

Summary of *The Aesthetics of Dealcoholized Wine*

Leona Chandra Kruse

Problematization

Starting a conversation about dealcoholized wine is not a trivial undertaking. Although dealcoholized wine receives positive responses from the health-conscious consumers, wine enthusiasts give it the cold shoulder. Some people point to its lack of wine-like characteristics and others to its lack of alcohol. Some people accept dealcoholized wine as it is, while others find solace in sparkling tea and premium grape juice. However, the worldwide demand for dealcoholized wine is anticipated to grow by 10% from 2023 to 2033, reaching a market size of US\$ 5.2 billion¹. With this expansion comes the need for a new wine appreciation paradigm, one that can accommodate our aesthetic experience when tasting dealcoholized wine. This paper addresses the following question: *How can one describe the aesthetic experience when tasting dealcoholized wine?*

Study approach

This undertaking requires rich evidence and engagement with the literature on wine research, aesthetics, consumer behavior, and sensory ethnography. I collected 57 first-hand and published tasting notes of white, red, rosé, and sparkling dealcoholized wines. The focus is on dealcoholized wines with less than 0.5% ABV alcohol content. These products are made of wine by removing its alcohol content through distillation, partial vacuum evaporation, and membrane techniques.

Findings

Philosophers and wine scholars consider wine as an aesthetic object. Dealcoholized wine inherits the aesthetic quality of the wine it is made from, and it can provide an aesthetic experience. The aesthetic criteria for wine appreciation can be applied to dealcoholized wine. The analyzed tasting notes use the criteria of complexity and intensity. Unity (i.e., balance and harmony) is more challenging to recognize, although it is probably more relevant to dealcoholized wine than complexity and intensity. More importantly, dealcoholized wine demonstrates intrinsic value—it is relished for its own sake, not to obtain other goals.

Being an emerging wine category, dealcoholized wine has often been compared with wine and wine-alternative beverages. Such a comparison is uncommon in wine appreciation; a tasting flight

¹ <https://www.factmr.com/report/4532/non-alcoholic-wine-market>

usually compares different wine styles or grape varieties from a wine category (e.g., red, sparkling, fortified, etc.). Future tastings can be enhanced by shifting away from such a comparison and focusing on the aesthetic experience of dealcoholized wine instead.

The role of alcohol and intoxication in the aesthetic experience with wine has long been contemplated. Some scholars argue for moderation and the use of spittoon, showing how wine can *still* be capable of an aesthetic appreciation *despite* its mind-altering effects. Others demonstrate how the aesthetic experience involves being intoxicated *at* wine and having one's mind altered in the delight. These two sides are relevant to the case of dealcoholized wine. Dealcoholized wine can still be regarded as an aesthetic object *despite or because* its lack of alcohol.

Contributions

The paper contributes to the body of knowledge on wine aesthetics as well as to the appreciation of dealcoholized wine in three manners. First, it extends the discourse on wine aesthetics by considering dealcoholized wine. Second, it extends the discourse on dealcoholized wine by examining the aesthetic experience it provides. Finally, the understanding can assist wine educators and wine specialists to describe the aesthetic experience with dealcoholized wine to a broad audience.

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