

WSET Systematic Approach to Tasting Spirits®

(Level 2 Award in Spirits)

WSET SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO TASTING SPIRITS AND LIQUEURS®

APPEARANCE

Clarity		clear or hazy/cloudy (faulty?)
Intensity		water-white – pale – medium – deep – opaque
Colour	white golden brown coloured	colourless – green – lemon-green – lemon gold – amber – copper tawny – mahogany – brown pink – red – orange – yellow – green – blue – purple – brown – black (natural/synthetic?)
Other observations		e.g. legs, tears, louching

NOSE

Condition		clean – faulty (fault: feinty – woody – TCA – stale – other taint)
Intensity		neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Maturation		unaged – short ageing – matured
Aroma characteristics		e.g. fruits, flowers, vegetables, grains, botanicals, herbs, oak, sweetness, other

PALATE

Sweetness		dry – off-dry – medium – sweet
Alcohol		soft – smooth – warming – harsh
Body		light – medium – full
Flavour intensity		neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Flavour characteristics		e.g. fruits, flowers, vegetables, grains, botanicals, herbs, oak, sweetness, other
Length		short – medium – long
Finish		clean and simple – some complexity – very complex

CONCLUSIONS

Quality		faulty – poor – acceptable – good – very good – outstanding
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AROMA AND FLAVOUR CHARACTERISTICS (SPIRITS AND LIQUEURS)

FRUITY/FLORAL (ESTERY) – fresh or cooked? natural or synthetic?

Citrus Fruit	orange, tangerine, grapefruit, lemon, lime
Orchard Fruit	apple (green/ripe?) gooseberry, pear, apricot, peach, plum, red cherry, black cherry
Berry/Currant	grape, strawberry raspberry, redcurrant, blackcurrant, blackberry
Tropical Fruit	banana, kiwi, lychee, mango, melon, passion fruit, pineapple
Dried Fruit	fig, prune, raisin, sultana, citrus peel, fruit cake
Flowers	elderflower, orange blossom, rose, violet, perfume, lavender, lilac, dried flowers

VEGETAL

Cereal	husk, porridge, barley, rye, linseed, malt, flour
Fresh vegetable	agave, bell pepper, mushroom, asparagus
Herbaceous	grass, hay, eucalyptus, blackcurrant leaf, wet leaves, conifer
Botanicals/herbs	juniper, coriander, basil, rosemary, thyme, sage, lemongrass, mint
Kernel	chocolate, coffee, hazelnut, almond, coconut, cashew

OAK/SWEETNESS/SPICE

Oak	toast, coffee, cedar, char, spice, sherry, sawdust
Sweetness	corn, vanilla, butterscotch, menthol, caramel, burnt sugar, toffee, molasses
Spice	anise, fennel, liquorice, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, cardamom, black/white pepper, cumin

OTHER

Peat (phenolic)	peat, medicinal, smoked fish, earthy, smoky, seaweed
Animal	leather, meaty, gravy, yeast extract
Rancio	fruit cake, candied fruits, mushroom, forest floor, polish
Solvent	peardrop, turpentine, paint, varnish
Feinty	wax, leather, biscuits, tobacco, cheese, sweat, plastic
Sulfur	rubber, spent matches, boiled cabbage, drains



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