

# The emotional response to wine consumption

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**How do you feel when drinking wine?** This is an interesting question that is seldom asked among wine consumers, casuals or professionals alike. Learn about a recent study to determine emotions related to wine and take a poll at the end.

Consuming a glass of wine can indeed be motivated by many factors:

- to celebrate a special day or a special person,
- to pair with the prepared meal,
- or simply to relax after a long day at work.

Consuming wine is not only a sensory experience – the interaction of our senses with the flavours of the wine – but also an affective one that creates feelings, emotions, or set us up in a particular mood. The emotional response to food and wine has driven an increased interest among academic researchers in the last few years.

**But what is exactly an emotion?** Emotion and mood can be wrongly used interchangeably.

Researchers define emotion as a brief intense physiological and mental reaction focused on a referent (e.g. seeing my dog welcoming jumps when I come back home makes me feel happy and amused). Whereas a mood lasts longer and is not specifically related to a referent.

Research on emotional response to food is an emerging field challenged by the fact that adjectives used to describe emotions are more related to everyday life situations than the act of food or wine consumption. A recent article by Ferrarini et al described the studies the authors conducted in Italy to identify the terms suitable to describe emotions associated to wine and wine tasting.

**But why is such a lexicon of emotions important to determine?** When we drink wine, we tend to describe the sensory perceptions experienced in a more or less technical way, we express our likes or dislikes but rarely take a step further to describe our feelings. The authors suggest that profiling a wine both on its sensory characteristics and its emotional responses could provide additional insights on what makes a wine pleasant or unpleasant. In addition, these emotion adjectives could become handy to marketers for communicating a particular response that a wine can elicit.

Starting from 453 terms collected in the literature to describe emotions related to consumption or everyday life, the 3-step process reduced the list to 16 terms relevant to wine and wine consumption, easy to comprehend by casual consumers (see table below). These terms were associated to pleasantness and arousal of emotions, in agreement with the more generic bi-dimensional model of emotion lexicon (Russell's circumplex model, 1979); interestingly very few terms were associated to unpleasantness, which seems quite logical as we do not choose to consume food that could be unpleasant.

	Pleasantness	Unpleasantness
High level of arousal	Amusing Happy Euphoric Joyful Keen Passionate	Aggressive Overwhelming
Low to medium level of arousal	Interesting Elegant Curious Desirable Peaceable Pleasant	Disgusting Bland

The limitations of these studies are first that the terms were generated for Italian consumers and might not be directly translated in other languages. Indeed emotions are context specific but also cultural dependant (I could be disgusted to have to eat insects whereas my African friend would not). Secondly, the selection of terms were conducted conceptually: respondents had to imagine wine as a product and the situation as wine consumption. There was no wine consumption taking place. It is obviously the next step of their research, i.e. to validate that these terms are actually appropriate and suitable to describe emotions while consuming an actual glass of wine.

**Back to you.** Reading the list of 16 terms developed through this study, what are the emotions aroused when you drink wine? Let's say when you are having dinner with friends. Select all the terms that apply.

## What are the emotions aroused when you drink wine?

Peaceable
  Pleasant
  Passionate
  Joyful
  Happy
  Disgusting
  Elegant
  Curious
  Keen
  Aggressive
  Desirable
  Bland
  Euphoric
  Overwhelming
  Amusing
  Interesting

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### References:

Ferrarini R., Carbognin C., Casarotti E.M., Nicolis E., Nencini A., Meneghini A.M. (2010) The emotional response to wine consumption. *Food Quality and Preference*, 21, 720-725

Russel J.A. (1979) Affective space is bipolar. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 37, 355-356