

NEW YORK WINE SOCIETY

Beyond the Label

THE SOCIETY FIELD LIBRARY

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Session two: a duplicate and a different wine

This exercise uses the basic arrangement of a triangle comparison described by the Australian Wine Research Institute: three coded samples, two from the same wine, with the taster selecting the different sample.⁶ It is an informal learning exercise, not a validated assessment of sensory ability. A single correct choice can occur by guessing; a single incorrect choice does not establish that someone cannot notice differences.

Use two wines that a retailer expects to contrast clearly. Avoid an extremely subtle comparison for the group's first attempt. Tell participants the structure in advance: two samples come from one bottle and one from another. Their job is to choose the apparent outsider and explain the observation behind the choice.

Organize six possible orders

Using A and B only in your private record, the possible arrangements are AAB, ABA, BAA, BBA, BAB, and ABB.⁶ In each arrangement, one wine appears twice. Give the visible glasses neutral codes rather than the letters that reveal the mapping. For a small group, distribute different arrangements and record who received which one.

These six arrangements are a way to think about position and identity, not a promise that a small gathering has achieved statistical balance. If six people each receive one arrangement, you have distributed the patterns; you have not removed every source of bias or made the group representative of other tasters.

Pour and check

Set out three matching glasses per person. Prepare a written mapping before pouring and check each place against it. Keep fill amounts and serving conditions as similar as practical. If another organizer is available, have them check the mapping. Participants should not need to handle the bottles to complete the task.

Ask everyone to work quietly at first. They may return to the samples, but should not ask their neighbor which one seems different. Give permission to record “unsure” alongside a choice. The exercise loses value if people feel they must invent a confident explanation.

Participant sheet: two wines

Use this for a two-wine description or preference exercise. Write the question first and complete the observations independently. Leave the identity fields empty until the organizer reveals the checked mapping. Skipping a field is preferable to inventing a descriptor.

Date and session question	Codes and positions of my two glasses
First code: clearest observation	Second code: clearest observation
My comparison sentence	My choice for the stated occasion and why
Something I am uncertain about	An alternative explanation to consider
Verified identities after reveal	My next question or purchase decision

Keep the original observations visible. Add new information after the reveal rather than rewriting what you recorded before it.