



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the implication of ground water age?

The quality of mineral water is not determined by its age, unlike wine that needs time to mature. The age of groundwater could however influence the mineral composition, and thus the taste. Typically very young groundwaters (also bottled rainwaters) do not have much time to absorb minerals as they travel through the various rock formations. Thus they tend to have low TDS levels and light, clean tastes.

These groundwaters are mostly captured at higher elevations, e.g. in the more mountainous areas. In South Africa, this will typically be in the Natal Drakensberg areas. Old water may have a more substantial taste profile, although one does find old waters with low levels of mineral content. The age of a water is less important than the local geology. The age of bottled waters should be noted, though, as an enjoyable part of their history.

Source: www.finewaters.com

Does bottled water really have a taste profile?

It is important to spend some time getting used to the smells and tastes of water. At first, the water may just taste like water – neutral and tasteless. However, as you follow the steps and compare waters from different sources, you will soon begin to discover the beauty of this simple beverage, one that can be both delightful and complex on its own and can create a wonderful flavour experience when paired with food and wine.

Try comparing a range of different mineral waters, both still and sparkling. Mineral water can broadly be divided into 2 groups of water, namely still and sparkling.

Within these two groups there are 3 classes of taste depending on the mineral composition.

- A sparkling water is still water with carbon dioxide gas added. CO₂ added to water has the effect of lowering the pH, in other words, making the water more acidic on the palate. A simple comparison is to take a still and sparkling water from the same producer and compare the 2 waters, the increased acidity of the sparkling water is very evident.
- A very low mineral content water, such as water from the Western Cape, has a total dissolved solids (TDS) or mineral content of less than about 50 to 80 milligrams per litre. This water has a low taste profile and its 'freshness' gives one an impression of drinking water from a high mountain stream. The main minerals are sodium and chloride. The pH of these waters is often less than 7. This type of water in the sparkling version is quite acidic on the palate.
- An alkaline water is a water which has calcium, often with accompanying magnesium, and alkalinity as the predominant dissolved minerals. Such a water will give a broad and full-bodied mouthfeel. This water in the sparkling version gives a complex tasting water that will accompany many different dishes.
- A Sulphate water is one that has high levels of Sulphate, often accompanied by magnesium. This is a water that has a tinge of bitterness, of the attractive kind, to the taste. This water will match creamy and sweetish dishes. In South Africa this is a water that is seldom encountered.

Source: Water on the table – a guide to serving and drinking bottled water, Jenna Gough & John Weaver. Available from SANBWA

