

# TEAMBLENDING: Blending Wines, Building Teams With Jonathon Alsop

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**What do you get when you give teams of ordinary people four different wines, a hundred wine glasses, and challenge them to blend a better wine?**

First of all, you get to sample a lot of very tasty wines, which is great on its own, but more meaningfully, people start to taste wine in a completely new way. By blending together their own signature wine from four components, the teams enter a world where wine is not a product anymore but a live thing becoming something different, new -- and in the case of blending wine -- often better than the sum of its parts.



The wine blending seminar begins with an explanation of the program and timeline followed by a brief technical tasting introduction: sniffing, swirling, sipping, and perhaps most importantly, using the spill buckets. We will sample the four component wines together briefly, then the blending begins.

One or more persons can be designated to document the process the team goes through deciding what kind of wine to blend and then doing it. Forty-five minutes later, each team should be executing its final blend and writing its 100-word marketing plan and description. The teams present their wines and descriptions to the whole group, and we break for lunch.



Behind the scenes, we shuffle the order of the blended wines so everyone is tasting all the wines blind again after lunch! We print up a new tasting sheet with marketing plans and challenge the individuals to match up their wines with their descriptions. After everyone has tasted through all the wines, we unveil their identities (and the component wines too) and discuss our reactions to what we were tasting then and what we know now.

During the debriefing, people can compare their wines, share the various processes they used, and ultimately learn something about each other through how they created their wines and how they reacted to them.

**Jonathon Alsop's Boston Wine School**

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## TIMELINE

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|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 10-10:15 am | Intro and explanation of program                           |
| 10:15-10:45 | How To Taste Wine, And Why!                                |
| 10:45-11:30 | Blend wine   |
| 11:30-11:45 | Write 100-word marketing plan and tasting note description |
| 11:45-noon  | Present wines, marketing plans, and descriptions           |
| noon-1 pm   | Lunch  |
| 1-1:45      | Blind tasting of blended wines                             |
| 1:45-2      | Unveil wines' identities                                   |
| 2           | Debrief  |

## MATERIALS

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|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Wine           | 4 different wines, 6 bottles each plus backup wine for final blending |
| Wine glasses   | 1 dozen per team  |
| Blending tools | Measuring cup<br>Magnum flask<br>Funnel<br>Spill bucket               |
| Food options   | Bread<br>Olives<br>Light cheese                                       |

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## **Jonathon Alsop**

is a Boston-based wine writer covering wine, food and travel since 1988. He is author of the wine column "In Vino Veritas" as well as numerous articles for the Associated Press, Frequent Flyer, La Vie Claire, Beverage Business Magazine, Mobil Travel Guides, Fodor's Travel Guides, Boston Globe, and others. He wrote Fodor's Dining Guide to Boston, Cape Cod, and The Islands from 1994-99. His best-known essays like "The Too-Perfect Hostess" and "Raise High The Wine Bar, Oenophile!" subject the wine world to the eccentric scrutiny of his unique critical personality. In addition to wine writing, Jonathon teaches wine, cooking and writing classes in Boston.



### **Wine Classes**

How To Taste: An Introduction To Wine  
Fine Wine On A Tight Budget  
Around The World With Wine  
Champagne & Sparkling Wine Intensive  
Wines Of Southern France  
Dude, Where's My Carneros?  
Zinfandel: America's Best Red Wine  
Modern Italian Wines  
Que Syrah Shiraz

### **Food Classes**

Simple Food & Wine Matching  
The Ultimate Cheese Course  
German Food & Wine  
Wine & Food of Provence

### **Writing & Literature Classes**

The Language Of Food  
Writing For Magazines  
Poetry of Dylan Thomas  
Literary History of Wine

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