

Court of Master Sommelier Level 1 Intro Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



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SAMPLE

Questions

- 1. Which characteristic is often sought after in high-quality wine?**
 - A. High sugar content**
 - B. Complexity and balance**
 - C. Parker scoring above 95**
 - D. Fruitiness with little aging**
- 2. What is the main purpose of decanting wine?**
 - A. To chill the wine**
 - B. To aerate the wine and separate it from sediment**
 - C. To enhance the color of the wine**
 - D. To increase the acidity**
- 3. What does the term "vintner" refer to?**
 - A. A person who sells wine**
 - B. A person involved in the production of wine**
 - C. A type of wine glass**
 - D. A specific winemaking technique**
- 4. What white grape is commonly grown in the Veneto region?**
 - A. Garganega**
 - B. Chardonnay**
 - C. Riesling**
 - D. Sauvignon Blanc**
- 5. Barolo and Barbaresco wines are produced in which province of Italy?**
 - A. Veneto**
 - B. Piedmont**
 - C. Tuscany**
 - D. Lombardy**

- 6. High levels of which components contribute to the viscosity of wine?**
- A. Phenols and tannins**
 - B. Sugar and alcohol**
 - C. Acids and esters**
 - D. Water and minerals**
- 7. Which wine region is renowned for its high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon?**
- A. Bordeaux**
 - B. Napa Valley**
 - C. Tuscany**
 - D. Barossa Valley**
- 8. What term describes a dessert wine made from grapes affected by botrytis?**
- A. Sec**
 - B. Late Harvest**
 - C. Passito**
 - D. Selection de Grains Noble**
- 9. What sensory aspect is evaluated when assessing the "nose" of a wine?**
- A. Flavor**
 - B. Aroma**
 - C. Appearance**
 - D. Mouthfeel**
- 10. Which of the following is NOT a DOCG designation from Tuscany?**
- A. Brunello di Montalcino**
 - B. Soave**
 - C. Chianti Classico**
 - D. Chianti**

Answers

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1. B
2. B
3. B
4. A
5. B
6. B
7. B
8. D
9. B
10. B

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Explanations

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1. Which characteristic is often sought after in high-quality wine?

- A. High sugar content**
- B. Complexity and balance**
- C. Parker scoring above 95**
- D. Fruitiness with little aging**

High-quality wine is frequently characterized by complexity and balance, which are essential attributes that contribute to a wine's overall experience. Complexity refers to the range of flavors and aromas that unfold in the wine, providing depth and interest as you taste it. This complexity can arise from various factors including the grape variety, the terroir, the winemaking techniques, and the aging process. A complex wine will often reveal different characteristics at various stages of tasting, appealing to both the senses and the discerning palate. Balance, on the other hand, is about the harmonious integration of the wine's components—its acidity, tannins, sweetness, and alcohol. When these elements are in balance, the wine feels smooth and well-rounded on the palate. A well-balanced wine ensures that no single element overpowers the others, creating a more enjoyable and elegant drinking experience. While other qualities, such as high sugar content, can sometimes create a desirable style in certain wines, it is not a definitive characteristic of high-quality wine overall. Similarly, while high scores from critics like Robert Parker are often sought after by producers and can indicate quality, they are not a guaranteed measure of a wine's intrinsic qualities. Lastly, wines that exhibit fruitiness with little aging may be enjoyable, but they

2. What is the main purpose of decanting wine?

- A. To chill the wine**
- B. To aerate the wine and separate it from sediment**
- C. To enhance the color of the wine**
- D. To increase the acidity**

The primary purpose of decanting wine is to aerate it and to separate it from any sediment that may have formed during aging. When wine is aged, especially red wines and some older white wines, sediments can settle at the bottom of the bottle over time. Decanting allows for a gentle transfer of the wine to another container, such as a decanter, while leaving this sediment behind in the original bottle. Aeration is also a vital part of the decanting process. When wine is exposed to oxygen, it can open up and develop more complex aromas and flavors, enhancing the overall tasting experience. This is particularly beneficial for young wines that may exhibit tightness or aggression when first opened. While chilling wine may be important for certain types or styles, it is not a purpose of decanting. The enhancement of color is not directly influenced by decanting either, as the color is primarily derived from the type and ripeness of the grapes used. Similarly, increasing acidity is not a focus of decanting. The primary functions are indeed to aerate the wine and to separate it from sediment, making the second option the most accurate choice.

3. What does the term "vintner" refer to?

- A. A person who sells wine
- B. A person involved in the production of wine**
- C. A type of wine glass
- D. A specific winemaking technique

The term "vintner" specifically refers to a person involved in the production of wine. This role encompasses various responsibilities such as overseeing the winemaking process, managing vineyards, and ensuring the quality of the wine from grape to bottle. In the context of the wine industry, vintners can be wine producers, winery owners, or even individuals who engage in winemaking on a smaller scale. Understanding this term is crucial for those studying wine because it highlights the connection between vineyard practices and the final product that consumers enjoy. By knowing who a vintner is, one can better appreciate the complexities of wine production and the factors that contribute to the character of a wine.

4. What white grape is commonly grown in the Veneto region?

- A. Garganega**
- B. Chardonnay
- C. Riesling
- D. Sauvignon Blanc

Garganega is the white grape that is most commonly associated with the Veneto region in Italy. It is the primary grape used in producing the renowned Soave wines, which originate from this area. Garganega is known for its ability to produce wines with good acidity and a range of flavors, from floral and citrus to more complex stone fruit and almond notes as the wines age. This grape thrives in the volcanic soils found in the Veneto and is a key varietal that defines the region's winemaking identity. Chardonnay, while a popular grape globally, is not native to the Veneto and is more often associated with regions like Burgundy in France or areas in California and Australia. Similarly, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc are not commonly cultivated in the Veneto; Riesling is more often linked to regions like Germany and Alsace, while Sauvignon Blanc is famously grown in regions such as the Loire Valley and New Zealand. Therefore, Garganega stands out as the most representative white grape of the Veneto region.

5. Barolo and Barbaresco wines are produced in which province of Italy?

- A. Veneto**
- B. Piedmont**
- C. Tuscany**
- D. Lombardy**

Barolo and Barbaresco wines are both renowned red wines produced from the Nebbiolo grape in the Piedmont region of Italy. This region is celebrated for its unique terroir, which includes a combination of climate and soil types that contribute to the distinctive characteristics of these wines. Piedmont is home to a diverse array of vineyards and has a long history of winemaking, particularly known for its high-quality Barolo and Barbaresco. Barolo is often referred to as the "King" of wines due to its age-worthiness and complexity, while Barbaresco, sometimes called the "Queen," offers a slightly lighter style that is still rich in flavor and depth. The other provinces listed, such as Veneto, Tuscany, and Lombardy, are also notable for their wines but do not produce Barolo and Barbaresco. Veneto is famous for Prosecco and Amarone, Tuscany is known for Chianti and Brunello di Montalcino, and Lombardy is recognized for wines like Franciacorta and Valtellina. Understanding the geographical origins of specific wines is crucial for anyone studying wine regions, and knowing that both Barolo and Barbaresco originate from Piedmont is essential knowledge for mastering the topic.

6. High levels of which components contribute to the viscosity of wine?

- A. Phenols and tannins**
- B. Sugar and alcohol**
- C. Acids and esters**
- D. Water and minerals**

The viscosity of wine is influenced primarily by the concentration of sugar and alcohol. Both of these components are viscous in nature. Sugar, particularly residual sugar, creates a thicker mouthfeel as it increases the overall density of the wine. Alcohol contributes to viscosity as well; as its concentration rises, it can give the wine a richer and more viscous texture. This is why sweeter wines or those with higher alcohol content feel fuller and thicker on the palate. While phenols and tannins do contribute to the texture and mouthfeel of wine, they primarily affect the astringency and flavor profile rather than viscosity in the way that sugar and alcohol do. Acids and esters pertain more to the sharpness and aromatic quality of wine, and water and minerals can influence the overall balance and flavor but do not significantly contribute to viscosity. Thus, the correct identification of sugar and alcohol as the key components of viscosity provides a clearer understanding of how these elements affect the wine's texture and mouthfeel.

7. Which wine region is renowned for its high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon?

- A. Bordeaux**
- B. Napa Valley**
- C. Tuscany**
- D. Barossa Valley**

The choice of Napa Valley as the region renowned for its high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon is supported by several key factors specific to the area's climate, soil, and winemaking history. Napa Valley is often considered the premier Cabernet Sauvignon producing region in the United States, and it is known for the excellent quality of its wines. Napa Valley's warm climate, which features plenty of sunshine and significant diurnal temperature variation, allows Cabernet Sauvignon grapes to ripen fully while retaining the necessary acidity for balance. This results in wines that are rich, bold, and complex, often featuring dark fruit flavors, structured tannins, and the ability to age well over time. Additionally, Napa Valley has a well-established reputation and history of producing high-quality wines, reinforced by accolades from critics and several prestigious wine competitions. The combination of ideal terroir and the dedication of winemakers has positioned Napa Valley as a standout region for Cabernet Sauvignon compared to other regions known for this varietal, like Bordeaux or Barossa Valley. In Bordeaux, though it may produce excellent Cabernet Sauvignon, it is part of a blend with other varietals, such as Merlot and Cabernet Franc, which often diminishes its singular focus compared to the varietal wines from Napa Valley. Tuscany is primarily known

8. What term describes a dessert wine made from grapes affected by botrytis?

- A. Sec**
- B. Late Harvest**
- C. Passito**
- D. Sélection de Grains Noble**

The term that describes a dessert wine made from grapes affected by botrytis is "Sélection de Grains Nobles." This French term specifically refers to wines produced from grapes that have been selectively harvested to include those affected by noble rot, or botrytis cinerea. The presence of this fungus causes the grapes to shrivel, concentrating their sugars and flavors, which results in a richly flavored dessert wine with complex aromas and a luxurious sweetness. While "Late Harvest" refers to wines made from grapes that are harvested later in the season to achieve higher sugar levels, it does not necessarily mean they are affected by botrytis. "Passito" is an Italian term for wines made from partially dried grapes, which may include botrytis-affected grapes but is not solely defined by it. Lastly, "Sec" refers to dry wines, which is not relevant in the context of sweet dessert wines significantly impacted by botrytis. Hence, "Sélection de Grains Nobles" is the most accurate term for this type of dessert wine.

9. What sensory aspect is evaluated when assessing the "nose" of a wine?

A. Flavor

B. Aroma

C. Appearance

D. Mouthfeel

The correct answer is aroma, as the "nose" of a wine specifically refers to the scents that can be detected when the wine is swirled in the glass and inhaled. The aromas arise from various compounds in the wine that contribute to its bouquet and can indicate grape variety, origin, and winemaking techniques. Evaluating the nose is a critical step in wine tasting because it sets the stage for the overall experience and can reveal much about the wine's character. Flavor, while related to what is experienced on the palate, is separate from the sensory evaluation of the nose, which focuses solely on the aromatic profile of the wine. Similarly, appearance and mouthfeel pertain to different aspects of wine evaluation: appearance addresses the color and clarity of the wine, and mouthfeel describes the texture and weight perceived in the mouth. Thus, both of these categories do not fall under the evaluation of the nose. The primary focus when assessing the nose of the wine is undoubtedly on aroma.

10. Which of the following is NOT a DOCG designation from Tuscany?

A. Brunello di Montalcino

B. Soave

C. Chianti Classico

D. Chianti

Soave is not a DOCG designation from Tuscany; it is actually a well-known DOCG wine from the Veneto region in northeastern Italy. Tuscany is famous for its specific DOCG wines, which include notable options such as Brunello di Montalcino, Chianti, and Chianti Classico. Brunello di Montalcino is particularly esteemed and made from the Sangiovese grape in the Montalcino area. Chianti and Chianti Classico, while both representing the Chianti wine region, have distinct regulations and classifications, with Chianti Classico being a specific zone within the larger Chianti designation that must adhere to stricter production standards. Recognizing the regions associated with various DOCG designations is crucial for understanding Italian wines and their geographical significance. Soave, being outside of Tuscany, highlights the importance of regional recognition when discussing wine classifications in Italy.