

Wine Descriptors ... from WINE 101 Mystery Diner

- **“BIG”** A red wine that has highly concentrated and rich fruit flavors and **“TANNINS”** (tannic acid). The wine is complex and bold. It leaves an impression, usually good.
- **“TANNIN”** is a characteristic of red wines. It gives a sense of puckering and drying in the mouth. Tannins are very typical in young **“BIG”** red wines like Cabernet Sauvignon. Too much is undesirable, some is very positive. Tannins tend to soften with age and **“BREATHING”**.
- **“BALANCE”** is a term used to describe whether the taste is in balance among things like fruit flavors, tannins and acidity. It means nothing dominates ...that the sensory characteristics are in harmony and compliment one another. A wine in balance is analogous to a beautiful natural landscape. If someone erected a billboard on a serene landscape, it would be out of balance.
- **“ROUND”** is similar to **“BALANCE”**. A round wine has a good balance of fruit and tannins. No sharp edges!
- **“BODY”** is the feel of the wine in the mouth. It is related to the wine’s viscosity. Does it feel thick or thin ...more like alcohol or syrup (exaggerated to make the point)?
- **“EARTHY”** means the wine has the aromas and flavors of soil, leaves, bark, minerals or leather. It is usually desirable characteristic of **“BIG”** red wines like Cabernet Sauvignon or Zinfandel if it is in **“BALANCE”**; not overdone.
- **“ELEGANT”** High quality wine that is light and graceful. Elegant wines have finesse. Many of the French red Bordeaux’s have this characteristic. **“ELEGANT”** is like fine china. **“BIG”** is like a vivid sunset. **“ELEGANT”** is more feminine. **“BIG”** is more masculine. It’s a matter of taste!
- **“SIMPLE”** is a term used to describe lack of complexity. It is often used to describe an inexpensive or young wine. It is not necessarily an undesirable characteristic. There are times when a simple wine is very appropriate ...a warm summer evening, a pizza, a casual chat with friends. It depends on the circumstances and your taste.
- **“BREATHE”** simply means to uncork a bottle and let it set. Usually appropriate for quality red wines... Air enters the bottle and oxidizes some of the tannic acid, **“TANNINS”**, which tends to soften the wine ...especially young red wines.

- **“CRISP”** is used to describe white wines that are somewhat acidic. It is a desirable trait that can be refreshing and light tasting if the acidity is in **“BALANCE”** or not over done. French white Burgundy’s are **“CRISP”**.
- **“BUTTERY”** is on the other end of the white wine spectrum from **“CRISP”**. It means the wine has a rich, **“CREAMY”** full **“BODIED”** taste. Most California Chardonnays have this characteristic. Again, it depends on your taste and mood.
- **“CREAMY”** wines have a soft creamy mouth feel.
- **“OAKY”** means the taste and aroma of oak from the aging barrel. This is typical of most California Chardonnays. It really depends on your taste whether this is desirable or not. It, at times, can be way over done and out of **“BALANCE”**.