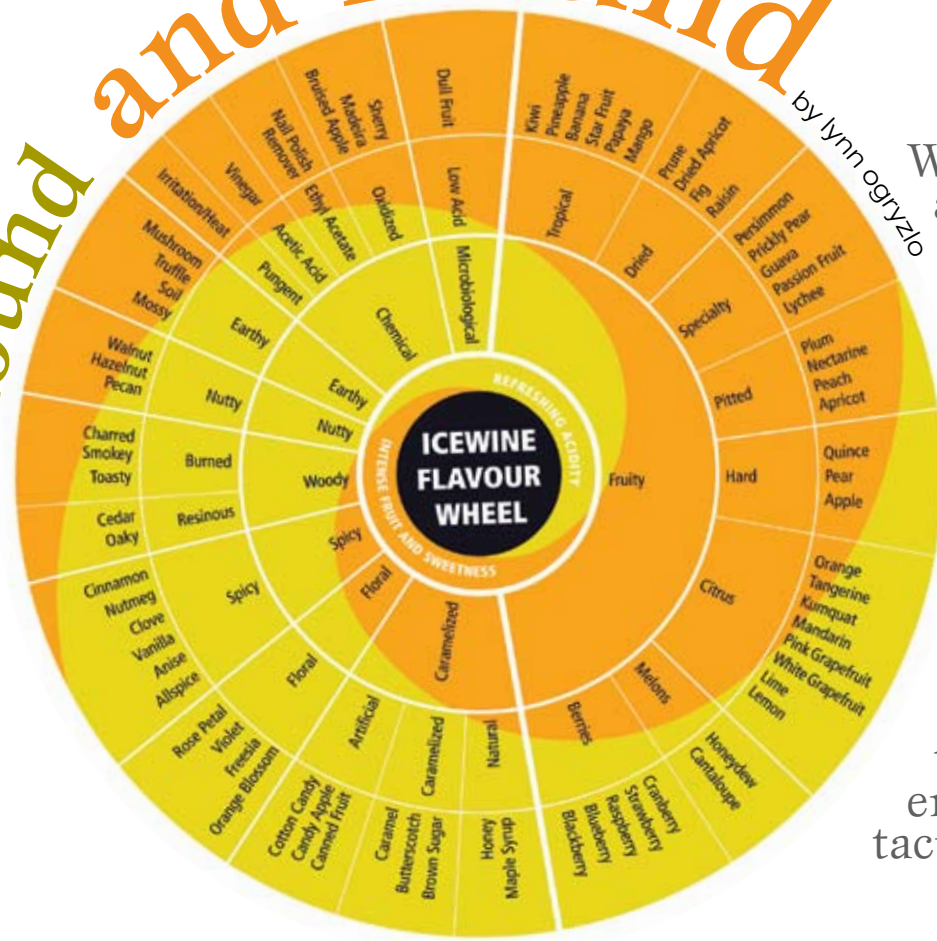


Round and Round

by Lynn Ogrzlo



What, you might ask, could possibly be so different about an Icewine tasting? A few wines; a dialogue that leads you through one liquid icon toward the unique and the aged; everyone sufficiently impressed; the wines depleted; end of another spectacular evening.

It was, instead, a night of delightfully shattered expectations. The venue was the age-worn loft at Inniskillin Wines; the speaker was the bubbly Shari Darling; the subject was her brand new Icewine aroma wheel. Darling was brazen enough to teach a group of seasoned wine tasters just how it's done.

In contrast to the usual empty spittoons and glistening glasses, each setting at the table held a packet of crayons, a small paintbrush, a few Dixie cups and a tongue map. For anyone not

familiar with a tongue map: it's simply a giant, swaying letter U scrolled on a large piece of paper. The only familiar sight in this untraditional setting were four beautiful wine glasses — like a beacon to home in the Land of Oz.

Canada, as we all know, produces world-class Icewines from Vidal, Riesling, sometimes Gewürztraminer, often-times Cabernet Franc and, every once in a while, from non-traditional grape varieties such as Chenin Blanc and Merlot. The zesty acidity and intense tropical fruit that mix harmoniously on

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Laminated Icewine Flavour Wheels can be purchased at: www.icewineflavourwheel.com

the palate are hallmark characteristics of the great Canadian Icewines.

The Icewine aroma wheel works like the table-wine aroma wheel, often used as an educational tool. Once you've tasted a wine, you identify one general aroma or flavour and locate it in the centre of the aroma wheel. From there, you branch out; your choices become more specific as you continue to work your way to the outer edges of the aroma wheel toward more definitive attributes.

The descriptive information on this wheel is, of course, specific to Icewine's characteristics. Because of the wine's unique harmony of acidity and intense sweetness, these primary taste sensations are represented in the colour overlay of green, for acidity, and gold, for fruity sweetness. Darling de-

scribes it as a kind of yin-yang balance — both in the wine and on the wheel.

Before we could start tasting, we discovered that our personal tasting ability was relative to specific tasting categories. Darling explained that “super-tasters account for approximately twenty-five per cent of the population, medium-tasters about fifty per cent and non-tasters another twenty-five.” She stressed that these classifications do not reflect one's tasting abilities, but rather have to do with abilities to recognize particular attributes of the wine — one must recognize these to come to know one's personal style of tasting.

To understand this, we painted the various flavours directly onto our tongues and coloured the tongue map

to reflect the location where we perceived each flavour. The maps told the story. Some contained just a few colours over the tongue, while others were more colourful and still others looked like a well-used palette.

Once we identified our tasting “identity,” we learned the characteristics specific to the classification and how to use this information to identify and/or compensate when tasting wine, with a view to becoming better tasters.

It sounds a lot more complex than it is; the road to becoming a better taster can be found in Darling's new food-and-wine pairing book, *Harmony on the Palate* (\$29.95, available at Chapters as well as other bookstores). It really is worth understanding how each of us tastes — not just Icewines, but everything around us. •

A photograph of a computer motherboard placed on a white plate. A silver fork is on the left and a black-handled knife is on the right, framing the motherboard. The motherboard is a complex of various electronic components, including capacitors, resistors, and a central processor area.

It's tastier than it looks.

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