



# AWOnews



**Produced by The Amateur Winemakers of Ontario**

**A forum for the exchange of news and opinions on home**

**winemaking in Ontario**

**May 1999 Newsletter No. 13**

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**The 1999 Spring edition**

***"Upon orchard and lane***

*Breaks the white foam of the Spring"*

- - *Sir William Watson*

*"Hymn to the Sea"*

## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

by Paul Dunseath



**The 1999 Festival in London is drawing nigh, and in this issue we include last-minute information for planning your attendance. Please note in particular the deadline for ensuring meal availability (see the last page); if you have not yet sent in your registration, or mislaid the form sent out by the London organizers, you will find another copy in this issue. This your last chance!**

**We also have the always-welcome views of our Prez, Dan Ostler; Chief Judge, Peter Pigeon; as well as information on deliberations on changes to the class descriptions by Gord Barnes of the Class Descriptions Committee. By popular**

**demand we complete an earlier article on the making of commercial wines, and also have an interesting account of a tasting in Peterborough, by Larry Paterson.**

**On a sad note, Shirley Passmore advises us of the death of a popular club member in April.**

**And now, on with the show.**

## **A WINETASTING IN PETERBOROUGH**

**by Larry Paterson**

**On February 8th we conducted a blind tasting that involved 8 1995 vintage Cru Classé en 1855 Bordeaux (among the very best) and 8 domestic- 3 each from Stoney Ridge and Thirty Bench, one altered Stoney Ridge and one (poor) homemade (mine)- 16 in all.**

**27 tasters included a wine journalist, ex-AWOer/winemaker Jim Warren and son Marshall from Stoney Ridge, and ex-AWOer/winemaker Dr. Tom Muckle and daughter Fiona from Thirty Bench winery. An additional 5 judges were**

**Kawartha Krushers. LCBO store manager Art Branch (# 45 Peterborough), who last year assisted in judging at the Krusher's club competition, was the only person able to identify all 8 Bordeaux. Well done Art! I hope we can talk him into pursuing AWO certification. We have him started winemaking with a Riesling this year.**

**The wines were hidden in paper bags (no-one could know which was which). We poured four wines at a time, scoring them between 70 and 100. Lower scores were treated as faulted wines ("X"). If 4 judges rejected (X) the wine, the wine was disqualified. Number 11 was rejected by 12 tasters as geranium flawed, and mine also earned an "X"!**

**Only chunks of fairly simple bread were available during the tasting as flavourful foods will skew the results of any tasting. Wines change in the presence of food. The first wine(s) tend to be scored lower as a result of what I call the toothpaste factor. Try a glass of orange juice AFTER you brush your teeth. You will get a similar result with wine. I suggest having something sparkling to remove the presence of toothpaste, mouthwash and dessert from peoples' mouths, followed by bread. We neglected to do this ourselves.**

**8:25 PM 12/3/04 Tasters also tend to be tentative at the beginning, and reluctant to score high. Scores tend to rise as a tasting progresses (which I call the happy factor). This is partly due to having swallowed a number of wines, and partly that as the evening progresses, people tend to get more communicative and have a better time. Wine tastes better when you are enjoying yourself. Unless the tasters are professionals, and spitting the samples, I recommend no more than 9 wines in a tasting, say in flights of three. Note that some less-experienced tasters were complaining of palate fatigue at the end.**

**For the following comparison, I have eliminated my wine, the flawed 30 Bench 1994 Cabernet, and the altered 1995 Stoney Ridge Merlot. I altered the Merlot by freezing two bottles in an ice cream container, and eliminating about 10% of the volume as ice. This left 5 domestic commercial wines as is. Note the poor finishing positions of the youngest wines (96 and 97).**

## **COMPARISON**

**The 5 unaltered commercial Ontario reds finished 1st, 5th, 6th, 13th and 14th. They cost an average \$27.60 and scored an average of 83.9%. The 8 Bordeaux cost an average of \$64.06 and scored an average of 83.9%. Funny, huh?**

## THE SCORES

#	SCORE	WINE NAME
1.	88.4%	1995 30 Bench Cabernet Franc
2.	85.5	1995 Ch. Malescot St. Exupery
3.	85.2	1995 Ch. Lagrange
3.	85.2	1995 Ch. Léoville - Poyferre
5.	84.4	1993 Stoney Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon
6.	84.0	1991 Stoney Ridge Cabernet Franc
7.	83.9	1995 Ch. Haut-Batailley
8.	83.5	1995 Ch. Lynch- Bages

**9. 83.0 1995 Stoney Ridge Merlot**

**(SEE NOTE)**

**10. 82.9 1995 Ch. St. Pierre**

**11. 82.5 1995 Ch. Talbot**

**12. 82.4 1995 Ch. Belgrave**

**13. 82.0 1997 Stoney Ridge Wismer Cab Franc**

**14. 80.9 1996 30 Bench Cabernet Sauvignon**

**15. 77.4 1997 Little Fat Wino (Larry Paterson) Cabernet**

**NOT SCORED 1994 30 Bench Cabernet - Geranium flaw**



**NOTE: Stoney Ridge Merlot was altered by freezing 2 bottles and removing 10% of the volume as ice.**

**I hope to repeat this theme in the spring, but will break it into 2 mini-tastings of 6 wines each, 3 Bordeaux and 3 domestic. I'd love to enter a top red BC Bordeaux blend into one flight or the other, but don't know how to get one or which to pick. Help please!**

## **1999 AWC NATIONAL COMPETITION**

**by Dennis Wright**

**The Pan-American Games will draw 5000 athletes and 3500 coaches, trainers and mission staff from 42 countries to the largest sport and culture event ever held in Canada and the third largest multi-sport event ever held in North America. Only the summer Olympics held in Atlanta and Los Angeles were bigger. The Pan-American Games are scheduled to run from Friday, July 23 until Sunday, August 8,1999**

**The AWC National Competition will draw an estimated 280 entries from Canada's finest amateur winemakers. The AWC Nationals will be held on Saturday, August 7, 1999 and will be hosted by the Amateur Winemakers of Manitoba. Although we are rather few in number compared to Ontario, BC and Alberta, we are an enthusiastic bunch and can guarantee an excellent weekend of competition, social events and friendship. Among the events that we are planning are a social on Friday, August 6 and a pig roast following the competition.**

**Details of the competition will be sent out to all of the AWC Provincial Directors within the next week. Information on the Pan-American Games can be found on the Internet at [www.panamgames.org](http://www.panamgames.org) or by phoning the Pan-Am Games HQ at (204) 985-1999. There will be 1.2 million tickets available for 367 sessions in 41 sports. Ticket prices range from \$8 to \$40 and offer exceptional value. Why not plan on joining us in the centre of Canada and taking in both the Nationals and the Games. You won't be disappointed!!!**

**P.S.: Do you know how much effort it took to convince the PanAm Games Society to hold their games in Winnipeg to coincide with the AWC Nationals?**

**Dennis Wright**

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## **HOW WINE IS MADE: COMMERCIALY**

**by Paul Dunseath © 1999**

**(continued from issue #9)**

*In the last article we described some of the politics involved in winemaking in the commercial world, especially in Europe. We now continue, at popular request with a*

*description of the process itself, which is where we pick up the narrative:*

**The grapes are trucked to the winery, where they are loaded onto a conveyor belt. Most of the leaves and pieces of stalk are mechanically removed, and the grapes then are dumped into a crusher. It is here that the difference between red and white wines comes into play.**

**For red wines, the colouring matter and tannin from the skins are essential ingredients; consequently the crushed grapes, juice, and in many cases the denuded stalks are pumped as a mass into a fermentation tank. For white wines, if the grapes themselves were red, the skins and stalks are immediately removed from the juice after crushing to avoid any pick-up of colour. If the grapes were white, the skins may or may not be immediately removed, depending on the intentions of the vintner; some wines - Chardonnays, for example - may benefit from a short (under 24 hour) period of "skin contact", while others do not. In the former case, the juice and skins are allowed to remain together in a tank, after which the skins are removed and pressed to expel any residual juice, and the juice is then pumped to a fermentation tank. In the latter, the skins are immediately pressed and the juice then goes directly to the tank.**

**The fermentation tank may be made of wood (oak or in some California wineries redwood), fibreglass, concrete, glass or stainless steel, again depending on the type of wine being made and the preferences of the vintner. A quality wine yeast is poured on top, and the tank either closed, with a valve in place to allow the gas produced during fermentation to escape, or simply covered with a sheet to prevent insects from entering. Again, the choice is determined by the views of the vintner (for example the Australian perennial favourite "Long Flat Red" is fermented in open casks covered only with a plastic sheet, presumably to discourage the joeys from jumping in). It's excellent value, by the way, and served on the long-haul Qantas flights to and from Oz.**

**Fermentation begins, as the yeast undertakes the process of consuming the sugar in the juice. The temperature is monitored carefully, since it has a significant effect on the flavour and character of the finished wine. Various means are employed to either lower or raise the temperature as and if required. If the skins are included in the tank, the "cap" - the mass of pulp, skins and stems that rises to the surface - is mechanically submerged at least once a day to prevent it from drying out and acetifying, i.e. developing a vinegar flavour. The number of days that the skins remain in the vessel is again determined by the vintner, based on**

**the type of grapes being used and the kind of wine being made. This period may run from a couple of days to as much as four weeks. At the appropriate time the skins are removed and pressed, and fermentation continues with the juice alone.**

**When the fermentation is complete, the raw wine is pumped into another vessel, leaving behind a residue of spent fruit pulp, seeds, remnants of stems, and dead yeast. This second vessel is always a closed one, but with a valve in place to allow any residual gases to escape. For the better red wines, these are often wooden barrels, while for most whites they are typically glass or stainless steel tanks.**

**Over the weeks which follow, suspended matter such as yeast and tiny particles of fruit pulp begin to settle to the bottom, and the wine begins to clear. The process may be hastened by the use of "finings", materials which cause the small particles to clump together and settle out more quickly, and as well an antibacterial and preservative agent may be added in controlled dosage, usually using sulphur dioxide gas.**

**When the wine has clarified it is transferred to a holding vessel for ageing. En route, it may be passed through a pressure filter; this is common practice in high-volume wineries, but is not used as widely in the highest-quality French**

**vineyards. "To filter or not to filter" is a topic which can spark a debate amongst almost any group of vintners.**

**After an appropriate degree of ageing (again, "appropriate" is in the eyes of the vintner), the wine is bottled. Some quality wines may be stored in bottle by the producer before being released to the market, while others will go out immediately. In the earlier years of this century it was accepted that one expected to "lay down" wines in one's own cellar for perhaps several years before drinking them, and commercial wines were made in a style which ensured that they would continue to improve for some time after bottling. Today, however, most customers are looking for instant gratification, and tax laws are often such that there is an economic penalty to the winery if stock is stored for any length of time. Consequently many wines, even expensive ones, are now produced such that they can be consumed shortly after purchase. This has necessitated a number of compromises in the methods of production, and it is arguable that the results leave something to be desired by comparison with the great wines of another age.**

## **CHIEF JUDGE'S COLUMN**

**by Peter Pigeon**

**Awarding recognition to high quality wines is the best part of judging. Accepting the responsibility to pass judgement on a product that is often lovingly crafted, with the best effort and intentions of the winemaker, is no small load.**

**Unfortunately, there are winemakers who don't receive the positive reinforcement that the medal winning makers do. For most, this is accepted as a necessary part of the learning experience. For some it is a crushing disappointment, often accompanied by confusion as to what was really wrong with their wine. My observations on this aspect of the "judgmental situation" may interest you.**

**The judge may have been wrong. No judge is perfect. Commission judges have had extensive training and been tested on their tasting ability. Now, all judges who attend the AWO finals are taste tested on a regular basis. So although mistakes can be made, the odds are increasingly remote, especially with the five judge system. Maybe the winemaker is wrong - unrealistic expectations, a lack of**



**quality commercial wine tasting experience, an inability to critically taste the wine, are all factors that will ensure disappointment.**

**The winemaker must be realistic in submitting wines to be evaluated by others.**

**If he/she really likes the wine, why have it judged at all? Competition usually does, after all, produce more losers than winners. Understanding the judges' comments is essential in understanding why your wine receives the mark given to it. That understanding only makes sense if you know the difference between quality levels in a wine.**

**Your own ability to differentiate the components of a wine and their interrelationship is essential. Really good wines usually share the same characteristics. The distinct character of the grape variety appears in both the nose and mouth. There is a pleasant "intensity" of flavor that is also "refined" in its complexity and the harmony of its components - sweetness, fruit, acid, tannins, alcohol and mouthfeel. The flavours are a unit from first sniff, through the entry, to a lingering, clean aftertaste. There is the pleasant awareness that your entire mouth has been drawn into the complex sensations of taste and feel, and that your mind is fully aware of that presence. The key to making great**

**wine is in tasting great wines, with your brain fully engaged. Unfortunately limited knowledge and experience leads directly to limited winemaking.**

**A proven "fast track" to becoming a better winemaker is to become a wine judge. Try the wine taste test at the London Festival to qualify for an invitation to our next, new judges training program. If you are not attending the conference, you may still take the test, but must register with Peter Pigeon and pay a \$10 fee at least one week prior to the event.**

## **NOTE FROM GORDON BARNES**

**The Class Description Committee is considering a number of suggestions about the competition in general as well as description changes. Four pages of details have been sent to your Club Rep. Some changes are effective for the '99 year: most want discussion and a vote at a future AGM.**

**1. Should the Zweigelt grape variety be included in Pinot/Gamay or in Other Red?**

- 2. Should there be a separate class for Gewürztraminer?**
- 3. Should there be a separate class for Medium Sherry? Or include all Sherries.**
- 4. Where should Late Harvest go?**
- 5. Draft description for Social**
- 6. Draft description for Sparkling**
- 7. Are the Concentrate classes (Red & White) still valid?**
- 8. Is the Best of Show award a valid and useful award?**
- 9. Are the Travelling Trophies still valid, or better replaced by 'Keepers'?**

**Please discuss these items at your club meetings. Send your comments and suggestions to me or better still, put them on WineTalk.**

## **DEATH OF A MEMBER**

**by Shirley Passmore**

**We regret to report that Hamilton Wine Circle experienced a devastating loss on April 11, during the presentation of results of our club judging, when our club treasurer and host for the evening, Lou Brajer succumbed to what was probably a massive stroke at the age of 64. Lou was just beginning the presentation when he was stricken. Members applied CPR to no avail. Medics, arriving in a very short time were unable to revive him. Well liked by all, Lou will be sadly missed. Lou had won a gold medal at club level and it adorned the floral arrangement sent by the club. He died with a smile on his face, amongst his friends of the Hamilton Wine Circle.**

## **NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**by Dan Ostler**

**Well the annual Festival in London is not far off and judging from the programme we will be kept busy all weekend. Personally, I had a hard time picking my seminars, there were so many I wanted to attend. The hard part about every Festival is not to over- enjoy the Friday night showcase such that**

**you miss the first few seminars Saturday morning. I can already taste those smoked meats at the Lakeview table (not to apply any pressure.....).**

**On your behalf I would like to thank two of our retiring Directors, Bill McClement who has handled the medals and trophies for several years, and Gerry Den Hartogh, our former Secretary. Both have served your interests very well but with many other personal commitments they are ready to pass the glass. We are hoping for several new nominations otherwise the work just falls on fewer shoulders. Of course we could just elect Gord Barnes President for Life (he does so much already) and then get on with our winemaking.**

**Please be sure to have a Club Rep at the annual meeting Saturday at 4:30. There are several very important motions to be voted and we want all clubs' participation. Don't forget the rule: if you are not there you can't complain later!**

**If you haven't visited our Web site for a while have a look at the nice club page put up by the Rideau-Tay club (see Members section and click on their club name). That gives us two (including Pickering) and I hear that Central Toronto is working on theirs (more pressure.....).**

**I have completed updating the Amateur Winemakers of Canada historical point totals. These will eventually appear on the AWC web page (within the AWO site), but until then if anyone is interested in a particular file (wine, beer, cider, ranking etc.), drop me an email and I can send you a copy (awo@makewine.com).**

**See you in London!**