coonawarra cabernet sauvignon displays eucalypt,