

THE WORMWOOD SOCIETY
ABSINTHE ASSOCIATION & INFORMATION NETWORK
WWW.WORMWOODSOCIETY.ORG

ABSINTHE EVALUATION INSTRUCTIONS

This guide is designed so that even someone who is relatively new to absinthe can submit a useful score. Please follow the criteria and standards shown here and use them in your score and review. Note your impressions and scores on the reverse side of this sheet.

How to Critique Absinthe

APPEARANCE - The color, if any, should be natural and organic-looking. Greens and whites (clear) are most traditional. Deep yellow and golden-brown amber hues (feuille morte, or “fallen-leaf” colors) are acceptable and often indicate a more aged absinthe. Reds, while apparently very rare, were not unknown. The color should be pleasing and have nuance. Prior to the addition of water, the absinthe should be clear and bright, with a no haze or sediment. A blanche, or white absinthe, should be crystal-clear and white and free of tint or hue.

LOUCHE - The “louche” is the clouding effect which occurs when very cold water is added to absinthe. It should be rich, but somewhat translucent, so that light passes through, giving warm amber highlights with shots of blue and green. It should not be chalky or flat, not too thick and milky, but contain interesting refractory effects. Nor should it be so thin as to be nearly transparent. An overly thick louche usually portends a flavor which is too heavy with anise and tongue-numbing, while a thin one may lack richness and flavor. Be sure not to over-water or under-water your drink. We recommend a ratio of four or five parts water to one part absinthe for tasting purposes but some absinthes perform better with less dilution, some with more. The final alcohol strength should be around 11% or 12%. For your convenience, there is an automatic calculator online here.

AROMA - This refers to the aroma after the water has been added. Ideally, the aroma dramatically increases and expands while the water is added, as the plant oils come out of solution with the alcohol. A pleasant fragrance should fill the air in the surrounding area. The aroma should be complex, with other botanicals evident besides the anise. The best absinthes have been described as a soft, spicy and complex floral perfume. It shouldn't smell grassy, seaweedy, vinegary, or vegetal. A smell of overcooked artichokes or cabbage indicates a flaw in distilling technique.

FLAVOR - The better absinthes will be complex and interesting, with hidden and mysterious flavors, always just out of reach of identification. The anise and fennel should not provide simply the flavor of licorice candy, but be balanced with that of the wormwood and other herbs. It should taste mildly bitter, but not overpoweringly so; no more so than unsweetened tea or coffee. It shouldn't taste grassy or spinachy. While mint is among the traditional herbs, it should be used judiciously and not overpower the more subtle herbs.

FINISH - This refers to the mouth-feel and aftertaste. It should not be excessively tongue-numbing, although some numbing is to be expected. It should be smooth, dryish, slightly bitter, fresh and crisp. A lingering unpleasant bitterness or greasiness adhering to the mouth should be penalized.

OVERALL IMPRESSION - This is your overall feeling about this absinthe. You can equalize any deficits you feel may have resulted from the scorings above. While an absinthe might technically score lower on the above criteria, it may have some other quality that mitigates that deficit.

Please consult our online evaluation tutorial for more detailed information.

HAVE FUN & PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY!

THE WORMWOOD SOCIETY ABSINTHE EVALUATION SHEET

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FINAL SCORE

Brand: _____ **Country of Origin:** _____ **Today's Date** _____

Style: Verte Blanche Other **Producer** _____

APPEARANCE
 1 = Totally inappropriate or poor.
 2 = Artificial looking and/or inappropriate.
 3 = Needs improvement; thin, hazy, too dark/light.
 4 = Correct, attractive, very pleasing.
 5 = Clear, bright and natural. Perfect!

LOUCHE
 1 = None.
 2 = Very slight, almost none.
 3 = Present, but too thick/thin or inappropriate.
 4 = Correct, opalescent, very attractive.
 5 = Beautiful, nuanced, jewel-like. Magic!

AROMA
 1 = Inappropriate, unpleasant or just alcohol.
 2 = Too weak/strong or unremarkable.
 3 = Unbalanced or peculiar.
 4 = Correct, very pleasant, intriguing.
 5 = Balanced, complex, beautiful, expansive.

FLAVOR
 1 = Unpleasant.
 2 = Inappropriate, unbalanced or weird.
 3 = Appropriate, but unremarkable.
 4 = Correct, very pleasant, enjoyable.
 5 = Well balanced, rich, complex, delicious!

FINISH
 1 = Unpleasant.
 2 = Absent or recedes quickly.
 3 = Lingers, but unremarkable.
 4 = Interesting, intriguing, pleasant.
 5 = Quite enjoyable, intriguing, complex layers.

OVERALL
 1 = Unacceptable.
 2 = Barely acceptable, needs lots of help.
 3 = Acceptable, shows promise.
 4 = Enticing, very enjoyable. Almost perfect.
 5 = Perfect. No improvements needed.

APPEARANCE NOTES
LOUCHE NOTES
AROMA NOTES
FLAVOR NOTES
FINISH NOTES
OVERALL NOTES

In order to weight your final score properly, please calculate each score as follows:

APPEARANCE x **0.8** = _____
LOUCHE x **0.8** = _____
AROMA x **0.9** = _____
FLAVOR x **1.0** = _____
FINISH x **0.5** = _____
OVERALL x **1.0** = _____

TOTAL _____ x **.20** = _____

Round to nearest .1 (3.72 becomes 3.7 and 3.77 becomes 3.8) This is your final score; enter in box at top right.