



# AWOnews



**Produced by The Amateur Winemakers of Ontario**

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

**winemaking in Ontario**

**August 1999 Newsletter No. 15 Winter 2000**

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**The Winter Edition**

*"For you there's rosemary and rue;*

*these keep*

*Seeming and savour all the winter*

*long"*

*William Shakespeare "The Winter's Tale"*

## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

by Paul Dunseath



**With our successful 1999 Convention over, and the grapes available, many cellars are busy preparing their wines for future competitions.**

**In this issue though we look at other materials for winemaking, with a thoughtful article by Gord Barnes, gleaned from Winetalk, on elderberries, and Dan Ostler provides his always-welcome President's column with his take on winemaking in Ontario.**

**An update, as well, on AWO Festival Y2K in Ottawa next June. In these pages you will see information on package costs, which have been held to the level of**

previous years, as well as planning information for your journey; holiday recipes; the lowdown on tannin; and Albrecht Seeger on the GGGMG. So, while the wind builds outside, throw another log on the fire, pour yourself a warming glass of Port, and let's go!

## **THOUGHTS ON ELDERBERRIES**

By Gord Barnes (via "Winetalk")

After talking with my good wife Marie - the horticulturalist, I get the following:

1. From A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants ( Lee Peterson) ISBN

0-395-20445-3

**COMMON ELDERBERRY** *Sambucus canadensis*. A common erect shrub.

Leaves divided into 5 - 11 coarsely toothed, elliptic leaflets: 4 - 11"

long.....**FRUIT:** Aug - Oct. **USE:** Fritter, jelly, cold drink, fruit.....Although

the fresh berries are rank smelling and mildly unpleasant tasting, they are

excellent when properly prepared. They make an outstanding jelly when mixed

**with the juice of one of the more tart fruits such as green apples, crabapples, or half ripe grapes. Add one cup of water for every quart of berries, simmer for 10 - 15 minutes, mash, and simmer for another 10 minutes, then strain through several layers of cheesecloth.....Elderberries do not contain their own pectin, so if you do not use at least as much of the tart juice as the elderberry juice, you will need to use a commercial pectin (to make a jelly.).....berries are extremely rich in vitamin C; also contain vitamin A, calcium, iron and potassium. WARNING: although flowers and ripe fruit are perfectly edible, the roots, stems, leaves and unripe berries can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.**

## **2. From The SHRUB IDENTIFICATION BOOK George W.D. Symonds**

**Common Elderberry Sambucus canadensis (American elder) FLOWER: In**

**June-July area: N.S. to Man., South to Florida and Texas. Grows to 12ft. Ripe**

**fruit is dark purple to black berries in a flat umbrella shape cluster in top of the stem.**

**Red-berried Elder Sambucus pubens (Scarlet Elder) FLOWER: In April- May**

**AREA: N.S. to Alaska, South to GA, TN, IN, IA and west. Florida and Texas.**

**Grows to 25ft. Ripe fruit is red berries in a cone shaped cluster on top of the**

**stem.**

**Note: There was now reference to the Red Elder but, it was not included in the Edible Wild volume.**

**I seem to remember this top on Winetalk a year ago - indicating that Elderberries were normally used as a small addition to a base wine for colour and a complexity of flavours.**

## **NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**By Dan Ostler**

**I am writing this on Oct 31st, just before going out to press my last Niagara red for the season and what a season! I don't recall pressing Niagara reds this late and the overall harvest quality looks excellent - high sugars and low acids like '98. Our cellars are going to be in great shape for the next few years!**

**I would like to welcome Peter Bennell to the AWO Executive. Peter will be taking over the secretarial duties from Dan Sullivan and Dan will assume the**

**position of Director - Special Projects, with emphasis on education and the expansion of material on our web site. Gerry Den Hartogh has taken over the medals and trophies from retiring Bill McClement and the rest of us stay in our existing positions.**

**Your Executive had its first meeting Sept. 11th. Gord reported that the London Festival was a great financial success with a \$1500 contribution to AWO' bank account - well done! There is still a lot of interest in the Sherry Seminar but to date we are still looking for a few members to be the coordinators. There are a number of changes related to competition classes and the Class Description Committee is busy working on an updated handbook for next year's competition. As well there are still several class description and medal/trophy issues being debated, for presentation at the AGM in Ottawa next year.**

**For those who may not have visited our web site for a while I have updated the 1999 cumulative point standings. Congratulations to Don Panagapka of KW who is only the third member to crack the 2000 point total (Jim Warren being the first at 2254 and Terry Rayner well out front at 2873). The rest of the top 10 is a very tight grouping, with only 110 points between fourth (1548) and tenth**

**(1438). Please check the postings and let me know if there are any corrections in spelling of names or perhaps your name has changed through marriage. If you change clubs there is no change to the records. If anyone needs a paper or electronic copy of the results just let me know (905-427-7455 or e-mail to ostled@tdbank.ca).**

**Congratulations to the 17 Ontario winners at the AWC competition in Winnipeg, whose medals placed Ontario second to BC (945 points to their 1298). However, we did manage to win Champion Winemaker - Mike Charlebois of Bytown and Best Wine In Show - Lorne Weyers of Pickering Wine Guild. Once I catch up with the cellar I will update the AWC historical point totals; watch the Web site for their posting.**

**I hope you all have your calendars marked for the 2000 Festival in Ottawa next June. Our member clubs in the region have a reputation for putting on very well organized Festivals and based upon preliminary planning information this looks like another winner.**

**I hope all your carboys settle quickly.**



## **TAKE TIME FOR TANNIN**

**By Paul Dunseath c 1999**

**Someone once said that you can make wine from almost anything, including old boots! I wouldn't want to speculate on the taste of "Old Boot Wine", but one thing is for sure; it would certainly have a high tannin level. By the purest of coincidences, that is the subject of this article (tannin, that is, not old boots!).**

**Tannins are substances which are most familiar because of their historical use in preserving - or "tanning" - leather and other hides. Members of the polyphenol family, tannins are closely related to the substances which give fruit its colour, and can be found in the skins, stalks and stems, as well as in the leaves of such plants as oak and tea. In the latter, in fact, tannins are one of the main flavour constituents. In wine, tannin gives an impression of dryness in the mouth; with the correct amount, the wine has an appealing character of cleanliness; without it, it is flat and uninteresting; with too much, it is bitter and astringent.**

**This of course returns us to the subject of wine, and wine grapes, in which tannins are also present. Since white wines are produced from the uncoloured**

**juice of red or white grapes, and usually without skin contact, whereas red wines are produced from red grapes using a period of fermentation on the skins (sometimes with bits of stem and stalk present as well), white wines are consequently much lighter in tannin than reds.**

**Even among red wines, tannin content varies; Beaujolais Nouveau has a very short period of skin contact, and a resulting low tannin content (important, since otherwise the raw tannin of a young wine would make it undrinkable). Fine Bordeaux, and classic Chiantis, may have an extended period of fermentation on the skins ( and, in the case of some Chiantis, on the stems and stalks as well), with a consequently high tannin content. The effect of this is to produce a wine which, when young, has a raw harshness which some tasters compare to "Post Office Ink"; however, as the wine ages, the tannin content lessens, until at maturity it is present in the quantity required to provide an underlying austerity and complexity to the taste, without intruding unduly into the flavour. In the meantime, of course, the wine has benefited from the preservative effects of the tannin to age slowly and safely.**

**While there are a variety of sources of tannin available, it is important to**

**remember that each source produces a different member of the family, with different characteristics and taste, so although oak leaves and vine prunings, for example - both of which have been used in the past to make country wines - may contain ample tannin, their particular taste may be undesirable in a wine from delicately-flavoured fruit.**

**The two sources of choice for supplementing tannin in an otherwise-deficient wine are grape tannin, sold as such in winemakers' supply stores, and strong tea. Of the two, grape tannin is the more predicable since it is available in a known strength. Consisting of a reddish-brown powder, it is added to wines from concentrates or garden fruits according to recipe directions prior to the start of fermentation. Lacking this, the winemaker may use strong tea (the difficulty being, of course, that "strong" is a relative term); failing any other direction, addition of one tablespoon of strong tea per gallon most, or about 3.3ml per litre, is a good average figure.**

**In addition to its ability to confer flavour and quality on a wine, and its contribution to the keeping quality of a wine, tannin also results in more rapid clarification of the must after fermentation has finished. The home winemaker**

**will often find, as a result, that red wines - particularly those which have had a reasonably lengthy period of fermentation on the skins - tend to clear more rapidly than whites, and seldom need the addition of wine finings to bring them to full clarity.**

**There is no readily-available test for excess tannin which is available to the home winemaker, so the best technique is to develop a sound appreciation for the taste of tannin in a wine. If in doubt, simply add a small quantity of grape tannin to a finished red wine and do a side-by-side comparison of this wine with the original; at some point in tannin addition you will find that the taste first develops a slight dryness, then slides into overtones of a tea-chest, and finally becomes overly astringent. Determine where you find the flavour most to your liking (and that of your friends and guests), and simply aim at that content.**

**Low-tannin wines can always be changed by the addition of tannin; however if there is too much tannin present to begin with, there are three fundamental options open. The first is simply to allow the wine to age, since tannins become increasingly insoluble in alcohol over time; the second is to blend the wine with one which is low in tannin; and the third is to remove some of the tannin directly.**

**Blending requires little explanation; one simply mixes the over-tannin wine with one which is flat or insipid, after first having done a trial blending using small quantities of each to determine the optimum mix; after blending, the wine should be placed under an airlock, as renewed fermentation is always a possibility after blending. See also Gord Barnes' article on blending in issue #14 for advice on how to do this most effectively.**

**Tannin removal, for its part, is normally done by fining the wine with either unflavoured gelatin, or casein (milk). A quarter of a gram of gelatine, dissolved in 25 mls of warm water, will remove the same weight of tannin from a wine. Try this amount for each 5 litres of wine (or gallon, if you choose), as a starting point. We ourselves have not used milk, but it is an old remedy which many winemakers swear by. The basic dosage is 2 to 3 drops per gallon as a starting dose. Other "country wine" remedies include egg-white, one egg white, thoroughly beaten into 300 ml of wine, is reported to be suitable for up to 50 litres of wine. Of course, when using any perishable organic agents such as milk or egg white, it is important to rack off the sediment without delay.**

**All of these approaches are based on the fact that tannins and protein precipitate**

**each other. Several commercial finings work on the same principle and combine tannins and proteins in their mix; however these are formulated to balance each other, and therefore will not be particularly effective in removing excess tannin itself.**

**Although it may appear that tannin is a troublesome ingredient, in fact this is not the case. Readily available and easy to use, tannin is an essential ingredient in making the finest wines, wines with complexity and character, and ones which will reward your patience with an aristocratic maturity.**

#### **TANNIN CONTENT OF COMMON FRUITS AND INGREDIENTS**

**LOW: Flowers, vegetables, grain, bananas, honey, Gooseberries, strawberries, pineapple, rhubarb**

**MEDIUM: Grapes, apple skins,(most varieties), blackberries, cherries, loganberries, raspberries, currants, sultanas**

**HIGH: Elderberries, crab apples, oak leaves, tea, grape stems, apricots, blackcurrants, plums, grapefruit, oranges, peaches, pears, figs, raisins**

## **CHIEF JUDGE'S COLUMN**

**by Peter Pigeon**

**Wow! We have seventeen new trainees enrolled in the current New Judges Training Program! The first session was held in Hamilton on October 30th, at the Tom Van Zuiden Sr. Residence. Bill Thornton and Tom Van Zuiden presented sessions on Component tasting - critical analysis, Balance-relationship of the components, and Vocabulary/descriptors - meaningful communication. There are six more sessions including a club judging experience. There may also be a training program taking place in Eastern Ontario as well, this winter. The AWO winemakers have much to look forward to with such a fine group of potential wine judges, some of whom will be evaluating AWO Finals entries this coming year.**

**Plans are under way for the Commission to initiate the first annual, commercial wineries, "National Fruit Wine Competition", in late February.**

**The new millennium will mark a major change in the activities of the Commission. A number of Commission judges are currently evaluating**

**commercial as well as amateur wines. However, this year, all judges have the opportunity to assess commercial wines in both a national competition, and in the Fruit Wines of Ontario version of wine quality testing similar to the VQA. You, the home winemaker, will benefit from the broadened experience and increased knowledge that will result from this change.**

**We are looking for people interested in joining a new, "Commission Wine Stewards" group. We can serve AWO better, and fulfill our new commercial wine contracts with a well trained, motivated, group of stewards, who will form an integral part of the Wine Judges' Commission makeup. No pay, but you will be well fed, sleep in a hotel or university residence bed, and enrich your wine knowledge tremendously. AWO volunteers from years past, as well as anyone interested in joining us, are welcome. Please contact any Commission judge if you would like more information, and/or would like to join this prestigious group.**

## **TWO RECIPES FOR THE HOLIDAYS**



**These two sinfully delicious recipes were initially published in issue no. 3. They are reprinted here in time for Christmas and the New Year (just)) and make a excellent festive dishes for entertaining over the holiday period. Terrine with Pistachio and Cranberry is the creation of Don West of Bytown Vintners, while the Brie with Sun-Dried Tomatoes is from Marie Droste of Capital Amateur Winemakers.**

## **TERRINE WITH PISTACHIO AND CRANBERRY**

**By Don West**

**2 lbs ground raw turkey**

**2 lbs sausage meat**

**2 chopped onions (1 cup)**

**1 cup dried or fresh cranberries, coarsely chopped**

**1 cup pistachios, coarsely chopped**

**½ tsp salt**

**½ tsp allspice 2 eggs, beaten**

**2/3 cup chopped shallots/chives/green onions**

**1/4 cup dry vermouth**

**4 slices bacon**

**6 bay leaves**

**Combine all ingredients except bacon and bay leaves. Avoid mushing it together or the texture will be heavier.**

**Place 2 strips bacon and 3 bay leaves on the bottom of a terrine or baking dish.**

**Fill with meat mixture, top with bacon and bay leaves. Bake in 350N oven until meat reaches 170N. (A shallow baking dish will take ~ 30 minutes, a deep loaf dish up to 1 hour). Pour off any fat. Chill overnight. Remove from pan, remove bay leaves, garnish with orange segments or zest.**

## **BRIE WITH SUN-DRIED TOMATOES**

**By Marie Droste**

**1 round or large triangle of Brie cheese**

**4 oz chopped sun-dried tomatoes**

**olive oil**

**3-4 cloves garlic, chopped**

**chopped parsley**

**Soak the tomatoes in olive oil to cover, overnight in the refrigerator.**

**Add chopped garlic several hours before serving.**

**Pile the mixture on top of the Brie and sprinkle with parsley.**

**Heat in oven at 350NF for a few minutes until the cheese begins to melt. This can also be done in the microwave, but be careful not to overheat and make the cheese tough.**

## **COMPETITION SCHEDULE FOR 2000**

**Following, thanks to Ellen Kareckas our Judging Coordinator, are the last possible dates for competitions and entries for year 2000. Would-be competitors, club judging organizers and club representatives should note that these are**

**somewhat earlier than last year. You have been warned!**

**Friday Jan 16 Deadline to request the services of an AWO Judge**

**Saturday Apr 22 Last possible Club judging**

**Sunday Apr 23 Easter Sunday**

**Friday Apr 28 Last date for receipt of all Entry Forms and payment of fees**

**Friday May 5, 8pm Last possible delivery of all entry bottles to the judging site**

**Sat/Sun May 6-7 Ontario finals**

**Sunday May 14 Mother's Day**

**Sat/Mon May 20-22 Victoria Day Weekend**

**Fri/Sun June 9-11 AWO Festival - Ottawa**

**Clubs should plan on completing their club judging as early as possible in March and early April in order to meet these dates.**

## **EXTRACT OF A PRESENTATION TO AWO,** **JUNE 5, 1999**

**By Albrecht Seeger**

*Editor's note: this arrived too late to be included in our Harvest issue, where it would have been more timely; however, Albrecht's views on the state of the industry and the influence of the Grape Growers' Marketing Board are well worth reading by all amateurs interested in supporting this important domestic industry. Never - ever - in the history of this Country has there been a better time to be a buyer of grapes for the top quality table wines. Never.*

**Last year we harvested more than 14,000 tonnes of viniferas alone. How many will we have this year? I can give you an assurance that this year's harvest of viniferas will be way ahead of '98. We're forecasting a minimum of 17,000 tonnes of viniferas. Our vineyards are healthy. Vigorous. I have never seen them look so good right through the major grape growing regions of our Province. I'm talking about Chardonnays and Rieslings; Cabernet Franc and Merlot; Gamay and Gewurtztraminer; as well as Baco...Vidal...Foch. The selection is immense....right across the board.**

**As you know, I am a Director of the Ontario Grape Growers Marketing Board, and marketing boards sometimes can sound pretty restrictive and self serving. For our board our powers are limited by legislation, under the Farm Products Marketing Act. Our powers, our authorities, are basic and permit us to negotiate the terms and conditions of sale of grapes for processing. That's it.**

**Can we set prices? No. Our option is limited to negotiating a price that is mutually acceptable to the processors and growers. Can we stop people planting more and more vines? No. This is not a quota Board. Do we have the power to say what vine varieties should be planted? No. Our Board is owned by all growers who sell grapes for processing, and we are totally democratic.**

**This means we have a lot of weaknesses. We have very little influence in the market place because we don't have a consumer product. We are vulnerable when competition gets tougher and sales of our wines are impacted. It's easy to say, "No thank you, we aren't buying many grapes this year". That is disaster for the grower. Since 1990 more than \$100 MILLION has been committed by independent growers in developing and upgrading Ontario's wine industry and so growers are strung-out; they can't afford to lose a pay day because they have**

**only one pay day a year.**

**Another weakness is that our wineries are able to import from the lowest-cost spot market they can find and bring in blending product. The position of the winery, as a processor, seems to us to be more secure. They can adjust their inventories almost at will. We are in the long-haul business; maybe four years for the first crop and maybe a 20-year span needed for the original investment to prove worthwhile.**

**Right now we are sailing into very troubled waters. Wineries are buying far fewer grapes this year....maybe 28,000 tonnes against 32,000 tonnes last year.**

**Our younger vineyards are maturing...this means a substantial increase in the tonnage of the viniferas, around one thousand acres of vines will be producing for the first time.**

**We forecast a surplus for nearly 12,000 tonnes of premium table wine grapes this fall. For some reason sales of Ontario's wines have not developed at the pace the wineries anticipated....and the wineries were basing their long-range needs for viniferas on those anticipations.**

**Let me repeat. There never, ever, has been a better time to be a buyer of**

**premium wine grapes in Ontario.**

**...snip...**