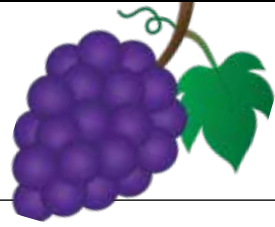


GRAPE TALK

Education of a wine taster



BY DEBBIE TOLLEFSON



Debbie Tollefson

When I first became interested in wine, in the 1970s, my husband and I joined wine groups and went to vertical tastings and wine education seminars. I found the information daunting, but I learned that understanding your motivation helps you know how far down the wine rabbit hole you need to go. If you want to be a sommelier, your education is vastly different from that of a wine lover who just doesn't want to seem clueless when ordering from a wine list.

The first step for the wine lover's education is to know the process of wine tasting. First look at the wine. Note the color and hue, then the clarity and opacity. If you see a lot of sediment, the wine needs to be decanted to separate it from the sediment.

Then slowly swirl the wine in the glass to release the aromatic compounds, and note the viscosity of the wine. Fluid streaks, called "legs" or "tears," running down the glass show that the wine has higher surface tension (viscosity). This

may indicate higher alcohol content or higher residual sugar.

Next tilt the glass and note the smell. What aromas are you picking up? Citrus, tobacco, and vanilla are frequently present. Do you smell any "off" aromas? If a white wine is more brown than yellow, it may be past its prime. You might also get a wine with an acidic aroma or a sulfite smell. Make notes of these so you remember.

Now take a large sip and hold it in your mouth. Then either spit it out or swallow it and take a few smaller sips while trying to identify primary flavors and traits. Is the wine sweet? Is it acidic? Is it high in alcohol? Can you taste tannin (tastes like sucking on a tea bag)? Every taster has a personal preference. Many taste preferences are genetic and depend on how sensitive to specific tastes you are. The more taste buds you have, the more you will want a delicate smooth-tasting wine with less tannin. Fewer taste buds allow the taster to enjoy the most intense tannin wines.

For the initial part of your wine education, try many different kinds of wine, from sparkling to full-bodied reds and everything in between. Make tasting notes about each kind. Since we have so many great wineries in our valley, make the challenge fun by doing tasting flights at local wineries. Take notes!

Many people believe it's impossible to identify a particular wine just by tasting it, but in 1984 a friend, Fred Dame, went to France to take the rigorous Master Sommelier Examination. We were confident he knew his wine, but he surprised us by being the first person to pass all three parts of the exam on his first try. He also identified two of the wines in the identification portion without tasting them. Fred didn't have degrees, and he started his career as a busboy. He learned wines by tasting, and he became one of the most respected Master Sommeliers in the world. His story is told in *Somm*, a documentary about wine sommeliers.

After you have determined what kinds of wine you like, try some wines from different countries. Start with France, Spain, and Italy, then add Australia, Argentina, and Germany. Also try wines from different parts of the

US. If you like pinot noir, for example, try Washington state or upstate New York. California produces many different varietals and has some of the best chardonnays in the world. If you like light whites, you will find that Michigan produces outstanding pinot gris and riesling, and Virginia and Texas also make some good white wines.

Challenge your taste buds with wines from the Willamette and Umpqua valleys, and then compare them with our great southern Oregon wines.

Take notes whenever you can. I have a small notebook that I take notes in when I am tasting a new wine. I also always try to get the label off the bottle. If it's impossible to get off, I might ask the winery if it has loose copies of its labels that I can have. If you can't get the label, take down the information.

To further your education, you might want to take some classes offered at the Oregon Wine University. Visit theoregonwineexperience.com for more information.

Debbie Tollefson
debbie.avrealty@gmail.com

(541) 846-0540

APPLEGATE PLUMBING LLC

David Kennedy

applegateplumbing@epbb.net CCB# 175451

EYE CARE FOR YOU

Jacksonville Vision Clinic
Julie D. Danielson, O.D.

(541) 899-2020

950 North Fifth Street
Jacksonville, OR 97530

Mobile Automotive Windshield and Glass Repair and Replacement

APPLEGATE AUTO GLASS

Efficient, Dependable Automotive Glass Repair & Replacement

Call for a FREE QUOTE
541-621-1889
ApplegateAutoGlass@outlook.com

- Local Family Owned
- Mobile Convenience
- OEM Glass
- All Vehicles
- Classic Automobiles
- RV Windshields
- All Insurance Companies
- Competitive Cash Prices
- Licensed & Insured

A Great Fit for the Perfect Smile!

Serving Jacksonville for over a decade with 30 years of experience in the Valley

Our Services include:

- Full Dentures
- Partial Dentures
- Immediate Dentures
- Repairs • Relines
- Implant Dentures
- Great Service
- Custom Support

Valley Denture Care LLC 535 N. Fifth Street
Diana Helvey L.D. Jacksonville, OR 97530
valleydenturecare@gmail.com
541-899-9516

R.W. CASSIDY, INC.
Design & Building

541-846-1248

Applegate Valley, OR
CCB # 166059

Custom Homes Remodeling
Alternative Energy
Small to Large Jobs

Call for an Estimate
846-1248
www.RWCassidyInc.com

The Bard's Garden at Hanley Farm

Tour the plants featured in Shakespeare's plays at the Southern Oregon Historical Society's 2018 Music Festival
September 8th from 3:00 to 8:30 p.m.
at Hanley Farm, 1053 Hanley Road, Central Point
For more information, visit www.sohs.org.

PRE & POST-HARVEST

WE TEST HEMP

SERVING ALL OF OREGON

Green Leaf Lab TESTED We test the best. ✓

ODA Approved Testing Laboratory
www.greenleaflab.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PRE-HARVEST TESTING, CALL DEVIN AT (541) 690-6803