

Reflections on Preference Testing of Pinot Noir Wines

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1. Choosing the Research Subject

For my preference testing research I will be the subject of my testing. I have had amateur experiences in tasting wine – the product I will be testing, and I have done some research into the product, having a desire to learn more. I also have some small knowledge in how wine is described, so my knowledge will be useful in not only creating but in using my lexicon. Plus, I enjoy wine, and I think I will have fun doing research on this product in this way.

2. Choosing the Research Product

For my research, I have decided to test between two brands of the wine Pinot Noir – one of the most collectible wines in the world and one of the hardest grapes to grow. I enjoy wine, and I have had a desire to know more about wines – the differences in the types and how to choose a good brand. I typically drink Merlot for a red wine, so choosing Pinot Noir will give me a new experience with a new type of wine. I have chosen Pinot Noir specifically, because from descriptions I have read I am supposing that it should have the same good balance between dry and sweet that I prefer in my wines. I have had some experience in tasting wines and in the descriptions of wine flavors, so wine tasting will not be entirely foreign to me.

3. Choosing Brands of Pinot Noir

To choose the two brands of Pinot Noir, I obtained help at Colonial Wine and Spirits. I was told how broad a difference the flavor of Pinot Noirs was depended on how much you were willing to spend on the wine, going anywhere from twelve dollars and up. I was told that a twenty dollar range would give me a good selection. I was also told there is a difference between Old World Pinot Noirs, coming from Europe and New World Pinot Noirs typically coming from California. In Old World Pinot Noirs, such as the French Bourgogne that I selected, the fruitiness of the wine is secondary, so the Pinot Noir grape is ripened less, giving it a lighter, earthier

flavor. It has higher acidity and is more “complex.” New World Pinot Noirs such as the Californian Laetitia that I purchased are ripened more, giving it a sweeter, less acidic flavor.

4. Reflections on the Process of Conducting the Preference Testing

I found the preference testing on Pinot Noir wines challenging and interesting. The preference testing on this wine was challenging because it was difficult to know how to test it. For one thing, I wasn't sure if I should test all the way through one sample at a time or test them side by side. By testing all the way through one at a time, I wasn't so much as comparing against the other sample as comparing with my own experience with alcohol and wine in particular. By testing side by side, I would be comparing them against one another with perhaps some of my own prior experience thrown in on the side.

I decided to test each separately all the way through to try to get an independent read on the wines. I assumed the scales were not bound by the sample's comparison to each other but to the overall experience. I still found this challenging as I am not accustomed to studying wines that closely, and I haven't developed a finer tasting ability for wine. Despite the independent exposure, the testing was still rather subjective to my experience with other wines.

I also found it challenging to come up with a lexicon with such a variety of attributes for one product and to provide definitions by which others would be able to understand the quality in the attribute for which I was looking. I was able to obtain some help with this by doing some research online. I think choosing the product of wine gave me an advantage in this regard, as wine is something many people have taken the time to describe and understand in-depth.

The testing was interesting in that through the process I learned more about wine – particularly where the grape is grown and how that particular part of the world prepares the wine. The testing was also interesting in that I was able to experience a wine I had not experienced before. I also enjoyed being able to appreciate the different aspects of the wine, and I know I have grown in how I will taste wine hereafter.

On a side note, one aspect of the Bourgogne French wine that I am curious about and that rather confused me for a part of the testing was the presence of stagnant bubbles when it was in the wine glass. It was as if it was a sparkling wine, but it didn't seem to affect the flavor or feel. As long as I had the wine in the glass, they never went away, but a day later when I poured from that bottle the bubbles were gone.