

Wine Blending Commentary

Blending wine can add a nice dimension to your wine making passion. There are many reasons to consider blending. Common reasons include

- Create a more complex and flavorful wine
- Enhance aromatic qualities
- Mask or correct a minor flaw
- Balance PH/Acid in out-of balance wine to extend shelf life
- Create a favorite style of wine (e.g. rose, port style, or Rhone/Bordeaux blend)

Some general advice summarized from my research

- Avoid blending a bad wine with a good wine. Bad wine tends to bring down the good.
- Consider bringing wines together that are well made, but “don’t stand alone”
- Blend complementary wines on opposite sides of goal “balance level” (e.g. for PH, Fruit, Acid, Alcohol, wood). I will present a list to consider later.
- Always blend on a trial basis, measuring the percentages added; ideally in graduated amounts
- Blends may taste awkward at first, let them sit a bit and taste again.
- In general, it is better to blend sooner after fermentation than later, but this is not mandatory. This protects against oxidation during the process. Meta can also help avoid oxidation.
- Consider creating classic combinations. Traditional blends have evolved from good practices. Examples of some classic blends include:
 - Merlot and Cabernet Franc with Cabernet Sauvignon;
 - Mourvedre, Cinsault, Carignan, or Petite Sirah with Syrah/Grenache;
 - Semillon with Chardonnay;
 - Add 1-25% Petite Sirah to a lighter colored/body Zinfandel;
 - Add 1-5% Viognier with a less fruity Syrah.
- Do consider trials with multiple percentages and with multiple people participating. I have been surprised to see the large difference 2% versus 5% can sometimes make.
- Don’t make a snap judgment from one taste. Wines will change with some time together, and it is often good to try more than once to see if your first impression lasted.
- Remember that a little bit of blending will get a small component of flavor that adds complexity. This is often a good practice if flavor enhancement is the goal.

Blending Data Sheets Criteria

A. Color:

It may seem obvious, but usually like colors are blended. Red with red and white with white. However, I added this factor because you may not consider using a white with a red. This mix can create interesting Rose wines or can be used to add fruit or floral qualities to a flat red wine. Sirah is often spiced up with some percentage of Viognier to add floral notes.

B. Variety

Certain varieties are known to be complimentary. I list some common wine groups in the attached table. Common approaches are Bordeaux varieties together (Merlot/Cab S., Cab F.) and Rhone varieties together (Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre).

C. Attack / Mid-palate / Finish Profile

A lot of blending writers spoke about the tasting profile of a wine as a key factor. When you taste wine, there is usually a first impression, followed by a mid-palate flavor impression, and finally, the lengthy finishing flavors. One writer graphed the profile and tried to add wines with a strong attack but lacking finish to wines with stronger mid-palate and finish. I include his graph as an attachment. In our tasting each will be rated as strong or weak.

D. Acid / PH Level

Balance of acidity and PH in a wine can be a key factor, especially here in California where we often get over-ripe grapes, with high PH. While not exactly the same, the theory is similar. Consider blending to achieve ideal levels of acid and PH (e.g. 3.7 for a red wine). Some makers harvest wine from the same vineyard early and late to blend the wine to the desired level.

E. Alcohol / Sugar Level

High-alcohol or low-alcohol wine can make for a less food friendly experience than desired. If a wine has excess residual sugar, blending can lessen the perceived sweetness or "hot" qualities of a wine.

F. Wood

The wood qualities imparted by barrel aging are hard to modify once integrated within a wine. However, blending can be used to reduce an over-oaked wine to a tolerable level, or to combine the qualities of different wood. It is common to age wines in both French and American oak and then blend to a more complex profile. One tip is to retain some quantity of unoaked wine for adjustments prior to bottling.

G. Floral Aromas

Some wines have an intense nose, but lack flavor or vice versa. Wines with good aromas can compliment wines with less nose but perhaps better depth of character. I think of wine aromas and

flavors as musical instruments in an orchestra. A beautiful quartet needs to achieve balance between the flute, the violins, and the cello. Aroma is the flute of the music.

H. Fruit / Flavor

Some wines are intensely fruity due to ripeness or variety of grape, while others have depth, complexity or perhaps just a firm backbone. Wines with excess fruit can compliment wines with less fruit but perhaps better depth of character. I think of wine flavors as musical instruments in an orchestra. A beautiful symphony needs violins and flutes. Fruit is flavors form the melody of the violins

I. Tannin/ "Backbone"

Some wines extract good tannin from their skins or during barrel aging. Depth of flavor and color form a "backbone" that lends weight and substance to a wine. Wines with excess fruit can compliment wines with less fruit but perhaps better depth of character. Continuing the musical instruments analogy, this quality is the bass of the orchestra.

WINE BLENDING PROFILE SHEET

A. Color:	Red: ____	Rose/light: ____	White: ____
B. Variety			
C-1 Attack	Sharp/Intense: ____	Average: ____	Weak/light: ____
C-2 Mid-palate	Rich: ____	Average: ____	Weak/light: ____
C-3 Finish	Long: ____	Average: ____	Short: ____
D-1. Acid (TA)	High: ____	Balanced: ____	Low: ____
D-2 PH Level	High: ____	Balanced: ____	Low: ____
E-1. Alcohol	Hot: ____	Balanced: ____	Low: ____
E-2 Residual Sugar	Dry: ____	Off-dry: ____	Sweet: ____
F. Wood	Excess: ____	Balanced: ____	None: ____
G. Floral Aromas	Strong/complex: ____	Balanced: ____	Weak/off: ____
H-1. Fruit	Strong/complex: ____	Balanced: ____	Weak: ____
H-2. Noticeable Flavors			
I. Tannin / "Backbone"	Strong/complex: ____	Balanced: ____	Light: ____

Common Wine Varieties by Region
 (blending reference - not a complete guide)

	Bordeaux	Rhone	Burgundy	Italian
RED	Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot	Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre, Cinsault, Carignan, and Petite Sirah	Pinot Noir, Gamay	Sangiovese, Barbera, Nebbiolo, Primitivo, Dolcetto, Malvasia, Montepulciano, Lambrusco
WHITE	Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle, Colombard, Vini Blanc, Merlot Blanc	Viognier, Roussanne, Marsanne, Grenache Blanc, Bourboulenc, Clalrette Blanc, Muscat Blanc	Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc	Pinot Grigio, Moscato, Prosecco, Trebiano, Verdicchio, Vermentino
	Germany/Alsace	Spanish	New World (California, SA)	
RED	Pinot Noir, Dornfelder	Tempranilla, Garancha	Zinfandel, Pinotage, Catawba	
WHITE	Gewurztraminer, Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Muscat, Sylvaner	Airen, Albarino, Macabeo, Verdejo, Parellada, Xarel-lo, Palomino		

One Wine Writers Rendition of the "Attack/ Mid /Finish by Variety

