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The Wine Tasting Experience: A Profit Generator

James Peter Murphy

Technological University Dublin, james.p.murphy@tudublin.ie

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Hospitality EXPO – The Irish Hospitality Industries Exhibition 2018

The Wine Tasting Experience

A Profit Generator



James Murphy MSc, MA,
Head Culinary Operations, School Culinary Arts and Food Technology, DIT james.p.murphy@dit.ie

Presentation Overview

- **Getting Started:** the room or area, preparing the wines.
- **Types of Wine Tasting:** comparative, varietal, horizontal and vertical.
- **Blind Tastings:** rationale, procedure, the fun factor - options game,
- **Food:** appropriate small meals, snacks.
- **Glasses.**
- **Wines to select:** budget, advanced, exclusive.
- **How we taste wine:** techniques.
- **How to write tasting notes:** systematic approaches, assessing wines, main faults, the taster's notes.
- **What grapes taste like (expectations):** the major red varieties, white varieties.
- **Tasting note sheet:** suggested layout template.
- **Conclusion, Reading & resources, Training, References.**

Getting Started

'It is crucial in wine tasting that the major senses should be given a free rein to operate to best effect; thus the environment in which the tasting takes, this place should be as neutral as possible' (Murphy, 2013).

Preparation for the wine tasting experience - the room or area

- ✓ **Lighting** should be as natural as possible. Daylight is best; failing that fluorescent strip-lighting is the best alternative.
- ✓ There must be a **white background** (white tasting bench or sheet of plain white paper) against which the wine can be studied.
- ✓ Tasters should try to approach the tasting with **palates free** from cigarettes, food, fizzy drinks or other strong flavours. A piece of bread or plain water helps cleanse the palate.
- ✓ **Colds or hay fever** affect the ability to smell and taste well.
- ✓ The location should not be influenced by outside or internal **odours** which could confuse the power of smell – tobacco, perfume and aftershave should be avoided, and there should be no food smells coming from nearby kitchens.
- ✓ **Tasting glasses** with residual smells, e.g. cardboard, detergent or cloth, can invalidate a tasting. Smell the glass before use and look to see if it is star-bright.

Getting Started

- ✓ **Select the wines:** could be personal preferences, special tastings, themed evening
- ✓ **Other initial considerations:** good tables, spittoon (optional), paper, pens and tasting sheets, glasses.

Preparing the wines

- Each wine has its ideal **temperature** (white wines should be served cool, but not cold, Red wines should be served at room temperature, provided the tasting room is not too warm).
- Wines can be **decanted** before the tasting to allow them to breathe and/or separate them from the sediment, and also to avoid pre-judgement by seeing the label or bottle shape.
- The **order of the wines** is crucial for the palate: white & rosé wines (dry before sweet), then red wines (young before old).
- Consuming **food with wine:** Spanish and Italian wines in isolation may taste harsh, but when married with the local cuisine seem more appealing.

Types of Wine Tasting

‘There are numerous different ways of organising a wine tasting and these will affect the wines you buy’
(Decanter.com),

COMPARATIVE TASTING.

This is a tasting in which you and your guests taste three or more examples of a particular grape or style (for example, tasting 3 bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon, one from California, one from Australia and one from Bordeaux).

TASTING BY VARIETIES.

This is a mix of grape varieties, vintages and styles, starting with the whites and ending with the reds, going from the least powerful grape to the more perfumed and full bodied, and going from the youngest to the oldest vintage. Our guide to wine tasting lists the order of grape varieties and styles. This is the approach adopted by Decanter towards their *Wines of the month* recommendations.

HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL TASTINGS.

These are at the more professional (and therefore more costly) end of the market.

- a) A *horizontal tasting* compares wines from a **specific region and vintage**. (i.e. industry, trade, association panel tastings).
- b) A *vertical tasting* compares the wines of **one estate or producer**. This will show the evolution of the wine and the effect different growing conditions have on the production of a wine tastings (i.e. master classes with the producer, wine grower)

Once you have decided on your tasting, assemble your wines and refrigerate them if necessary. **Sparkling and white wines** should be refrigerated, but not for too long. Allow refrigerated wines a little time out of the fridge to warm as most refrigerators are too cold for wines (aim to serve them at around 10-14oC). **Reds** should be stored in a cool cellar (ideally) and served just below room temperature (aim for 18oC)

The Wine Tasting Experience - A Profit Generator: James Murphy, DIT

Horizontal Tastings

[Examples]

Steve Smith MW (Viticulture) - Craggy Wines (NZ). **Dr. Sandro Boscaini - President of MASI (Italy)**



Blind Tastings

Serving wines blind can be an interesting approach, WHY ? (rationale)

- 1) Remove any prejudice attached to a particular wine
- 2) Allows beginners, amateurs and experts alike the chance to rate the wine on a level playing field – that of pure taste
- 3) Gives more confidence to beginners to analyse a wine in the company of others.

Procedure: You can cover the bottle with a small **opaque bag** or **pre-pour** the glasses Before your friends arrive. Remember that pre-pouring will change the temperature of the wine if it sits in the glass for an extended period of time. **Reveal the identity** of the wines when your friends' curiosity has peaked or, as the host, **you can play the options game (fun factor).**

The Options Game (Len Evans OBE): players compete to guess, eventually, the name, grape variety and vintage of a wine. The host starts off by asking very general questions such as 'is this an Old World or New World wine?', gradually getting more precise, asking for a guess of the vintage ('is it pre-2000 or post-2000') and whether or not the wine is Cabernet Sauvignon or Pinot Noir. Those giving the wrong answer in each round are eliminated from the game until the producer and year (and possibly grape variety) has been correctly deduced or until there is no one left in the game.

Food

- Think about appropriate matches.
- It is always worthwhile considering a (break period) for a small meal or snack.
- Crackers or any other neutral-tasting snack to cleanse the palate throughout tasting wine
- Cheese matching: Near the end of tastings - hard cheeses (Gruyere or Cheddar), blue cheeses (Stilton, Roquefort or Gorgonzola) and creamier varieties (Pont l'Eveque, Camembert or Brie) all work well.
- Other food favourites include quiche, ham, salad or pork pies.

Selection of Flavoured Irish Cheeses.

Wine Tasting set up (includes: waters, wines, food – boiled egg, salad leaf, hard cheese, mayonnaise, horseradish).



Glasses

Glasses can make all the difference to your appreciation of a wine, always consider the following;

- the **size, shape and type** of glass can dramatically **affect your tasting** by enhancing your ability to pick up aromas and colours.
- the **best glasses** are **tulip-shaped** with a **stem**.
- the glass should **enable you to swirl** a small sample of wine vigorously, allowing the wine to '**open up**'.
- **small self test**: pour a sample and sniff it, next swirl the wine for about 30 seconds and smell it again, the difference should be obvious (the smell is stronger and it is easier to pick up more aromas).
- the glass should also be **clear**, enabling you to judge the **colour of the wine**.
- the **perfect tasting glass** is the **ISO standard 21.5cl** glass, suitable for red, white and sparkling wines as well as fortified and distilled (box of six costs approx €15-20, available from wine and glass merchants).
- for **sparkling wine**, **flutes** are the best shape, **no wide** or flat champagne 'coupe' glasses.
- for **sweet and fortified wines**, a **tulip-shaped** glass will do.

ISO standard 21.5cl glass (including recommended service portion 3-5cl can depend on budget, wine strength)



Wines to Select

Some suggestions / Ideas for your tastings:

Budget Selections: select 3 Chardonnays: 1 Australian, 1 American and 1 French (ie Chablis) and 3 Cabernet Sauvignons: 1 Australian, 1 South African and 1 French (mainly Bordeaux, but not always). Alternately select 3 Sauvignon Blanc or 3 Merlots.

Advanced selections: try pairing off less well-known varieties such as 2 Rieslings (one Australian, one German); 2 Sauvignon Blancs (one New Zealand, one French – Sancerre); 2 Pinot Noirs (one North American, one French – Burgundy); 2 Merlots (one Chilean, one French – most vin de pays will state the variety on the label or try St-Emilion) and compare two sweet wines such as a Hungarian Tokaji and an Italian Vin Santo or French Sauternes.

Exclusive selections: taste several vintages of the same wine, your wine supplier or merchant can help you here.

(Mary Downey, Wine Journalist & Author: Australian Wine Tasting 2013) . John Wilson, Wine Columnist Irish Times: DIT Tasting, 2017)



How we taste wine

Tasting and talking about wine

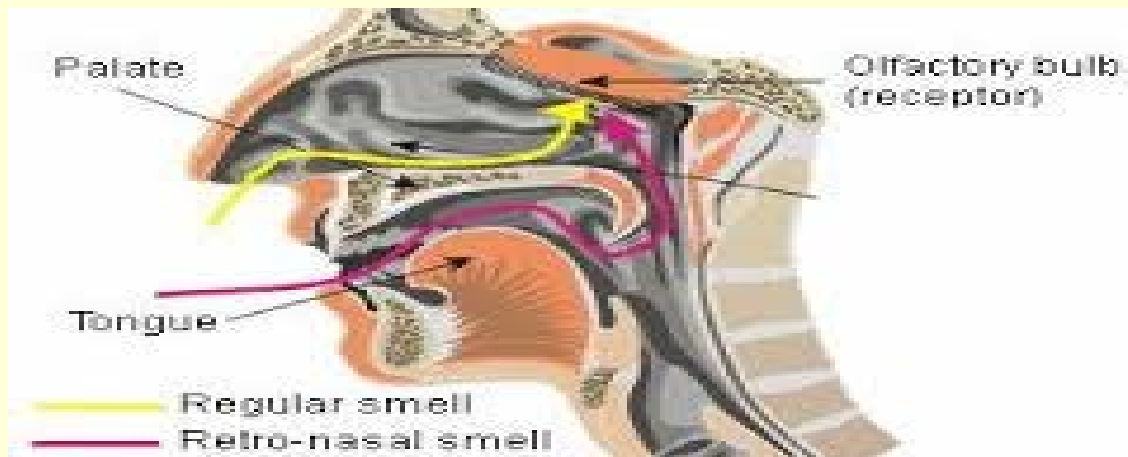
'Tasting is intelligent drinking' (Murphy, 2014).

'Wines differ from one another in terms of colour, texture, strength, structure, body and length, as well as smell and their complexity of flavours, a taster takes all these into account' (Johnson, 2003).



You should consider the following;

- We **smell tastes**, rather than tasting them with our tongue.
- The real organ of discrimination is the upper **nasal cavity**.
- Smells **stimulate memories**, helps your powers of analysis. Apart from sweet, sour, salt and bitter, every taste term is borrowed from other senses.
- Most people are not attuned to what a wine offers, for example they may be **occupied with conversation**, or also **drinking whiskey or gin** which overwhelms it, or have a **cold or simply never have tuned** to the differences between ordinary and fine wines.
- **Communicating the sensation** of wine is harder than appreciating it.
- Words give **identity to sensations**, and help to clarify them.
- Experience tasters have a wider range of **reference** available to them than beginners.



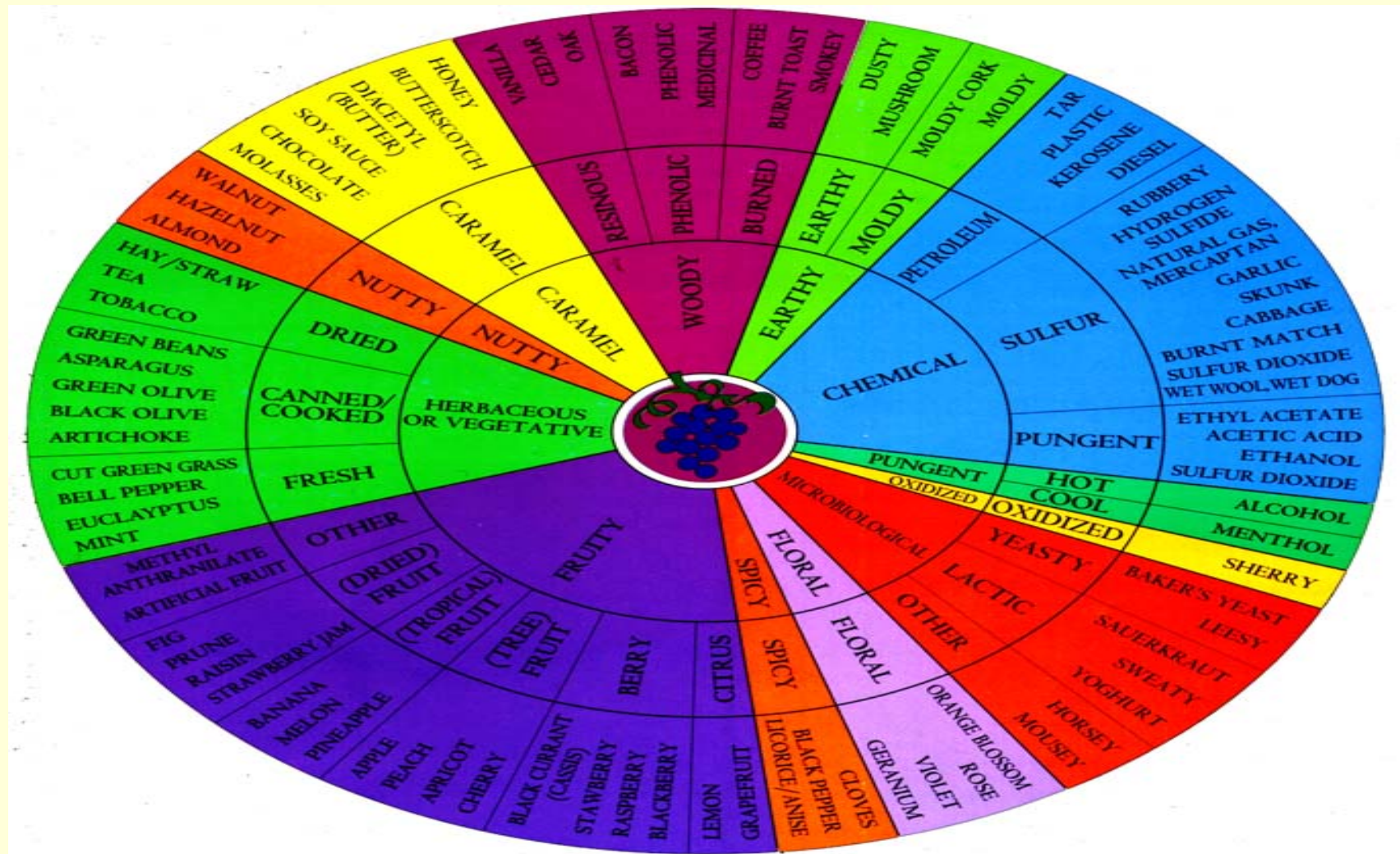
How to write tasting notes

(a systematic approach ?)

Appearance	
Clarity	clear – dull
Intensity	pale – medium – deep
Colour	white : lemon – gold – amber rosé : pink – orange red : purple - ruby – garnet – tawny
Nose	
Condition	clean – unclean
Intensity	light – medium – pronounced
Character	fruit – floral – spice – vegetal – oak – other
Palate	
Sweetness	dry – off-dry – medium – sweet
Acidity	low – medium – high
Tannin	low – medium – high
Body	light – medium – full
Character	fruit – floral – spice – vegetal – oak – other
Length	short – medium – long
Conclusions	
Quality	poor – acceptable – good - outstanding

How to write tasting notes (continued)

[The Flavour Wheel for Wine- Dr. Ann Noble - University of California, Davis near Sacramento, USA]



How to write tasting notes (continued)

The Art of Tasting Wine (there is no right or wrong in anyone's description, it's highly personal to the scent and taste released)

- As time passes you gain experience, confidence in assessing wine.
- Some people have great memories for taste (pinpointing, wine origin, grape variety etc).
- Anyone can be a good taster, as long as they have an unimpaired sense of smell and taste, and are prepared to concentrate.
- Keep your notes taken (invaluable source of reference when purchasing wines).
- Professional tasters keep their notes for years

Notebook content: *'producers name, vintage of every wine you tasted, brief note on each, your own grade system for the wines, what food you had with the wine'* (Hugh Johnson)

Appearance (Eyes): Tip the glass away at **45 degrees angle**, hold it against a **white background** (paper even) – to see true colour of the wine (see WSET above), **colour ranges** between pale straw and rich golden yellow, with Red wine the deeper the colour the more concentrated the flavour (i.e. Pinot Noir vs. Syrah). **Tears or legs** will indicate high alcohol or residual sugar content.

Smell (Nose): Sense of smell and taste are **intertwined**, **glass design** captures a wine's aromas and funnels them in the right direction, **swirl** the wine to coat the inner surface, put your **nose** well in, **age, barrelling, region** influences aroma, if it lingers. **A good sniff** give you clues on condition (corked - smells musty, burnt matches – sulphur was added, oxidised – rich burnt smell). **Reidel's** research and glassware.

Taste (mouth): Take a mouth full and **swish** it around your mouth quite vigorously, **breath** as you do (aeration, increased flavour), hold the wine in your mouth for 15-20 seconds, spit it out (spittoon) or swallow. **Your tongue** – taste receptors, *sweetness* at front, *acidity* at sides, *bitterness* at back, *high acidity* – mouth waters, *tannin* – dryness. (see next slide)

How to write tasting notes (continued)

Tongue range of receptors.



Tongue range of receptors (updated)



How to write tasting notes (continued)

Assessing

- Flavours reveal themselves over time
- Is it ready to drink now or should it be kept for a while ?
- Does it offer value for money ?
- Do you enjoy it ?

Consider the following

- ✓ If the wine gives immediate pleasure (no heavy tannins, which need to soften) - its ready to drink.
- ✓ Heavy tannins - wine needs several years to soften.
- ✓ Closed wine – tightness at back of palate, wine needs time.
- ✓ Some young wines which taste oaky (if oak and fruit seem separate – might need time to marry).

Wine faults

- Can emerge from poor winemaking, defective materials (cork).
- Sensitivity to wine faults differ (some people only need seconds, others pick up sulphur).

Main faults:

Corked - the wine smells and tastes musty and sour, caused by a fault in the cork whereby a chemical called TCA destroys the wine.

Oxidised - a wine that has had too much contact with oxygen. It has a sherry-like smell.

Over-sulphured - a wine that smells of burnt matches and leaves a sour taste in the back of the throat.

Hydrogen-sulphide - bad egg smells that come from winemakers not paying sufficient attention during fermentation.

Unclean barrels ('barrel taint') - can give wine an unpleasant musty taste which is often very similar to a corked wine.

Acetic acid - common to all wines, in excess it will make the wine smell and taste vinegary.

How to write tasting notes (continued)

Sample Tasting Notes (Michael Broadbent who has written more than 88,000 tasting notes since 1952)

Meursault 1998 Louis Latour

*Clean, **limpid** medium yellow with a hint of green, quite **rich**, a really lovely colour. Touch of **new wood** on the nose, ripe **melony** fruit, slightly exotic, stylish and very **expressive**. Fine, **floral**, **honeysuckle** fruit on the palate, with **hazelnut** overtones, rich and quite **buttery**, yet good lemony acidity, very elegant but still young. Very good balance, oak and fruit well blended in, an excellent example of grape variety dominated by terroir, great persistence, very good future.*

Valpolicella Classico Superiore 1998 Allegrini

***Brick red** colour, very fresh and young looking. Fine, **rose-like** like bouquet, some sweetness in **attack**, drier on the **second nose** Clean, **cherry-like** fruit flavours on the palate, a hint of **wood** and a touch of **bitter almonds** , good balance, long, dry finish. Fine long flavour despite the liveliness, natural acidity present, a wine for **food**.*

Top Wine Writers / Tasters: Hugh Johnson, Jancis Robinson, Michael Broadbent.

Robert Parker .



What grapes taste like (expectations)

[Red varieties]

BARBERA:

- plummy and cherryish
- undertones of sweet vanilla.

CABERNET FRANC

- grassy and raspberryish
- aroma of lead pencil shavings.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

- capsicum and blackcurrant
- a range of cedar, vanilla and coffee notes.

GAMAY

- bubblegum and banana
- cherry and strawberry flavours.

GRENACHE

- white pepper and raspberry
- thyme and rosemary scents.

MALBEC

- mulberry and blackberry flavours
- tarry and leathery.

MERLOT

- bell pepper and blackcurrant
- chocolate and spice-like characters.

MOURVEDRE

- brambly and blackberry-like
- animal, funky and meaty.

NEBBIOLO

- tar and roses
- truffle and liquorice spiciness.

PINOT NOIR

- raspberry and strawberry
- cola spice, incense and game.

PINOTAGE

- plummy and blackberryish
- hints of baked banana and burnt rubber.

SANGIOVESE

- cherry and plum
- herby and savoury.

SHIRAZ / SYRAH

- smoke and blackberry
- cool climate pepper and mint.

TEMPRANILLO

- strawberry flavours
- a veneer of vanilla and tobacco-spice.

ZINFANDEL

- brambly and raspberryish
- headily spicy.

What grapes taste like (expectations)

[White varieties]

ALBARINO

- citrusy and crisp
- fragrant and spritz-fresh.

CHARDONNAY

- melon, grapefruit and pineapple
- buttery and nutty.

CHENIN BLANC

- quince and apple
- sweet barley sugar and honey characters.

GEWURZTRAMINER

- fragrant rose petal and lychee
- dusting of Turkish Delight.

GRUNER VELTLINER

- white pepper and celery
- an alluring herbiness.

MARSANNE

marzipan-like and nutty
opulently rich, honeysuckle aromas.

MULLER-THURGAU

- floral sweet pea
- faintly spicy.

MUSCAT

- grapes and raisins
- exotically fragrant

PINOT GRIGIO / PINOT GRIS

- smoky and spicy
- occasionally oily.

RIESLING

- apples and lime
- honey and petrol characters.

ROUSSANNE

- white flowers, hawthorn
- almond and greengage.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

- from gooseberry to tropical passion fruit
- aromas of elderflower and blackcurrant leaf.

SEMILLON

- lime citrus and honey
- lusciously sweet and marmaladey.

VIOGNIER

- peaches and apricots
- heady scents of jasmine

Tasting note sheet

Wine	Appearance	Nose	Taste	Drinkability (now 2/5/10 years)	Rating Please up to 20

Rating / Scoring System

20 Outstanding (*****)

19 Excellent (*****)

18 Very Good + (****)

17 Very Good (****)

16 Good + (***)

15 Good (***)

14 Fair (**)

13 Adequate (**)

Your name/s:

12 Mediocre (*)

11 Poor (*)

10 Bad

Conclusion / Reading & Resources / Training / References

- **Conclusions.**
- **Reading & Resources.**
- **Training & Skills Development (DIT wine courses).**

References

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Web Resources

Wine and Spirit Education Trust
Decanter Magazine
Irish Guild of Sommeliers
Institute of Masters of Wine
Wine Television
Sommeliers International

www.wset.co.uk
www.decanter.com
www.irishguildofsommeliers.ie
www.masters-of-wine.org
www.winetelevision.com
www.sommeliers-international.com



Questions

