



# AWOnews



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

**winemaking in Ontario**

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*"Wine is not an imperial deity. It is something to drink, something you put in your mouth and sometime later you expel it. But it's bloody marvellous along the way, isn't it?" Len Evans (Australian vintner)*

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

by Paul Dunseath



**Our millennial Festival, in Niagara, is now only a few weeks away. We include here your LAST CHANCE to register, if you have not already done so, along with a list of seminars. Unfortunately, if you are in the category of late registrants, the "early-bird" Registration Fees are no longer available, but it's still a bargain weekend.**

**Werner Roesener joins us with an article on alcohol measurement; Tom Ostler reports on a Pinot Noir tasting, and we include an article on Sherry. Now that**

**Spring is here, it is also time to turn our thoughts to fruit wines, which can be an economical addition to any cellar. Readily-available garden fruits such as rhubarb, gooseberries and elderberries, as well as the berry fruits such as strawberry, can provide an interesting change to grape wines; and soon it will be possible to harvest those dandelions to produce - if properly made - a very attractive Sauternes-type wine (see inside). So crack those old books, and let's spread our wings a bit!**

## **HUMBER VALLEY VINTNERS AND BREWERS JANUARY TASTING**

**by Tom Ostler**

**TOPIC: PINOT NOIR / YEASTS and "THREE GUYS PINOT NOIR"**

**1995 PINOT NOIR – FUNK VINEYARDS PRODUCED BY STONEY RIDGE,**

**MARYNISSEN AND LAKEVIEW**

**The evening began with a yeast trial tasting of 1999 Pinot Noir from the**

**Beamsville Bench produced by Tom Ostler and Ed Hale. The must was split in two: RC-212 yeast was used in one, and Assmannhausen yeast was used in the other. The two batches were blended together (50/50) in November of 2000.**

**General comments / observations noted:**

**RC-212 was quicker to ferment and yielded a deeper colour, light bouquet, more tannin Assmannhausen was extremely slow to ferment (about 10 months altogether), yielded light coloured wine, a very strong cinnamon / spice bouquet that suggests sweetness, lighter tannins. The blend was generally considered to be an improvement on both individual wines and should age well. The wines have just gone into American Oak barrel – Feb. 2001.**

We then tasted the 1995 "Three Guys" Pinot Noir package that the club purchased when first released. In 1995 three commercial winemakers, Ed Gurinskas, Jim Warren and John Marynissen (all former distinguished amateurs and members of the AWO) purchased Pinot Noir grapes from Funk Vineyards on "The Bench". They each processed the wines in their individual premises. At bottling, a blend of the three individual wines was produced and the wines were marketed in a four-pack.

**Lakeview Cellars provided the following information on the harvest conditions:**

**Harvest date: October 7, 1995**

**pH: 3.18**

**Brix: 22.7**

**T.A. 8.5 g/l**

**Production data were available from Lakeview and from Stoney Ridge:**

**Lakeview:**

**20 days maceration; yeast strain – not available**

**Aged 10 months in French and American Oak**

**At bottling:**

**pH: 3.53 T.A. 6.6 g/l Alc. 12.3%**

**Stoney Ridge:**

**2 weeks maceration in stainless; yeast strain – RC-212 and RA-17**

**Aged 10 months in Fr. and Am. oak**

## **Enzyme: Colour X**

**The Stoney Ridge version was preferred by 9 of the 10 tasters. One person preferred the "3 Guys" blend. Overall, there was a consensus that these wines have a few years left in them. They could improve somewhat, but are certainly not trending downward at all.**

## **MEASURING ALCOHOL AND RESIDUAL SOLIDS IN WINE**

**By Werner Roesener**

**This is an easy method, yielding instantaneous results of the alcoholic strength as well as residual solids (sugar) in finished wine. Equipment required: 1. A narrow range hydrometer (SG 980 - 1022), Note 1 2. A refractometer, calibrated for 0 - 32 Brix The method is based on the scientific facts that the gravity of wine is affected by alcohol in one direction (lighter), and by sugar solids in the opposite direction (heavier). The refractometer, however measures the optical bending of light traversing through a wine sample, and both sugar and alcohol produce**

readings in the same direction (increased brix reading for both). The procedure is to take a hydrometer reading, record the SG , then to place a small drop of wine on the refractometer prism and record the resulting brix reading. Those two numbers are then placed into the following formulae to obtain alcohol and solids content. Alcohol (vol %) = (B \* 4.16 - SG + 1000) \* 0.365 Solids (g/L) = (SG - 1000 + ALC \* 1.264) \* 2.52 Where SG is in 3 or 4 digits, ALC is in vol %, B is the brix reading. To expedite the calculation, the formulae can be entered into a programmable calculator (Note 2), or into a PC program in BASIC, C or PASCAL. It should be kept in mind that solids are made up of mostly sugar, but also the acids and other minor solid components in wine. When dealing with sweet wines, pretty near all of the solids can be assumed to be sugar. The measurement accuracy is affected by temperature. It is essential that all involved items are stabilized at the same temperature, preferably in the 15 - 18 degree Celsius range. I have been asked if the method would be suitable for following the fermentation progress. In principle, yes, but the cloudiness of fermenting wine blurs the refractometer reading, making it difficult to obtain meaningful numbers. When glycerol is added to wine, the method is fooled to recognize glycerol as alcohol. Therefore, it is advisable to make measurements prior to

**adding glycerol. The small amount of glycerol produced normally during fermentation is already compensated in the formula.**

**Here is a numerical example:**

**A port wine produces these readings: SG 1022, Brix 18.3**

**Calculation results: 19.8 % alcohol, 118 g/L solids**

**Note 1: A wide range hydrometer can be used, but the accuracy suffers when measuring dry to medium sweet wines. Dessert, sweet aperitif and after dinner wines, on the other hand, frequently read beyond the narrow range hydrometer and give satisfactory results with the wide range instrument. I keep both types on hand for these reasons.**

**Note 2: My recommendation for a programmable calculator is Texas Instrument TI-83PLUS. There are other makes around, but I found that the TI product beats them when it comes to ease of programming.**

## **THE STORY OF SHERRY**

**by Paul Dunseath © 2000, 2001**

**Sherry is the corrupted name in English for a town in Spain, Jerez de la Frontera (Jerez is pronounced "Hereth"), which is located about 20 km inland from the Atlantic Ocean, and about 100 km west of Gibraltar, where the Mediterranean Sea begins. It is located in the province of Andalucia (pronounced "Andaluthia"), and is notable for its soil, which varies between white Albariza soil, which has a high limestone content, and clay. The area planted in the three grapes used in Sherry (or XérPs in French) is about 30,000 acres, with the dominant grape being Palomino, with very small plantings of Pedro Ximenez and Gordo Blanco, also known as Muscat of Alexandria. For its part Palomino has no less than eight different names within the Sherry region itself, the most well-known being Tempranilla. Maximum permissible planting under the Jerez DO (roughly equivalent to the French D.O.C.) is 1660 vines per acre with a maximum yield of 4.5 tons per acre. Harvest occurs at about 20 degrees Brix, or an SG of about 1080.**

**The chalk-rich soil is dug to a depth of up to 3 metres in a pit and then cultivated; the vines draw some moisture from the winter rains but are sustained**

**during the summer through the roots from the subsoil, since the area receives little or no rain during this period and the vines are not irrigated. As one would expect they are trained low on the ground and with a single branch to avoid drying out in the intense sun and during the Levant, the hot wind that dominates the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula. The climate can be very harsh; at Jerez the summer temperature can rise to 300C to 400C, while on the coast, where there are bodegas (storage facilities) at Sanlucar and Puerto de Santa Maria, the temperature is about 100C lower. Most of the rain arrives during the winter, totalling about 25 inches, but from June to October there is virtually none, and as mentioned the vines survive because of the moisture-retention capabilities of the Albariza soil. An infestation of phylloxera in the 1850s resulted in the current vineyards being exclusively grown on American rootstock.**

**Contrary to public perception, since many so-called Sherries are produced in other countries, it is in fact a regional wine, in the same sense that Bordeaux and Château-Neuf-du-Pâpe are correctly regional rather than types of wines; but over the centuries it has come to be thought of in the latter category rather than the former, which is a shame since the imitators never achieve the quality of the**

**real thing. Real Sherry is from the Jerez DO, and is marked as such.**

**It first made its mark in England and entered English literature in the 1500s, when it became known as "Sack", a name that has clung to it just as German wines have often been called "Hock". In those earlier days it was always a sweet wine - a luxury when sugar was neither readily available nor inexpensive - and came from a number of sources around the Mediterranean. Eventually it came to be recognized that the Sack from Jerez - or "Sherris", as it was then spelled (Samuel Pepys is my witness to this!) - was superior to all of the others.**

**The grapes are raisinified for a period from one to several days on straw mats to increase the sugar content, and, historically, when gathered for the fermentation vats, a quantity of the soil found its way into the vat. This soil, rich in calcium carbonate and potassium bitartrate, affected the ultimate acidity of the wine through conversion into calcium tartrate and thence to tartaric acid, thereby increasing the acidity level. Health concerns as early at the turn of the century eventually led to the end of this practice, which up to then had been enhanced by the addition of gypsum, a practice known as "plastering" or "chalking"; now the acidity is usually raised through the simple addition of tartaric acid.**

**Fermentation takes place in cool bodegas cut into the hillside. Even with the lowered temperature, the fermentation is tumultuous and lasts only from 3 days to a week; when it is finished, the new wine is stored in barrels, or "butts", in a "criadera", or nursery, and watched carefully throughout the winter.**

**There is a myth that holds that by chance some butts develop a growth of "Flor", a film yeast also called in Spain "Flor del Vino" (not to be confused with the unwelcome "Flowers of Wine" in English), which causes a number of changes in the young wine. Actually, virtually any Sherry will produce a Flor growth, unless the alcohol level is too high, since the cellars are infested with it. Flor growth occurs twice during the year in Spring and Fall when the effects of the hot summer and the cool winter are not felt.**

**Flor, or in correct terms *Saccharomyces bayanus*, *S Capensis*, and *S. Fermentati*, are strains of yeast which ferment sugar anaerobically, but when the sugar is consumed are able to convert to aerobic fermentation in the presence of air and act on alcohol. They are antioxidants, so that wines which develop the Flor are pale, delicate, and with a distinctive nutty taste. The Flor forms a sort of white curds on the surface, and produce acetaldehydes, the main component of the**

**Sherry characteristic bouquet and flavour (typically in the range of 200ppm), as well as acetals, polymerized acetaldehyde resins, esters and higher alcohols. Little of the original fruit flavour is left. The alcohol level is critical, since in a wine of less than about 14% alcohol, vinegar will be produced, while above 16% the Flor is deactivated. Consequently the Sherry producers fortify the wines intended to become Flor Sherries to about 15% alcohol, while the non-Flors are fortified above 16%. The Flor yeast is heat sensitive and is inclined to expire after doing its act on a butt; to prevent this, and keep the Flor alive (and to achieve a uniform blending process), the Solera system has been created.**

**The Solera consists of from 3 to as many as 14 sets of barrels. Conceptually, these are usually portrayed in a series of rows, one above the other, but physically this is often not the case and one set, or "criadera", may even be in a separate bodega from others. The first criadera contains the oldest wine, with those in the second, third and other criaderas containing progressively younger wines. Each year up to one third of the wine in the first criadera is bottled, with each barrel in that set giving up that amount. These barrels are replenished from the second criadera.. They in turn are replenished, in a similar manner, from the third criadera, and so on. The final criadera in turn is replenished with new wine. The**

**effect is a total mixing of the wine as it ages but with some wine remaining from earlier batches, so that every bottle of wine drawn off from the bottom row of a 200 year old Solera contains some small amount of the original, 200-year-old, wine that went into its founding! That, of course, is why there is no such thing as a "Vintage Sherry", i.e. a wine from a single year's production.**

**Sherries fall into a number of categories. The very palest and driest are the Fino Sherries, produced by the Flor method and intended to be served as a pre-dinner aperitif. In terms of dryness, these are in order Manzanilla (which is claimed to have a slightly salty taste, which is attributed to the fact that Manzanillas are matured in bodegas at Sanlucar de Barremeda, on the Atlantic coast), Fino, and Amontillado (which is distinguished by a nutty taste). Amontillados were immortalized in Edgar Allan Poe's novel "The Cask of Amontillado". "Dry Sack" is an example of a popular Amontillado.**

**The non-Flor Sherries are the Olorosos, also dry but darker in colour. These are grown largely on clay soil and increase in alcohol level as they age in barrel. Typically Olorosos range from 20% to as much as 24% alcohol. While Flor sherries are virtually exclusively made from free-run juice, Olorosos often also**

**contain press juice. Other varieties one will experience are the Cream sherries, which are Olorosos to which sweet wine (usually made from sun-dried PX grapes) and colourizer wine have been blended. You may also occasionally encounter Rayas, which are dark and harsh precursors of Olorosos. A final, but uncommon, variety is Palo Cortado, which combines the intensity of a fine Oloroso with the fragrance and delicacy of a Fino.**

**The major shippers of Sherry have been around since the 1800s, and include Pedro Domecq, Duff Gordon, Gonzalez Byass, Sandeman, Williams and Humbert, and Harvey. You will notice from the foregoing a significant number of British names, which have been associated with the Sherry trade since Sir Francis Drake attacked Cadiz during one of the many wars between Spain and England and seized about 1 million litres of Sherry, so setting the taste in England for this unique wine for centuries to come.**

**For judging purposes remember that the comment "too dark for a Sherry" is an indication of ignorance. While the Flor Sherries are generally light in colour, the Olorosos are darker, ranging in colour to dark brown, and the Creams even more so, although clearly a Cream Sherry would be out of class in the Dry**

**Aperitif-Sherry category. A dark, dry Oloroso would, however, be fully acceptable in this class.**

**The LCBO sells the following classic Sherrys, among others: Gonzalez Byass Tio Pepe Fino (\$15.25); Emu Fino (Australian) (\$7.75); Burdon Manzanilla (\$ 9.15); Williams and Humbert Dry Sack (Amontillado) (\$11.45); Harvey's Bristol Cream (sweet Oloroso) (\$12.90) (Sale price)**

**Sources:**

**"The Oxford Companion to Wine" by Jancis Robinson**

**"Technology of Winemaking" by Amerine, Berg and Cruess**

**"Technology in the Art of Winemaking" by Drs. Cyril Duitschaeffer and Carole Buteau**

**"Modern Encyclopaedia of Wine" by Hugh Johnson**

**"Encyclopédie des vins et des alcools" par Alexis Lichine**

## **DANDELION WINE**

**This recipe produces one gallon of a white wine with a suggestion of Sauternes to it, It can be scaled up to larger quantities, depending on your diligence in gathering the petals, but is presented here in the basic 1-gallon form.**

**8 cups of dandelion petals (petals only; do not use whole heads or stalks)**

**3 pounds sugar**

**1 pound light raisins, chopped**

**4 teaspoons Acid Blend for white wine**

**1 teaspoon yeast energizer**

**¼ teaspoon potassium metabisulphite**

**¼ teaspoon tannin**

**1 gallon hot water**

**EC 1118 yeast**

**Place all ingredients except the yeast in a primary fermenter and pour the gallon**

**of hot water over them. Stir to dissolve the sugar. When cool, add the yeast.**

**Ferment for 3 days then strain off into a closed fermenter fitted with an airlock,**

**leaving petals and raisin pulp behind. First racking will likely be in 3 weeks,**

**with second when the wine has thrown a deposit and is beginning to clear (about**

**3 months). When clear and stable, fine if desired, add ¼ teaspoon ascorbic acid,**

**and bottle. The wine may be slightly sweetened to about 1% residual sugar if**

**stabilizer is also added.**

## **COMPETITION CLASS CHANGES**

**by Gordon Barnes**

**When the Red and White table classes expanded, each included two varietals (or**

**families), a class for Other Viniferas and a class for Hybrids. A few years ago the**

**"Other" classes were amended to allow up to 15% of EACH of the other three**

**classes. This produced some confusion and a cry from some of the winemakers**

**that many good and interesting wines had been excluded.**

**At the 2000 AGM a motion was passed to rectify this situation. The "Other"**

**classes went back to being "Other Viniferas" with only a total of 15% additions.**

**Plus new classes were created for "Red Blend" and "White Blend". Therefore**

**any table wine which does not fit in one of the first four classes, can compete in**

**the "Blend" class. Now no one will be left out.**

**Also note that we will be judging Meads for the first time. Peter Bennell points out that most meads take several years to properly mellow and develop. That being the case, it will be a few years before we can properly assess the interest and quality of our novice efforts in this class.**

## **AND SPEAKING OF MEAD...**

**Traditionally, Mead was believed to have certain mystical properties, among them that of increasing fertility. In olden days it was the practice for newlyweds to drink mead for the first 28 days of their marriage (hence the term "honeymoon") for this purpose. Neighbors of ours, who considered themselves past child-bearing age and drank some mead at our Christmas party a number of years ago were reluctant evidence that the myth may have some validity.**

**Mead is a very slow fermenter, taking up to 9 months to finish, and needs a year or more of aging after that to smooth out the rough edges. Here is a recipe for 1 gallon (multiply upwards as needed) that works in more ways than one; use at your own risk!**

**3½ pounds clover honey**

**2 tsp reductive acid blend (or tartaric)**

**a pinch of powdered ginger**

**¼ tsp tannin**

**2 tsp nutrient**

**wine yeast (EC 1118 recommended)**

**Dissolve the honey in hot water and make up to 1 gallon. Add other ingredients and yeast when sufficiently cool. Rack first when below SG 1000. Fine with Bentonite after 3 months if it is slow to clear. When clear, add stabilizer, and (optionally) ¼ teaspoon of Ascorbic Acid. Add sugar to bring the SG up to about 1.005, or to your taste; bottle when clear and stable.**