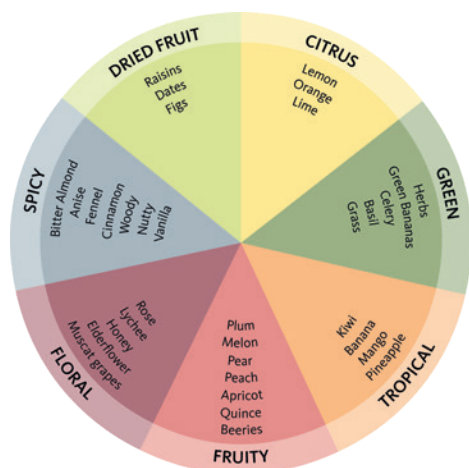




# A New Way of Tasting

The training for apple sommeliers in South Tyrol is the only one of its kind in the world: an intensive course focusing on sensory analysis. Antonia Widmann, coordinator of the South Tyrolean Apple Consortium and apple sommelier, gives us a taste.



## 01 Ms. Widmann, how does one become an apple sommelier?

The training, which we run in collaboration with the South Tyrolean Farmers' Association, consists of 80 lesson hours on various aspects of apple growing and processing: knowledge of our apple-growing region, breeding and varietal theory, quality control and food safety, crop protection and organic cultivation, legal aspects, nutritional advice, and – an important focal point – sensory analysis training that takes in all the senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and feel.

## 02 What are the aims of the program?

The course is open to a wide audience, and so far, 43 apple sommeliers have qualified. They can now offer apple tastings in hotels or schools, raise awareness of the apple's diversity in the hospitality and food sector, and provide added value at trade shows. Our ultimate aim is to enhance the apple's image as a multifaceted product.

## 03 Hence the emphasis on sensory analysis and the use of the term "sommelier", which we usually associate with wine?

You've got it! It's all about being able to describe flavors and aroma families in detail: apples are not just sweet or tart, they have floral, tropical, or green flavors, notes of mango, pineapple, aniseed, or fennel. The mouthfeel also plays an important role: the cell structure, the texture, the thickness of the skin. If the apple sommeliers from South Tyrol can convey this to consumers, they will in turn appreciate the diversity of the apple more. This also boosts variety innovation: consumers learn to rate and appreciate new varieties, which always perform extremely well on sensory aspects in blind tastings.

## 04 What fascinated you as a course participant?

The sensory tastings. Taste arises partly through the perception of smell, and smells are something very personal! A Granny Smith, for example, reminds me of freshly mown grass and playing in a meadow as a child. We can also stir these emotions in consumers by showing them how to recognize and describe the aromas of the apple.



*Antonia Widmann, coordinator at the South Tyrolean Apple Consortium, has completed the apple sommelier training herself. What do participants most appreciate about the course? "The light-bulb moments when they suddenly experience the apple in a whole new way – even if they're from the industry themselves," says Widmann.*