



# AWOnews



**Produced by The Amateur Winemakers of Ontario**

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

**winemaking in Ontario**

**May 2000 Newsletter No. 17**

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**The Festival Issue**

*"What wond'rus life is this I lead !*

*Ripe apples drop about my head;*

*The luscious clusters of the vine*

*Upon my mouth do crush their wine."*

*-Andrew Marvell*

*"The Garden "*

## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

**by Paul Dunseath**



**With our Year 2000 Annual General Meeting ("Festival**

**Y2K") now just a few weeks off, the lower prices before May 1 have expired.**

**However, although a couple of the most popular seminars are now fully (or over)**

**subscribed, there is still time to sign in for such features as the bus tour or the**

**self-directed walking tour. There is a registration form on the back page, and**

**numbers are coming up fast, so run - don't walk - to your nearest post office or contact [mhquast@magma.ca](mailto:mhquast@magma.ca), our registrars, for further information.**

**Lots of stuff, too, about the new class descriptions to be discussed this year; Gord Barnes provides a book review; an article on fining; a new club in Peterborough stretches its wing; and obituary for an old friend; and - the last Registration Form you will ever receive for AWO2000. Enjoy!**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**by Dan Ostler**

**Well by now all the club competitions are over and hopefully you have a wine or two submitted to the Provincial competition. This year both Golds & Silvers go forward, which will allow many more of our members to achieve recognition for those long hours in the cellar racking, fining, blending and balancing. Good luck to you all!**

**Paul Stuart, our Web Master, is anxious to expand the wine making content on**

**our web site. But in order to do so Paul needs input from the members. It doesn't have to be an "article" on wine making (although that would be great). Any thoughts or short notes on any aspect of the hobby are welcome. Why don't we start the process with a campaign to expand a section dealing with methods, tips or tricks. This can be as short as a few sentences. No topic is too basic to be included here as we have many new winemakers among the site visitors. It could be as simple as these....**

- > Be sure to store your sulphite in a plastic bag to slow deterioration**
- > If testing pH be sure your buffers are at the same temperature as your wines**
- > If adding acid AFTER doing your sulphite addition be prepared for a possible increase in free SO<sub>2</sub> due to a possible drop in pH**
- > When making a 5% or 10% solution of any additive be careful to add the chemical to LESS THAN the final volume, stir it in and then ADD water to get the final volume. That is a 5% solution is NOT 50 grams into 1000 ml water, it is 50 grams in a FINISHED volume of 1000 ml.**

**So what other tips can you add? Please E-mail to Winetalk or and we will pick**

**them up for posting to the web site.**

**As usual this year we have suggestions for changes to some of the wine classes so if you want to have a say in the definitions for next year be sure to either attend the Annual General Meeting in Ottawa or provide a proxy to another club that is attending.**

**I am looking forward to another great Festival in Ottawa and the opportunity to meet with old friends and make new ones. Hope to see you there!**

## **OBITUARY - ANDREW SHARP**

**by Peter Pigeon**

**A highly respected and truly inspirational Canadian wine authority, Andrew Sharp, died recently after a lengthy illness. Andrew's book "Winetaster's Secrets" has been used as a textbook for both the past and current Wine Judges Commission, new judges training programs, and as well he donated the annual award for our winning AWO Winetaster of the Year competition.**

**A very strong supporter of amateur winemakers and a dear friend to the those of us who joined the InterVin family, he will be sadly missed. The funeral was held in Toronto.**

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**by Gord Barnes**

**Techniques in Home Winemaking**

**A practical Guild to making Chateau-Style Wines.**

**Daniel Pambianchi**

**Vehicule Press 266 pages \$19.95**

**When I first heard about this book the initial thought was, "So who needs another amateur winemaker book?" When it arrived I dug in with a heavy overlay of negativism - ready to tear it apart. That bias soon fell apart as the clarity and completeness became apparent.**

**One example should illustrate the craftsmanship in this work. The section of source material methodically describes Fresh Grapes, to concentrate in a tin. In the process he itemizes the processes and additions that happen to each section. At each step through the progression the product is calculated to reduce the probabilities of a failure for the wine maker. Along the way, Pambianchi conveys the awareness that the level of safety comes at the cost of the producing a great wine.**

**Another welcome quality through out the work is the attention to detail. The "Do and Don'ts" witness this little section the cleaning property of Washing Soda of Carbonates and barrels.**

**For those who have already devoted much study time to the works of, Cornell.Davis, there will be only a few new bits that postdate these publications. The middle majority of winemakers will find logical organization makes this an easy read from front to back as well as a reference work. For the beginner, it is easy for a quick read will convey the essentials without getting inundated by the heavy chemistry.**

**All this for half the price of a half bottle of Icewine - what a bargain!**



## **A NEW CLUB IN PETERBOROUGH**

**-by Larry Paterson**

**Growwine, a new AWO club, was formed May 6, 1999 with seven members.**

**Without excluding normal avenues of amateur winemaking, Growwine focuses on controlling our raw materials. Club projects are open only to Growwine members. These projects work by renting a portion of a crop directly from the producer. To a limited extent, we participate in the growing and harvesting decisions, and the work therein. We get our hands dirty, and the experience is greatly enriched.**

**By mid-December 1999 club membership has grown to twenty-four members.**

**Eighteen are primary members - eleven new to the AWO - and six members of the Kawartha Krushers are secondary. A secondary member is entitled to everything except the club competition. Secondary memberships are \$15 each with \$5 of this going to the AWO and \$10 to the club.**

**We had four projects in our initial year: The first, July 28th, saw six of us at**

**Caza Berry Farm pressing partially frozen raspberries. Cold hands, warm heart?**

**Sep 12 had an army picking and crushing Pinot Noir. Sep 28th we purchased**

**Chardonnay juice from Reif Vineyards and November 7th we traveled to a**

**cranberry bog north of Kaladar to pick cranberries (Cold everything!).**

**The second, Sep 12, was my personal favourite.**

**Martin Vagners is a great supporter of AWO through Scott Labs. Martin agreed**

**- with, I'm sure, some trepidation- to rent us two rows of Pinot Noir (200+**

**vines). We agreed that those who wanted to share in the project would share in**

**the work as well. The rough idea was that Martin would apply all the normal**

**vineyard procedures (spraying, weeding etc) and that we would be responsible**

**for judicious leaf-pulling, thinning and removal of secondary clusters. We would**

**pay Grape Growers Marketing Board prices based on weight and sugar for what**

**we took. We naturally would do nothing to harm the vines or property. A trip**

**was made in early August with enough people to do some pruning and**

**leafpulling. Any excuse to visit Niagara is good and Dom Vagners may be the**

**smallest, friendliest, most interesting winery there!**

**Got up about 2:30 AM on September 12th and we had a small army of groggy**

**people down in Niagara before first light picking Pinot Noir. By hand-harvesting we were able to exclude the normal run of MOG (Matter Other than Grape) that machine-harvesting must include. It was also possible by hand-selection in the vineyard to avoid unripe grapes or those bunches overly infected by the botrytis that was the bane of Niagara Pinot Noir this year. We picked just before the rains that caused huge damage to Pinot in many parts of Niagara.**

**We harvested for two plus hours and weighed the grapes with Martin on a low-tech measuring device highly reminiscent of the one-eyed monster which inhabits most bathrooms. We harvested about three-quarters of a ton, I think Martin is still recovering from invasion shock. We loaded the grapes in a number of 45 gallon drums loaned to us by Martin. Wally Henry's pickup truck was full on the way back. Some people headed back to Peterborough to meet the expected crowd at my place at 2 pm or so.**

**While a couple of people went to pick the Landot 4511 and Landal at Vineland Research Station some of us went to clean out/harvest the Landot Noir and Landal that I had rented at Ed Gurinkas' (Lakeview Cellars). Look for this in the future as a grape that may well survive Central Ontario winters.**

**Returned to Peterborough about two hours later than planned to find an army of helpers there. We crushed - destemmed- drank wine- ate food - had a perfect late summer day. Even the few wasps in the area seemed intoxicated.**

**CHEX TV showed up to catch new member Naoko Sakai (our favourite import from Japan) and Mary Jane Branch ( the I Love Lucy grape stomp in a plastic tub for the evening news. Imagine 30-some winos on my driveway! We had a great time, and even managed to get a copy of the news story.**

**The crowd dwindled with time, although many were kind enough to help crush and destem the Landot and Landal afterwards. I finished a minimal rinsing of empty pails by 3 am the next morning. Wow!**

**Imagine the fun when 7 winemakers release their 1999 club project Pinot Noir at a tasting next year. I know that I made 2 versions- one normally and one in imitation of the Accad method. I'm not sure how many other variations were tried.**

**Anyone interested in our endeavors should contact Club Rep Larry Paterson at or by calling 705-743-4153 or mailing to 1325 Royal Drive, Peterborough, Ontario K9H 6R6**

## **CLARIFYING YOUR WINE**

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**Most wines will clear naturally, given sufficient time, and the process can be accelerated by chilling it, either in a fridge or by setting it outside in cool (but not arctic) conditions. However, to achieve the maximum in clarity, it is usually necessary to employ other methods to remove the last trace of haze.**

**The least intrusive of these is the use of "finings". These are materials which are added to the wine, and which act on the basis that hazes are usually charged with static electricity (it is the electrical charge which keeps the particles apart, and thus maintains the haze), and the fining material neutralizes the charge, allowing the particles to clump together and settle out.**

**Historically, such materials as milk, beef blood, egg white, and gelatin were used.**

**Some "traditional" winemakers use them to this day; however the trade has produced a series of products which eliminate the guesswork and problems (but see also Roy Ellis' article on Reducing Oxidase in oxidized wines" using skim**

**milk powder: Issue #7).**

**One of the most widely used fining agents is "Bentonite", technically montmorillonite clay. This is mixed into a slurry with hot water, allowed to stand overnight to absorb water and swell, then stirred into the wine to be cleared. The slurry develops both positive and negative charges, and neutralizes those of the wine. However, it does result in a fair amount of deposit and consequent wastage of wine.**

**Another is a blend of agar-agar and diatomaceous earth, sold under the brand name of "Sparkaloid". It is simmered in water for half an hour, then stirred into the wine, and is generally effective against most hazes.**

**Still a third are two-liquid system, one of which contains calcium silicate and other gelatin, the other Kieselsohl and Chitin.. The two are added to a wine must and stirred in, and clarification usually begins in 24 hours. Wastage is minimal.**

**For really stubborn hazes, or to achieve the maximum in brilliance in a wine, many experienced winemakers resort to filtering their wines (as, indeed, do many commercial operations). A variety of wine filters are on the market for the amateur, ranging from those in which the pressure is developed by pumping air**

**into a vessel containing the wine and thus forcing it through a set of filter pads, to motor-driven pumps. All have the potential danger of exposing the wine to oxidation, so it is important, when using a filter, to ensure that the wine is protected either by addition of potassium metabisulphite or by using Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid).**

**The price of filters varies from under \$100 to several hundred dollars, while the filter pads cost typically about \$1.50 each (you will need two for a pump-type filter, more for a motor-driven one), and come in pore sizes (i.e. the openings in the filter material) from 7 microns (coarse filter) to 3 microns (fine filter) to less than 1 micron (sterile filter). The finer the pore size, the less wine that can be filtered before it clogs. If a wine is reasonably clear, one might succeed in filtering 20 litres through a fine filter before replacing it, and of course more with a coarse and less with a sterile.**

**The decision to filter is obviously a personal one. Without doubt, it produces a wine of the highest possible brilliance, but at some cost in terms of potential oxidation or contamination. And it can be a lot of work. Fining is less intrusive and can produce almost the same result, although it does require racking to**

**remove the wine from the deposit. As a purist, I would have to argue that the best results - overall, that is - come from letting nature take its course, and nudging it only to the extent required if nature doesn't cooperate. That means using finings if possible, and filtering if necessary, but not necessarily filtering. On the other hand, there is no argument that the prize-winning wines in competitions have almost invariably been filtered. Go figure**

## **FROM THE CLASS COMMITTEE FOR AGM**

**by Gord Barnes**

**You are asked to confirm the actions of the Directors in 1999-2000 to:**

- 1 Expand the 'Multiple Golds' to 'Golds and Silvers' [ different makers.]**
- 2.. That there be a no-point demonstration competition for Mead in 2001.**

**B. Motions for consideration at AGM -**

**MOVED -**



- 1. THAT the competition eligibility restriction on owners of U/Brews and U/Vints be removed.**
- 2. THAT a new varietal class - GEWURZTRAMINER - be created for with 85% or more of the named grape.**
- 3. THAT the OTHER RED and OTHER WHITE Table wines be changed to be 85% or more of the identified Vinifera varieties. This would make these classes Vinifera varietals.**
- 4. THAT two new classes be created in TABLE WINE - RED BLEND and TABLE WINE - WHITE BLEND which will accommodate all tables wines that do not fit in any of the other classes**

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#### **Personal notes from G. Barnes**

**It is my view that we are snipping off the dog's tail, one inch at a time. It is time to examine the philosophy of the competition. That really means the motivations that drive the contestants to enter. Several years ago the AWO members firmly rejected the proposal to reorganize the AWO as a group of individuals, rather**

**than clubs. A strong argument was that the annual competition was viewed as between individuals and not between clubs. Actions of the past decade seem to support that argument. Medals replaced ranking so that four Chardonnays from one club could be 'equal Golds' (getting 100 points for each winemaker and 400 points for the club) rather than the ranking system previously used. (Then the club and one winemaker would each get 100 points.)**

**My previously stated views on wine classes are still strongly held. Define the classes by style rather than arbitrary percentages of component materials. If we have a common understanding of what wine in the Cab Family should be, it would be a short hop to call it "Big Red Table Wines" and eliminate all reference to the components. A similar case goes for the Chardonnays that have at least two distinctive styles - the crisp, steely Chablis style as opposed to the buttery style resulting from MF. We are already at the stage with the other 16 classes. It is only the 8 Red and White Table classes that get hung up on essentially unenforceable rules on component materials.**

**If our goal is the recognition of excellence, it seems to me that we should apply style descriptions to the red and white tables wines. If there were a class for**

**White Spicy Table wines, the Gewurtz folks would have a place to go. If someone else can get a Gold in that class with a Vidal, Muscat, White Currant blend, - blessings on them. It's what's in the glass that counts!!!!**

**A valuable part of the competition is educational feedback. The Commission is making that part better. The Directors need to know what else is your motivation and desires from the competition**

## **CHIEF JUDGE'S COLUMN**

**by Peter Pigeon**

**The AWO Finals held last weekend at Brock were a big change from the way we ran competitions in the past. And the comments from all participants indicate that the change had merit.**

**No wine bottles were seen by judges as glasses of wine were set before them, six or seven per flight. Individual judge's assessments were paramount as wines were judged purely by their individual merit and not by comparison, as in the past**

**for ranked placings. Each panel of five judges assessed medal standings for their part of each class, with no judge tasting all the wines of any class. As before the top and low marks were discarded, averaging the middle three marks to determine the medal.**

**The evaluation forms specified thirteen areas of focus (nose, balance, flavor, harmony, etc) within which to quantify quality with up to eight marks each, up to a possible 100 marks. The form should vastly improve consistency among commission judges, and standardize medal placements, as well as provide the winemaker with more feedback. It also allows us to monitor the performance of all judges, to catch palate fatigue, or declining abilities before too much damage is done. All judges have a great respect for winemakers, and want to know how well they themselves are performing.**

**Joining us for their first wine judging assignment as newly certified judges were recent "new judges training program" candidates, Tonja Lailey, Jim Lloyd, Steve Jones, Alan McClelland, Dan Sullivan and John Tummon. Other trainees participated in judging exercises as a valuable part of their training at the finals.**

**It appears that the event cost us significantly more than we took in from entry**

**fees. However, club judging income and our fee for judging the Fruit Wines of Canada competition should come close to covering the cost. The fruit wine commercial wineries in effect helped sponsor the AWO event to the tune of more than \$2,000, since the commission judges volunteered their time. We will strongly recommend that club competitions should make use of the new evaluation form.**

**Hope you are among the medal winners to be announced at the festival in Ottawa.**

## **FINAL UPDATE ON AWO2000**

**The annual festival is now just a couple of weeks away and there are a few final details to pass on. Of course the May 1st deadline for discounted packages is past, but on the back of this issue you will find a registration form giving the current pricing. There is still time to register, but we would urge you to do it as quickly as possible. The numbers are coming up nicely and it promises to be a thoroughly enjoyable and informative weekend. The most popular seminar, the**

**vertical tasting of both Chardonnay and Cabernet is not only sold out, but over-subscribed. Consequently we have laid on an additional seminar for those who were unable to be registered for the vertical tasting. It is entitled "Who wants to be a sommelier?" and is loosely styled on a popular television game show. Participants will be provided with wines and asked questions about them. The idea is to stop answering before you become uncomfortable with the increasing complexity of the questions. Prizes will be awarded for correct answers. And speaking of prizes, in excess of \$3,000 worth of goods have been donated to enhance your enjoyment of the weekend. Among the big ticket items are a package of Corel Professional Office Software and a hand-made quilted wall hanging. Other items include concentrates, bottle racks, books, magazine subscriptions and gift certificates.**

**It should be noted that the LCBO rules now prohibit the serving of wine at an event such as the festival to anyone who is not a member of the organization.**

**The registration fee qualifies attendees as members and therefore keeps it all legal; however, by the same token, no one who is not registered for the festival will be able to attend any event at which wine is served and consume wine. An example of this, of course, is the Showcase of Club Wines on Friday evening.**

**In addition to the seminar programme and the meals, we will have information on a self-directed walking tour of down-town Ottawa including such famous landmarks as the Parliament Buildings, the National War Memorial, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and several museums.**

**We look forward to seeing you in Ottawa on June 9th - 11th. Drive carefully**