



KES | 101

# KOBRAND Wine & Spirits EDUCATIONAL SERIES

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## TASTING/EVALUATION

### **The Tongue Tells** – Identifying Basic Tastes (10-15 Minutes)

Facilitator's Guide

Tongue Diagram (Handout)

Kobrand Taste Pyramid (Handout)



## THE TONGUE TELLS™

–Identifying Basic Tastes

### OVERVIEW:

Demystify wine by tasting the main components found in most wines. Experience where and how they feel in your mouth so that you can easily identify the presence of single components when combined in a glass of wine.

### TOOLS/PREPARATION: (for a group of 20-25)

- Disposable cups (5 per participant) – 2 oz. plastic are best
- Table sugar (2 cups)
- Component ingredients (ordered on-line – see last page for ordering instructions)
  - Malic acid
  - Tannin
  - Oak chips
- Four 2-Quart Rubbermaid containers for liquid (with resealable pouring spouts)
- Label each of the containers – one each for “Sweet”, “Acid”, “Tannin” and “Water for Oak”
- Bottle of Vikingfjord or other vodka (need 1 oz. per participant; a 750ml. has roughly 25 oz., a liter has roughly 33 oz.)
- Water (16 cups total)
- Tongue Tells Tasting Mat
- Spit cups – 1 per participant
- Napkins (1 per participant)
- Crackers or bread – 1 small serving per participant

**HANDOUTS:** ▶ Tongue Diagram  
▶ Kobrand Taste Pyramid

### CREATING THE COMPONENTS:

#### “S” – Sweet

- Create simple syrup by combining 4 cups water and 2 cups table sugar in a sauce pan.
- Bring to a boil on the stove until all sugar is dissolved, stirring occasionally.
- Allow to cool.
- Pour contents into your plastic 2 qt. container and store in the refrigerator until needed.
- This product does not *need* to be refrigerated, however, if left out, it will mold after a few days – refrigerated it will last indefinitely.
- Note: In a pinch, you can simply combine the sugar with very hot tap water, however it is possible that the sugar will not dissolve completely.



## THE TONGUE TELLS

–Identifying Basic Tastes Continued

### “A” – Acid

- Combine 4 cups of water and 1 tsp. malic acid into your 2 qt. plastic container.
- Save until ready to use.
- This product will last indefinitely if stored in a cool, dry place.

### “T” – Tannin

- Combine 4 cups of water and 2 tsp. grape tannin into your 2 qt. plastic container and save until ready to use.
- This product will last indefinitely if stored in a cool, dry place.

### “ALC” – Alcohol

- Acquire a bottle of Vikingfjord Vodka.
- No additional prep needed. This will be poured on site at your tasting.

### “O” – Oak

- Bring 4 cups of water (stored in its own 2 qt. plastic container) and your bag of oak chips.
- This will be combined on site at your tasting.

## THE PROCEDURE:

Allow 45 minutes to set up on-site; less if you have assistance to expedite the process.

### Set up:

- Prepare the Sweet, Acid and Tannin components in advance and bring them with you in 2 Quart Rubbermaid containers.
- Fill the fourth 2 Quart Rubbermaid container with water.
- Lay out one tasting mat per participant. It will be labeled “S”, “A”, “T”, “ALC”, “O” in order: Sweet, Acid, Tannin, Alcohol and Oak.
- Fill the Sweet, Acid and Tannin cups with about 1 oz. each of corresponding liquid and place over the appropriate letter on the tasting mat.
- Fill the Alcohol cup with 1 oz. of vodka.
- Fill the Oak cup with 1 oz. of water and then add a few oak chips (3-4 chips) to each cup.
- Place an empty “spit cup” at each place setting (along with napkin).

## TASTING DISCUSSION

### Points to Emphasize:

- The common tastes found in all wines (and foods) are objective tastes. These are elements that can be measured.



## THE TONGUE TELLS

–Identifying Basic Tastes Continued

- The acidity element in wine is the “crispness”. Participants learn that foods can be sour and wine can be acidic or crisp.
- The bitterness element from food (the taste of strong tea or the string on a banana) is labeled as “tannic” in wine.

### PROCEDURE:

As you go through this exercise, have them smell, taste and spit each component, saving a bit of each to combine at the end.

#### Sweetness

- Have them begin by taking a sniff from the “S” cup. There is no aroma. Have them take a sip, swirl the liquid in their mouths and then spit into their spit cups. They will taste the sweetness.
- Ask them where they first detect the sweet sensation. Sweetness is first identified on the tip of the tongue.
- Explain that people confuse sweetness and fruitiness when they’re talking about wine, but sweetness is something you sense on your tongue and can be clearly measured, whereas fruitiness is identified through the olfactory system.
- The “fruitiness” factor can be covered in another seminar when you talk about flavors.
- Technically speaking all wines are “fruity”, that is, have aromas of fruit, but few wines are sweet.
- Dessert wines have noticeable sweetness. Blush wines are typically vinified with some remaining residual sugar.

#### Acidity

- Have your participants smell and take a sip of the “A” cup. Spit. *There is no smell.*
- Once participants sample the malic acid and water mixture, their mouths will pucker up and start watering (think of lemon juice). The sensation is strongest along the sides of the tongue/mouth.
- If they want to use the word “sour” to describe the taste, steer them towards the wine terms of “crisp”, “lively” or “tart”. The term “sour” is appropriate for food but that is not a term used for wine unless it tastes like vinegar.
- Acidity in wine is a good thing. Identified as the crisp, bright and fresh sensation which comes from the natural acids in wine.
- Acids protect a wine from microbes as it ages. A wine that has high acidity naturally goes better with food. The mouthwatering that occurs tends to cleanse the palate and make a person ready for the next bite of food.

#### Tannin – also referred to as Bitterness

- Have the participants smell the “T” cup. There may be a slight aroma.
- Have them take a sip of the “T” cup and spit. Have them take a second sip and spit.
- They will perceive a drying sensation, an astringent effect. Their tongues will feel like they are getting stuck of the roofs of their mouth or like a cotton ball has been inserted into their mouths.





## THE TONGUE TELLS

–Identifying Basic Tastes Continued

- Discuss this feeling with them. The group will probably make faces that you can all laugh about. Though tannin alone isn't pleasant, it can be good when combined with other elements in wine.
- Identified as the astringent and drying sensation in wine, tannin comes from the skins, stems and seeds of grapes. Red wines tend to have more tannin than white wines.
- Tannins are the compounds that protect red wine from oxidation. Tannin is both a tactile and a taste sensation. Tea tannins can be more bitter than grape-skin tannins, but their effect is similar.
- Note: Tannins will soften as the wine ages. A winemaker can increase the wine's tannins by prolonged aging in an oak barrel.
  - Wines highest in tannins: California Cabernets, red Bordeaux, Australian Shirazes and Barolos.
  - Wines lowest in tannins: most whites, Beaujolais, Pinot Noir.

### Alcohol

- Have the participants smell, taste and spit the “ALC” cup.
- They will sense “heat” or a burning sensation in the mouth, especially in the back of the throat, which is indicative of alcohol in wine.
- Some wines tend to have higher alcohol levels than others (such as big red Zinfandels). Though the sensation will not be as unpleasant as this exercise, the heat detected in wine is an indicator of high alcohol.

### Oak

- Have them smell and taste the “O” cup. There is a slight aroma. Tell them to be careful to put only the liquid in their mouths (not the oak chips).
- Upon tasting, they should experience a slight drying sensation in the mouth and should be able to smell the oak aromas.
- This component will be subtle after having just tasted the alcohol, but of the 5 components, this one is a subjective taste (which requires aroma for detection), whereas the others are objective tastes that can clearly be sensed on the tongue.
- Oak is noticed in red wine and white. It gives a wine fuller body and more complex flavors.

A high quality wine will have a nice combination of all of the above elements, without one overpowering the others.

## COMBINING COMPONENTS

- Now, take the remains of the “A”, “T”, and “ALC” cups and combine into the “S” cup. (Do nothing with the “O” cup).
- Smell it, take a sip and spit.
- Have them describe what they taste/feel.
- They should taste all of the components in balance - they should compliment each other without one overpowering the other.
- The balance of these components in wine is a key to its quality.





## THE TONGUE TELLS

–Identifying Basic Tastes Continued

It is natural and very beneficial to combine this module with one of the following:

Jelly Belly experience using the “W” and “R” on this tasting mat for placement of your jelly bean cups (white and red) followed by the Big Six tasting.

**Or**

Simply taste a white and red wine (placing the wines on the tasting mat in advance when you set up the component tasting). For each wine, discuss the 5 components – are each present in the white wine and to what degree? What about the red?

### Ordering Information for Components: Acid, Tannin and Oak

- Go to [www.alternativebeverage.com](http://www.alternativebeverage.com)
- Click on “on-line catalog”
- Acid is found under “Wine Making Ingredients” then “Winemaking Acids” then “Malic acid”.
  - Purchase product MAL-04 Malic acid- 4 oz. (\$2.75/each; Note a 4 oz. container should provide approximately 1,200 1oz. tastes. This will last you a while!)
- Tannin is found under “Wine Making Ingredients” then “Winemaking Additives” then “Tannin”
  - Purchase product TAN-04 Grape Tannin- 4 oz. (\$4.79/each; Note a 4 oz. container will provide approximately 1,200 1oz. tastes. This will last you a while also!)
- Oak is found under “Wine Making Ingredients” then “Winemaking Flavorings” then “Oak Chips”, then “American Oak Chips–Light Toast”.
  - Purchase product OAK-AL04 American white oak 4 oz. (\$1.65/each; Note this should last for about 75 1oz. tastes – you should probably buy a couple of bags to last you).

*“A man will be eloquent if you give him good wine.”*

– RALPH WALDO EMERSON