



WSET Level 2 Systematic Approach to Tasting Spirits®

A learning tool to help you taste and describe spirits.

Appearance

Clarity	clear – hazy
Intensity	water-white – pale – medium – deep – opaque
Colour	colourless – lemon – gold – amber – brown pink – red – orange – yellow – green – blue – purple – brown – black
Other observations	e.g. louching

Nose

Condition	clean – unclean
Intensity	neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Aroma characteristics	e.g. raw material, processing, oak and maturation

Palate

Sweetness (sugar level)	dry – off-dry – medium – sweet
Texture	e.g. rough, smooth, watery, mouthfilling, warming
Flavour intensity	neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Flavour characteristics	e.g. raw material, processing, oak and maturation
Finish	length nature
	short – medium – long neutral – simple – some complexity – very complex

Conclusions

Quality level	faulty – poor – acceptable – good – very good – outstanding
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WSET Level 2 Spirit-Lexicon

Supporting the WSET Level 2 Systematic Approach to Tasting Spirits®

Aroma and flavour

Raw materials

Corn	butterscotch, sweetcorn, cornbread, popcorn, caramel, burnt sugar, toffee, menthol
Malted barley	husk, porridge, barley, malt, flour, oatmeal
Rye	rye bread, gingerbread, peppercorn, allspice
Grape	grape, fig, prune, sultana, citrus elderflower, orange blossom, rose, violet, perfume, lavender, lilac, dried flowers
Agave	agave, peppercorn, root vegetable, olive, green bell pepper (capsicum), herbaceous
Sugar cane	grass, herbaceous, caramel, burnt sugar, toffee, treacle, molasses
Fruits	apple, pear, apricot, peach, plum, cherry, marzipan strawberry, raspberry, blackcurrant, blackberry orange, lemon
Botanicals	juniper, citrus peel, root, earthy, cumin, peppercorn aniseed, fennel, liquorice cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, cardamom coriander, basil, rosemary, thyme, sage, lemongrass, mint

Processing (raw material, fermentation, distillation)

Smoke	peat, medicinal, smoked fish, smoky, seaweed smoke, iodine, char, charred vegetables
Esters	banana, apple, pear, floral, pineapple, melon, mango, nail varnish
Other	pungent solvent (prickling sensation on the nose), plastic, cheese, sweaty, burnt rubber

Oak and maturation

Oak	vanilla, toasted bread, cedar, spice, sherry, sawdust, coconut, coffee, nuts
Age/rancio	fruit cake, candied fruits, leather, tobacco, wet leaves, mushroom, forest floor, meaty, gravy, yeast extract, wood polish

Texture/other

Does the spirit feel:	• rough, harsh, sharp? • mouthfilling, full? • smooth, silky? • warming? • watery, thin?
Other	bitterness