

# Wine 101

Take the guesswork out of buying a nice red or white with our no-fuss guide.

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## Winespeak: A lesson in terminology

Just when you thought you were comfortable with reds, whites and ice wines, someone stumps you with a foreign wine-related word and your confidence is squashed like a grape in a crusher. Here are some commonly-used words to know:

### **Aerate (a.k.a.**

### **breathing)** — To

expose wine to air by

pouring it into a decanter, jug or glass. This releases more of

the wine's bouquet.

**Aroma** — The odours of the wine, originating from the fruit.

**Bouquet** — The fragrance of the wine, resulting from the winemaking process. When you swirl wine in a glass, you intensify the bouquet.

**Corked** — You don't want to experience the meaning of this word first-hand. When a wine is "corked" it may taste flat and smell musty. This is a result of mould and bacteria on the cork and it has nothing to do with the wine's quality.

**Fermentation** — The natural chemical reaction that turns grape juice into wine. The effects of yeasts turn sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide.

**Vintage** — The year in which the grapes were harvested.

**Tannins** — Substances that come from grape skins, seeds, stalks and oak barrels. Tannins contribute to a wine's structure and ability to age.

**Macerate** — To give red wines their colour, a winemaker macerates, or soaks grape skins in their juice.

**Sommelier** — Someone who is trained in choosing, serving and storing wine.

**Varietal** — A specific variety of grape. Also, a wine that's named after the grape from which it was made (ex: merlot).

**VQA** — Vintners Quality Alliance: Canada's system of standards that ensures that Canadian wine is appropriately labeled according to its origins and quality. The VQA helps to eliminate fraud by helping consumers to identify authentic Canadian wine.

**Vinification** — The winemaking process.

## Drinking and describing your wine

You may be familiar with the common steps of wine-tasting: You pour, sniff, swirl and take a sip of the liquid. Then you judge a wine by its appearance, bouquet and taste. Sure, these are good ways to savour wine, but your wine-tasting experience can be as regulated as you want it be. Before concerning yourself with whether what you taste is acidic or oaky, remember that there's no right or wrong way to describe it. What's fruity, nutty or spicy to you may not be to someone else. So relax, the only thing you really need to know about wine is whether or not *you* like the way it tastes. Just as one type of food can't possibly please all palates, one type of wine will not satisfy all sippers.

Winemaking is a fine art respected by many, but shopping for a drink that brings you pleasure needn't bring you pain. So sit back and enjoy your favourite vino on your own terms — but please enjoy it responsibly. Cheers!