

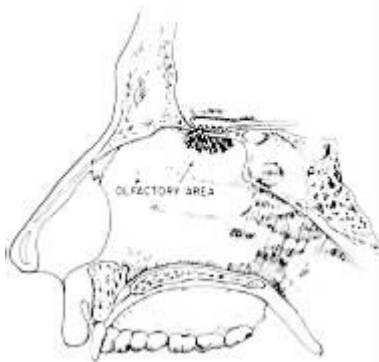
The Nose Knows

By Dave Preston – Guru of the Goodlife®

It's always fun to meet folks who want to learn about wine. The same question inevitably comes up, how do you really know what wine to buy and if the a wine tastes good? And my answer is always the same, the one that tastes good to you when you put it in your mouth! (Price is not an indicator) When I had that question posed recently, it caused me to think about the “essence” of a wine’s taste...it all starts in the nose. In fact, 80% of anything we taste starts in the nose. Researchers have been able to document more than 15,000 “smells”, yes 15,000!

Most people just think of the tongue when they think about taste. But you couldn't taste anything without some help from the nose! The ability to smell and taste go together because odors from foods allow us to taste more fully. Take a bite of food and think about how it tastes. Then pinch your nose and take another bite. Notice the difference? It's just another reason to appreciate your knockout of a nose!

Smell and taste belong to our chemical sensing system, or chemosensation. The complicated processes of smelling and tasting begin when molecules released by the substances around us stimulate special nerve cells in the nose, mouth or throat. These cells transmit messages to the brain, where specific smells or tastes are identified.



Olfactory (smell nerve) cells are stimulated by the odors around us—the fragrance from a rose, the smell of bread baking and the bouquet of a wine. These nerve cells are found in a tiny patch of tissue high up in the nose, and they connect directly to the brain.

Writer William Langewiesche's December 2000 story in *The Atlantic Monthly* - "The Million-Dollar Nose" - admirably cast Parker in the role of an all-American critic, a powerful wine judge whose opinions and scores were reshaping the once lofty, connoisseursk world of fine wine for the rest of us.

The Million Dollar moniker stuck, and while Parker had already built a substantial following among the relatively narrow world of serious wine enthusiasts, the article launched him as the public face of fine wine in America in an era when wine was becoming an increasingly exciting – and expensive - luxury product for a go-go crowd of well-off investors who wanted to know wine and preferred to be told what

they should drink.

I've spent time with the man and he does have a passion for what he does and tasting wine always starts with the nose. Parker is a driven, hard-working man with a palate exceptional both for its skill and its consistency, and he has earned his fortunes the old-fashioned way. Having judged a number of wine competitions myself, after about a dozen or so "spits" (you don't swallow when judging), your mouth isn't that effective, ergo your nose becomes extremely important.

Now I haven't reach the level of needing to insure my senses, but there is another pricey proboscis attached to one Ilja Gort, a Dutch wine merchant who made news by persuading the insurance companies Watkins Syndicate and Allianz Nederland to insure HIS nose for 5 million Euros, reported Britain's The Telegraph.

This "bespoke" insurance policy would cover any loss of Gort's nose and sense of smell, news media reported, quoting Gort's assertion that "his nose was his most important asset, as a good sense of smell was essential to guarantee the quality of his wines."

I could easily imagine The Telegraph's editors quietly chuckling as they quoted Watkins Syndicate lead underwriter Jonathan Thomas: "This certainly is an insurance policy not to be sniffed at."

Displaying synchronized credulity, Associated Press and Reuters spread the story around the world, with only occasional references to Parker's previous coup de presse and other similar big-money nose deals.

"In Dutch wine circles," the South African Website Grape.co.za reported laconically, "Gort's capers are taken with a pinch of salt, in fact. The website Wijn.blieb.nl has called him one of the top operators in the mechanics of publicity."

According to Grape.co.za, Associated Press reported that the policy would cover Gort for the loss of either his nose or his sense of smell. It imposes unusual conditions: He is not allowed to ride a motorcycle or be a boxer, knife thrower's assistant or a fire-breather. In that case, I would already qualify since none of those things are part of my routine.

So, the next time you want to taste a wine, take time to smell it first. And I mean spent a couple of minutes sniffing the juice, backing off, sniffing again and then put it in your mouth. It takes practice but once you begin to approach tasting a wine by using your nose more than you ever had, you might begin to truly taste the wine and then you'll know, for sure, if you like it. One other note – an this is a whole column in itself – the quality and size of glass does make a difference in taste. But like I said, that's a whole separate article. It's all good! Carpe Diem fun-seekers, and make it a point to go out and live the goodlife!