



AWOnews



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A forum for the exchange of news and opinions on home

winemaking in Ontario

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The 1997 Winter edition

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart"

Ecclesiastes 2: 13"

IN THIS ISSUE:

by Paul Dunseath



The 1998 AWO Festival will be hosted by the Kawartha

Krushers in Peterborough, a beautiful part of the Province. In this issue you will find some details on the event, so mark your calendars now to ensure that you don't miss out on a memorable weekend with some really enjoyable events.

Peterborough, of course, is the site of one of the highest lift-locks in the world, and is on the picturesque Trent waterway. We're going for sure! Who is up for 1998? 1999?

We also look at one of Ontario's unsung wine routes, learn from Roy Ellis how to reduce oxidase in oxidized wines, provide some hints on running a successful Festival, and benefit from the wisdom of Chief Judge Peter Pigeon, and President Don Ostler, and more. Good reading, we hope, for a winter's night.

Members may be aware that we had an unusually high level of breakage for winning wines submitted to AWC this past summer. Charles Plant, of BC, submits the following observations:

ON THE MATTER OF SHIPPING COMPETITION WINE

By Charles Plant

There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, perhaps not, in which, sometime in the past, a Province confidently shipped wines to the National Competition in a stout plastic container. They got the container, packed all the entries in it -- no padding between bottles or anything complicated like that -- and sent it on its way.

The container, when opened, revealed a fine collection of broken glass shards and pulped identification tags, well mixed into a wine blend of great complexity. In 1997 there was breakage in shipments from two Provinces to the National. In one case, the wines had been shipped, though late, still early enough to replace

the broken bottles. In the other case, sadly, not. Too many potential winners never made it to the judging tables.

Some suggestions:

- 1. At the Provincial Awards Event, hand out envelopes to those eligible to enter the National. The envelope should contain all entry regulations, tags, and whatever else is pertinent, as well as information as to where and when to deliver the entry for forwarding to the National. Packaging instructions for the individual Competitor might well include *"Wrap your bottle in bubble wrap and duct tape in such a manner that if it gets bashed against its neighbour, friendly or not, at an ugly angle, no damage should occur"*.**
- 2. Provincial Directors should be firm about their shipping dates. Competitors should be told that if their entries are not at the shipping point on time, they will be personally responsible for getting their entries to the National.**
- 3. Those entrusted with shipping their Province's entries to the National should be provided with the collective wisdom and confessions of the ones who have done it before. It's not fair otherwise.**

4. Remember: "A well placed piece of 'bubble wrap' on the inside is worth a thousand 'FRAGILE' stickers on the outside."

And lest I become too smug and overbearing, please remind me that next year, it will be my responsibility to ship BC's entries to the 1998 National!

SUGGESTIONS ON HOSTING A SUCCESSFUL AWO FESTIVAL

The Ottawa-area clubs have now hosted three AWO Festivals and two AWCs.

We believe that these have been successful and enjoyable events (none of them lost money, and the costs were reasonable), so as a service to AWO we provide below some suggestions for future organizers.

How to make your Festival work!

Determine your target: most Festivals are not viable with only local participation (and if they are, would be better off as Regional shows, since AWO is intended to be a Province-wide organization)

This means recognizing two factors:

There MUST be a "draw" on Friday evening to convince people from out-of-town that it is worth their while to take half a day, or a day, of vacation leave from work to attend. If they do not attend on Friday, they are unlikely to attend on Saturday either since, for many people, a 9 am start on Saturday means either arriving Friday or leaving home at 4 am to get to the first event. If you want people from out of town to come, there MUST be a Friday evening event which is informal, enjoyable, and inexpensive -- such as the Showcase of Club Wines.

Remember that people have to drive home after the event. If at all possible, have the festivities terminate no later than about 1:30 on Sunday, to allow time to check out of hotel or lodgings, load the car, and get on the road (kudos to Toronto for doing this in '97)

Determine, realistically, how many people are likely to attend.

Call the organizers of the last three or four Festivals to determine the number of people who attended. Be a pessimist: base your cost and revenue projections on the lowest number (recent Festivals have ranged from 125 to 160 attendees)

Reach an agreement with AWO on the sharing of profits and losses

This is a two-way street, and should be fair in both directions. Both AWO and the host clubs should share equally in any profit or loss, and this percentage can vary from a to $\frac{1}{2}$ to b, either way. AWO is unlikely to agree to accepting a high risk if you do not have a good business plan, and by the same token if the Festival loses money, the host clubs will have to pony up the difference, based on the agreed share. Be sure that you have agreement among the host clubs for the financial liability (but don't lose too much sleep; most -- indeed almost all -- Festivals are financially successful, to the benefit of both AWO and the host clubs).

Set a budget, and enforce it.

There are three categories of cost: fixed, which are independent of the number of people attending (such as printing, postage, long distance calls, honoraria for speakers, hall rental, hospitality, and so on); partially variable, such as rental of busses for tours, souvenir glasses, etc.; and variable, which depend on the number of attendees (such as meals). Don't underestimate these costs; and without dampening the enthusiasm of committee members with new ideas

(although be aware that many "new" ideas have been tried in the past and didn't work), ensure that anything which will involve a cost to the Festival is thoroughly justified by realistic income projections. The higher the cost of a proposed program, the lower the likelihood that people will choose to attend it.

Develop a spreadsheet to track costs of the Festival; ensure that the bottom line is positive! Whenever an enthusiastic member of your planning committee proposes a potentially very expensive event (such as flying someone in from California as a keynote speaker -- hey, from experience, I can tell you it has been mooted at least once!), ask the fundamental question, "how will we pay for it?"

No answer, or a dumb one such as "increase the Registration fee", are sure indications of good intentions but bad planning.

Don't assume that everyone in AWO is an analogue of people in your own club.

Club membership ranges from the dedicated, single-minded hobbyist for whom cost is no object, to others who are, shall we say, very cost-conscious and make wine because it is less expensive than buying it. Your Festival MUST cater to both, or you will lose a significant number of potential attendees. This means ensuring that the base price is reasonably low and represents good value (for

accommodation, meals and tours), with an optional up-scale event. Hint: if you can't afford both, drop the up-scale event; it will have the smallest attendance of any (typically, no matter what hype you receive from the persons favouring it, an event with a cost of \$25 or more will likely draw in fewer than 25 - 50 people, including those from your own metropolitan area!)

If it ain't broke, don't fix it

Despite the last item, if you've got an idea that doesn't fit with the classic, don't be afraid to try it out.

The Awards Brunch was originated in Ottawa in 1980 to allow people to get on the road for home at a reasonable hour, and has been used ever since. The new concept of having Bronze medals awarded Saturday night instead of Sunday morning in order to conclude the Sunday event in a timely manner, and which Toronto pioneered, is a great idea.

Develop an RFP ("Request for Proposal") and have your local Tourism and Convention authorities circulate it to hotels and campuses in your area.

Do this at least a year in advance of the event; make sure that ALL costs are

included, such as PST, GST and Service charges.

In considering alternatives, remember that many people -- ladies in particular -- value their privacy.

Communal washrooms in University Residences may turn off people who gave up camping long ago. Semi-private facilities are better than communal ones, but private bathrooms will appeal to more potential attendees.

Make sure that your Reception desk is open, ready for registrations, no later than 4 pm on Friday. Make sure as well that any necessary signage (such as to Parking areas, Registration etc.) is in place by noon Friday.

Attendees from out-of-town will begin showing up by about 4 pm. They will need information on where to park, where to have supper, and what is planned for the weekend. If people have driven for half a day to attend the Festival, only to find that there are no directions for where to check in, and no-one around who knows what is happening, where they can park, or where they can go for supper, this can be a real turn-off for the entire weekend. Remember that many of your attendees may never have been there before, and will need assistance.

Ensure that any potential host site will agree to a "no corkage fee" policy

Some hotels will not agree to this; if they will not, tell them that you are not interested in giving them your business (this can be a tremendous, unanticipated cost).

Check your invoices for double-counting.

Even University Campuses have been known to charge twice for the same service, or for two services performed within the same "minimum hours charge".

Solicit prizes that have value for people from out-of-town.

A prize of 25% off at a specific U-Brew in the city where the Festival takes place is of NO interest to people from outside your local area. In addition, prizes that have to be picked up several days later at a specific store or winery are equally problematic. Bring as many prizes as possible to the Festival so that winners can take them with them when they leave; gift certificates should be honoured at several stores, not just one in downtown Moose Pasture, ON (or Niagara Falls, Toronto, or Ottawa...)

Develop a means of verifying that people attending a function have actually paid

for it; even winemakers have been known to try to "crash" luncheons and dinners for which they have not paid -- and this is a direct loss to the organizers.

The simplest approach is to colour-code the badges for attendees; the lighter the colour of the colour band, the higher the value (no colour band at all is for the total, all-inclusive, package). Thus, anyone attempting to "upgrade" by changing the colour will instead downgrade themselves. Suggestion: in terms of decreasing value of the package, use no colour first, then gold, blue, green, red, black.

Keep detailed minutes of all your planning meetings, and send them to everyone on your Executive after each meeting.

This will help to eliminate the disruption, when everything is pretty well set in concrete, of the complaint by a member of the Executive "Gee, I don't remember agreeing to that".

Thinking ahead, and anticipating potential problems, is a sure way of ensuring that your next Festival is as enjoyable for the organizers as it is for your guests!

30th AWO CONVENTION GOES TO COTTAGE COUNTRY

by Burton McClelland

Mark June 5,6 and 7, 1998 on your calendar right now. The 30th AWO convention will be held that weekend at Trent University in Peterborough. With the Trent waterway running through the middle of the campus, the university's scenic setting will help you get into the spirit of the Kawarthas.

Peterborough is conveniently located between Toronto and Ottawa so we hope to see a good representation from all the clubs, and for that matter unaffiliated members as well.

Although we are still in the early planning stages for this event we hope to be able to take advantage of some of the more unique features of the Peterborough area in our program. We hope to be able to offer a boat cruise down the Trent Canal through Peterborough, allowing you to experience going through the tallest hydraulic liftlock in the world.

The program is still in planning but we have been looking at the surveys done for previous conferences and are confident that we will come up with a mix of seminars that will provide something of interest for all AWO members, from the rank neophytes to the budding Jim Warrens. If you have any suggestions for speakers or topics that you would really like to see included in the program please send the organizing committee a note at the following address:

Burton McClelland

829 Hewitt Drive

Peterborough, Ontario

K9K 2K1

fax (705) 755-1361

Look for more information in the next issue of the AWOnews.

HOW TO REDUCE OXIDASE IN AN OXIDIZED WINE

by Roy Ellis

In the event that you have an oxidized wine, the fault may lie in one of two places:

a) carelessness on your part when you left it open to the air by either a loose, or dry, airlock and not keeping the SO₂ content in the wine up to the required level with respect to the pH of the wine.

b) The juice was oxidized to start with and went undetected.

In either cases the oxidase can be reduced, or eliminated, by the use of powdered skim milk. The procedure is as follows:

1. Calculate the amount of wine to be treated, in litres, and for each litre of wine measure out 0.5 gm of powdered skim milk into five (5) ml of cold water. Stir into a solution making sure all the skim milk is dissolved.

NOTE: It is important that you use POWDERED skim milk, not decreamed whole milk.

2. Now bring the SO₂ level of the wine up to the required amount with respect to the pH of the wine.

3. Stir the wine vigorously and while it is swirling, add the skim milk solution by making sure that it enters well below the surface of the wine, There may be a bit of foaming, but it will dissipate. Continue to stir the wine to ensure all the skim milk is well distributed. It is important that the skim milk solution enters well below the surface. If you pour it on the surface, little, or nothing, will happen.

OBSERVATION ; Once the skim milk is fully distributed, brown curds will develop in the wine and will ultimately settle out.

4. Replace the airlock and allow it to settle for two to three days. Meanwhile, prepare a fining agent for fining the wine. I used Bentonite, but you may prefer some other agent.

5. After two to three days, rack the wine off the oxidase curds into a clean carboy and stir in the fining agent. Allow this to settle for about ten days, then rack the wine off the lees. Add an airlock. The wine should now be quite potable. Filter and bottle.

NOTE: the above was based on actual experience when I started with an oxidized juice (Chardonnay), which I purchased from a winery. The end product was quite acceptable, although it would not have won any prizes in an AWO

competition.

THINK SUMMER!

THE OTHER WINE ROUTE

by Paul Dunseath

For a change of scenery, follow the Essex County Wine Trail, in deep Southwestern Ontario, on your next vacation (Lake Erie North Shore).

We start in Kingsville, home of Pelee Island Winery. Visit their store on Highway 18 at the east end of town for award-winning wines, wine-related products, and friendly advice (in season this also includes tastings). The Blanc des Blancs, a blend of Vidal and Seyval Blanc, is itself worth the stop. Now continue west into town for refreshment or a light lunch at the Victoria Rose Tea Garden before you leave. If time is of the essence, one could take highway 18 direct to Harrow, but for only a slightly longer, and much more scenic, drive, turn south on county road 50 at The Beer Store, and follow the Heritage Route

along the lakeshore to Colchester, where we turn north on county road 13 to Harrow.

Harrow is home to Colio Wines (on Colio Drive, off Walker Road) and LeBlanc Estate Winery on Concession 4 east of Ferris Road. Then continue west on highway 18 to historic Amherstburg, site of Fort Malden and impressive War of 1812 victories. Here the highway turns north along the Detroit River; continue on Highway 18 to county road 10; turn east for 6.4 km to concession 5, then south on 5 for 2.7 km to D'Angelo Estate Winery, one of Ontario's newest. Sal D'Angelo planted his first wines in 1984 and was licensed in 1989; the winery produces a range of VQA wines, and also sells juice to amateurs! His wine labels commemorate historic scenes from Canada's history - in particular, the War of 1812 - and are all individually commissioned. Many are truly spectacular.

The wine route ends here (if you see a sign saying "wine route ends", you have overshot), but overnight accommodation is readily available in nearby Windsor.

Simply return to the highway and head north; it turns into the EC Row Expressway which carries traffic across Windsor's southern boundary; but exiting at the first opportunity, Huron Church Road, and turning north, on

Highway 3, will present a number of options including Travelodge (first on the right, and usually very good value) and Holiday Inn. You're also only a stone's throw from the Ambassador Bridge to Detroit in the USA; the campus of the University of Windsor; and several shopping centres.

Windsor, which has an undeserved reputation as a dowdy factory town, has many attractions, and much history. It was the terminus of "The Underground Railway", which prior to the US Civil War brought escaped slaves in that country to "freedom under the British Crown"; it is the site of the Baby House (pronounced "Bobby"), where during the War of 1812 a British General tricked the American Commander of the Fortress of Detroit into surrendering his garrison to a vastly smaller British and Canadian force without a shot being fired; it has a hugely successful Casino; and it is actually SOUTH of the City of Detroit, a fact which can be disorienting when considering street directions!

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

Mr. S. Shepherd of 5 Gatenby Drive, Malvern Park, Acklam Middleborough,

England, TS5 8JL writes to say that he is a novice winemaker who is trying to build up his library on the hobby. He is interested in swapping English winemaking books for Canadian and American ones. If anyone would like to do so, please contact Mr. Shepherd at the above address.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO AWO

Following Don Eastman's survey of the membership, a three-member committee has been meeting to discuss possible changes to AWO. All clubs by now should have received a copy of the resulting proposals, along with the rationale for each. In brief, the proposals are as follows (comments in italics are those of the editor, not the Committee):

MEMBERSHIP TO BE HELD BY INDIVIDUALS, NOT CLUBS

This would impact significantly on the organizing of Festivals, where clubs currently accept the financial risk of failure in return for a share of any profit, in partnership with AWO.

It could also have a significant effect on the annual competition, which is kept to a manageable size due to club pre-screening.

FOCUS EXCLUSIVELY ON FRUIT FERMENTATION (EXCLUDE BEERS)

JUDGES COMMISSION TO BE A COMMITTEE OF AWO

This would eliminate the "arm's-length" relationship and remove its independence in such matters as setting standards for judges.

ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE TO OVERSEE AND MONITOR CLASS

DESCRIPTIONS

This is currently done by the Judges' Commission.

INSURANCE COVERAGE TO BE RESTRICTED AND DECIDED BY THE

EXECUTIVE

CLARIFY MISSION AND SCOPE OF AWONEWS AND ESTABLISH POLICY

ON ADVERTISING

The current mission is stated in the top banner on page 1. Current policy on advertising - previously established by the Executive - is that there will be no

commercial advertising.

VARIOUS HOUSEKEEPING (PROCEDURAL) CHANGES

Views on the foregoing may be sent to John Harris, Don Eastman, or Gord Barnes.

CHIEF JUDGE'S COLUMN

By Peter Pigeon

The tanks and carboys are full, and another wine year has begun. Not only does this mark the 30th year of the Judges' Commission's service to AWO, but it is also the debut year of our best trained and qualified judges ever, the Master Judge. Four wine class presentations have been completed to date, with ten more monthly committed presentations on the calendar. Tasting tests (nearly identical to the InterVin test) and knowledge tests are also scheduled throughout the year. Successful candidates will be among the best qualified wine judges in North America.

We will be using a "five judge format" in the 1998 Ontario finals, at the medal selection phase of each class. The high and low scores will be rejected, and the other three judges' medal assessments used to determine the final wine placing. This technique should lessen "anomalous (sometimes called 'rogue') judging", (i.e. where one judge scores a wine significantly differently than that of the others), and assist us in providing the best judging ever for the winemaker. It would be great if wine assessment were totally objective - but it is not.

To do this we need more judges. If you would like to become a judge, or simply to explore the possibility, you may want to sit the "entry taste test" this spring. Candidates demonstrating above average tasting ability will receive up to two years' training and extensive testing. If you are successful, this unpaid job does however provide a lot of free tasting experiences.

I would especially like to see more female candidates in this program. Missing half of the better tasters in our population is a major handicap, to winemakers and the Commission. We need the best people to do the best job - period.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Dan Ostler

Mark your calendar now for an activity filled weekend at our '98 Convention, which will be hosted by the Kawartha Krushers at Trent University. The planning committee is working hard to develop an outstanding programme - let's give them our full support!

There has been interest expressed to host in 1999, but no confirmation to date. If your club is interested in 1999, or the big 2000, please contact any member of the executive.

On behalf of all members of AWO I would like to express our regret at the news that Gary Maldaver has found it necessary to retire as Chief Steward, due to time and travel commitments related to a new project at the office. Gary has admirably carried on the tradition of a long lineage of dedicated Chief Stewards.

This position is a cornerstone of support to AWO, in conjunction with the Judges' Commission. Gary is preparing a transfer package for the new Chief Steward, which position is currently unfilled. If you would like to know more about the job, without making any commitment, please give me a call.

Now that the new grape season is in full swing it seems like an excellent time to make my excuses for not having mailed the cumulative points disk to each club as yet. Seems like every free night is spent pressing, racking and sometimes tasting! As publication in the Newsletter would take too much space we will continue with the electronic distribution.

Speaking of electronic communication Another method of distributing such information to our members, and I feel soliciting many NEW members, would be for AWO to have its own web site. The British Columbia Amateur Winemakers Association and the Vancouver Amateur Winemakers Association have web pages which are very attractive. The results of this year's AWC competition were published the same day of the competition on the BCAWA site. There are costs involved in such an undertaking, but more than \$s, it also requires a webmaster. Do we have anyone in our membership with experience in setting up a web site?

Along with the letter from Gord Barnes soliciting your club's dues you will have received an outline of proposed changes to AWO's format from our Restructuring Committee. Please take the time to discuss these points at your

next club meeting and provide feedback to the committee. A more detailed proposal will be mailed directly to every member later in the year.

Trusting the new season's wines bring your club new medals!