

# 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. Numeric scores should reflect the level of technical adherence to the criteria below; comments can explain the score and/or reflect your personal feelings and observations about the absinthe's qualities.

**APPEARANCE** - The color, if any, should be natural and organic-looking. Greens and whites (clear/colorless) 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 free of tint or hue (absolutely colorless).

**LOUCHE** - The "louche" is the final clouded 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 three to 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 on our site.

**AROMA** - This refers to the aroma after the water has been added. Ideally, the aroma dramatically increases and expands after 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/MOUTHFEEL** - The better absinthes will be complex and interesting, with subtle and mysterious flavors, sometimes 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. The mouthfeel should be smooth, silky, clean, and dryish, and have some sense of weight without being overbearing on the palate.

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

**OVERALL IMPRESSION** - This is your overall feeling about this absinthe. Simply ask yourself the question: *As a whole, into which level do I think this absinthe most appropriately fits?*

Please consult our online evaluation tutorial for more detailed information.

**HAVE FUN & PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY!**

