

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 Bordeaux, 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 the wines from Bordeaux

Finally, wine 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 Bordeaux, 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.

BORDEAUX CLASS 1 TASTING

Compare Quality Levels

TASTING GOALS

Compare and contrast wines at various quality and price levels, paying special attention to the differences in quality cues such as tannic structure, complexity and age-worthiness.

THE THREE WINES

Purchase three red Bordeaux wines. Ideally, they should all be from the same vintage since vintage variation in Bordeaux is quite high.

Choose one wine from each of the following quality / price levels:

1. Popular branded wine such as Mouton Cadet costing about \$10-15
2. Cru Bourgeois costing about \$15-25
3. Classed Growth, 3rd-, 4th- or 5th-growth, costing about \$25-50

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

SUPPLIES

- Three paper bags. Each should be large enough to completely cover a bottle.
- Removable stickers, an erasable felt-tip pen or wax pencil to label glasses.
- Three glasses per taster. Ideally, all the glasses for all the tasters should be the same. At the very least, each taster's three glasses should be the same.
- Spit cup
- Water
- Plain crackers (save the cheese and nibbles until you've evaluated the wines)

BORDEAUX CLASS 2 TASTING

Top Four Communes in the Haut-Médoc

TASTING GOALS

Compare and contrast wines from the Haut-Médoc's top four communes. Pay close attention to the differences in aroma, tannins and structure.

THE FOUR WINES

There should be one wine from each of the top four communes

1. Margaux
2. St.-Julien
3. Pauillac
4. St.-Estèphe

- The wines should be from the same vintage.
- Each wine should be a Second-, Third-, Fourth- or Fifth-Growth and it's best if all the wines are from the same growth or two. For example, in this tasting it is less effective to use a Second-Growth and a Fifth-Growth since there will probably be a significant difference that stems primarily from quality rather than from appellation.
- Each wine should retail within about \$15-30 of each other. The average price of the bottles will vary based on the quality level you purchase.

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

SUPPLIES

- Removable stickers, an erasable felt-tip pen or wax pencil to label glasses. This is for an optional tasting exercise.
- Four glasses per taster. Ideally, all the glasses for all the tasters should be the same. At the very least, each taster's four glasses should be the same.
- Spit cup, one for each taster
- Water for each taster

BORDEAUX CLASS 3 TASTING

Regional Comparison

TASTING GOALS

Compare and contrast a trio of reds from Bordeaux's main regions on both the Right and Left Banks. Pay close attention to fruit flavors, tannin levels and structure.

THE THREE WINES

Purchase three Bordeaux reds.

1. One wine should from one of the Right Bank appellations such as Pomerol or St. Emilion.
2. One wine should be from Pessac-Léognan in Graves. The blend should rely heavily on Merlot and Cabernet Franc.
3. One wine should be from a Left Bank appellation in the Haut-Médoc. It should be from one of the northern trio of the top four: St.-Estèphe, Pauillac or St.-Julien. The blend should rely heavily on Cabernet Sauvignon.

- The wines should all be in the same price range, roughly \$30-50 each.
- If possible, the wines should be from the same vintage.

Make sure to write down the name of each wine and its price. You'll need this information to complete your tasting journal page.

SUPPLIES

- Three brown paper bags, each large enough to hold a bottle.
- Removable stickers, an erasable felt-tip pen or wax pencil to label glasses.
- Three glasses per taster. Ideally, all the glasses for all the tasters should be the same. At the very least, each taster's three glasses should be the same.
- Spit cup
- Water
- Plain crackers (save the cheese and nibbles until you've evaluated the wines)