

WARM UP

1 Ask and answer these questions in pairs.

- 1 Do you usually drink tap water or bottled water?
- 2 What is the reason for your choice?
- 3 Would you switch to drinking tap water or bottle water if you could? Why/Why not?

## A new professional figure: the water sommelier

### • The Making of a Water Snob •

I always ask for tap water, no matter how nice the restaurant is. So when I invited water sommelier, Michael Mascha, to a lunch where he would pair our courses with different bottled waters, I decided I was doing it 'to catch a predator'. I met Mascha at Los Angeles' La Terza and was delighted to find it served each table with a vessel of tap water they carbonate themselves. Unperturbed, Mascha brought out of his bag 15 bottles from his collection of 350 brands. He explained that waters have no smell and very little taste, but they have mouthfeel, which means how many bubbles there are and how big they are. This depends partly on how dense the liquid is with minerals such as calcium and magnesium, usually listed on the side of most bottles as the

total dissolved solids (TDS) and partly on pH balance. Slightly alkaline waters taste sweet; acidic ones have a tinge of sourness. Mascha further surprised me by admitting that no one really needs a water sommelier, that restaurants charge too much for bottled water and that he usually drinks tap water all day. After this confession I listened more intently as he explained that high-TDS waters (above 800) should be treated like red wines and low-TDS waters like whites; pairing water that has small bubbles with subtler dishes so that the effervescence doesn't overpower the food. To my surprise, the waters did taste different, or felt different and buying an occasional bottle of water no longer seemed crazy. Mascha was vindicated!

ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text about a water sommelier and choose the correct answer to each question.

- 1 The writer drinks tap water...  
 A all the time.                      B at cheap restaurants only.    C at home, but not out.
- 2 He thinks of water sommelier, Michael Mascha, as...  
 A a hero.                                B an enemy.                        C a friend.
- 3 Bottled water is differentiated by...  
 A mouthfeel.                          B smell.                              C taste.
- 4 The amount and size of bubbles in bottled water depends on the presence of...  
 A carbohydrates.                    B minerals.                        C proteins.
- 5 Compared to alkaline water, acidic water is...  
 A just as sweet.                        B not as sweet.                    C sweeter.
- 6 The more bubbles a bottle of water has, the better it pairs with foods which taste...  
 A mild.                                  B sour.                                C strong.

LISTENING

3 You will hear somebody talking about fine water balance. Listen and complete the table.

Water category	Description	Serving suggestions
1 still	no (1) _____	with any food; (2) _____; at 12°C
2 effervescent	sophisticated and with the smallest possible (3) _____, almost still	at (4) _____
3 light	appeal to people who claim they don't like (5) _____ water	served with dishes with a subtle (6) _____; at 14°C
4 classic	what people think of when they talk about sparkling water; (7) _____ content	served with many dishes and mixed drinks, especially (8) _____; at 16°C
5 bold	create a sensation of (9) _____ in your mouth, with bold, large, and loud bubbles	at the beginning of a meal, preferably with crispy (10) _____; at around 17°C