



AWOnews



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A forum for the exchange of news and opinions on home

winemaking in Ontario

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Editorial Board

Editor/Publisher: Paul Dunseath

Editorial Assistant: Maureen Thatcher

Executive members: Glenn Keown and Gordon Barnes

Address: AWOnews

1056 Harkness Avenue

Ottawa, Ontario K1V 6P1

(613) 523-6320

e-mail: dunseath@cyberus.ca

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AWO Executive 2001/2002

President: Glenn Keown 905-271-4337

Past President: Dan Ostler 905-427-7455

Treasurer: David Burns 416-251-0307

Director, Awards: Gerry den Hartogh 519-633-0483

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Education Committee: Elia Gallo 905-891-3617

Chairman, Judges' Commission: vacant

Chief Steward: Gary Maldaver 416-224-0176

Judging Coordinator: Ellen Kareckas 905-891-2504

Director: Gordon Barnes 905-727-2623

Archivist/AWC rep: Dan Ostler 905-427-7455

Festival 2002: Pat McPhail

AWOnews: Paul Dunseath 613-523-6320

The Late Winter Edition

"Come, gentle Spring! Ethereal mildness, come". James Thomson

"The Seasons: Spring"

IN THIS ISSUE:

by Paul Dunseath



Well, maybe we are pushing it a bit, but in a few short

weeks the last of winter will be gone, if it isn't already in your neighborhood.

Our focus shifts, as the seasons change, to the busy Spring period of wine

judging and the annual Festival, this year as you know in Hamilton.

Information on the upcoming Festival will be found inside, and as usual we

encourage you to register as early as possible, both to ensure that you are able

to have your selection of seminars, and also to assist the hard-working organizers

to estimate the number of people attending and make sure that the quantity of

meals, wine etc. is sufficient.

We also welcome a new contributor, Blake Galloway ("The Frugal Winemaker"), who offers his views on how to make good wine, and save money as well! We also include the timely views of our President. Glenn Keown, and - at left - a revised list of Directors of AWO. On with the show!

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

This issue, number 24, marks six years of publishing AWOnews. For each issue a small number of copies are printed beyond the actual number required for the mailing labels provided by Gord Barnes based on the membership records. This is to cater to last-minute additions to the mailing, or for unforeseen requirements.

In addition, each issue a number of copies are returned by the post office, generally marked "moved / address unknown". If we are unable to redirect them they end up in the "morgue" with the excess copies from previous issues. As a result we have a number of back copies (going back to issue #1), and when the needs of the filing and historical system have been met, these become "excess to

requirements".

In order to free up filing space, and to avoid simply putting them in the recycling box, we are offering these at little more than the cost of mailing, as follows:

Any single issue or multiple issues: \$1.00 each

One copy of all available back issues: \$7.00

Both prices include postage, handling and taxes

This offer is on a "first come, first served" basis, while supplies last.

Please note that some particular back issues are in short supply, and it may not be possible to satisfy all requests. In addition we cannot guarantee that the "all available back issues" offer will necessarily include every issue from no. 1 on.

To order, identify which issue(s) you wish to receive and send an e-mail to AWOnews (dunseath@cyberus.ca) with this information; we will notify you if it (they) are available; on receipt of confirmation send a cheque in the appropriate amount as above payable to "AWOnews" to the address at left, and be sure to include your full mailing address. On receipt of your payment we will send you

the copies which were confirmed to you.

As a reminder, and to avoid having your copy also end up in the morgue rather than in your mailbox, please send address corrections to Gord Barnes (to repeat, the mailing list is NOT maintained here at AWOnews). If you are not on e-mail distribution and would like to be, or if your e-mail address changes, please notify us at the above e-mail address, and be sure to include your name and club affiliation, not just the e-mail address as the e-mail address list is sorted by last name and cross-referenced in the mailing list by club. If you are not sure if you are on the e-mail mailing list, the answer is that if you received this in print form, you are not.

ANOTHER APPROACH TO MAKING PORT

by "The Frugal Winemaker"

Blake Galloway ©

Many of us like to save money so we don't shop around trying to find fresh

grapes to make Port. Plus if you are really cheap, this recipe of "adding sugar in stages" saves adding as much expensive brandy.

Ingredients:

1 can or jug (4.7 l) Spanish Red Concentrate

water to 4 gallons (18.9 l) warm to hot

1 packet (150 g) dried elderberries

57 g (2 oz) dried banana flakes

1 to 4 tsp acid blend

½ tsp nutrient

½ tsp pectic enzyme powder

¼ tsp potassium metabisulphite

3 ½ lbs sugar

EC 1118 yeast

resulting SG 1.090

3 lbs (6 cups) of additional sugar to be added in stages later

Procedure:

Mix all ingredients except yeast in a plastic pail. Add yeast the next day. Stir elderberries under once a day. After 1 week, strain and transfer to a 23 l carboy.

After a further week, add 2 cups (1 lb) of sugar. Continue adding the rest of the sugar every 2 weeks. Toward the end cut it down to ¼ lb (half a cup) every week.

Rack every 3 months for a year and on the last racking add ¼ tsp potassium metabisulphite.

Use the Pearson Square to obtain the right alcohol level (22%) (editor's note: see issue 19 December 2000). As a rough guide however about one 750 ml bottle of brandy is required per gallon.

The LCBO sells its least expensive 40% alcohol brandy at the same price no matter where it's from; France, Canada, South Africa etc. If you want to be more authentic use Spanish, although I've found the Australian gives better flavour: they use Muscat Gordo. Recently I've used Kitling Ridge 1.1 litre bottles because before Christmas they attach a free 1 oz bottle of their Brandy -

Ice Wine blend (I told you that I was cheap!)

I'm called he "Frugal Winemaker" because at one of our summer pool party wine club meetings one of our female partners asked me what "frugal" means. I told her it mean "to save". Later she was struggling, or really just playing, in the water and yelled "frugal me, frugal me".

So I frugalled her and my case comes up next month.

-B.G.

BALANCE, BODY AND TASTE

By Paul Dunseath © 1999, 2002

No matter how technically superior a wine may be in terms of alcohol, acid, sugar and tannin, it is of little use if it doesn't have an acceptable taste as well, so we should spend some time considering how to convert that often subjective consideration into an objective factor for the wines which we will be making.

We usually think of flavour as a simple, singular thing. We speak, for example,

of vanilla flavour, or the flavour of strawberries. There are many foods, however, which have more than one flavour, and we talk therefore about the taste of curried chicken (with the myriad flavours of the particular curry blend, chicken, apples, raisins, and other ingredients), the taste of honey, of single malt Scotch, and of course of wine. If flavour is the soloist, taste is the choir, and it is the choir about which we will speak.

Continuing with the musical analogy, our wines should feature a good soloist backed by a strong accompaniment. Just as few singers sound their best without some form of backing, so few, if any, wines are able to stand on the basis of a single flavour. The great wines of Bordeaux, for example, most of which have a high percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, are usually described as spicy, herby and tannic, with scents and flavours variously described as that of cigar boxes, chocolate, fresh tobacco, cedar, and dry leaves! It is this depth and complexity of flavours that ultimately separates the finest Bordeaux from all of their imitators.

Yet, as anyone with a home music system (is there anyone who doesn't?) will know, there is more to it than that. Simply having a good soloist and good

backing does not make for good listening if the system isn't functioning properly and if, as a result, instead of being surrounded by sound we have everything coming out of one speaker; or if the "mono" button has been pushed, and the sound is flat and lifeless. It's important that the sound be properly balanced for us to experience maximum enjoyment.

So it is with wine. Experts tell us that all flavours are composed of four elements: sweet, sour, bitter and salty. This, then, is where it all comes together, for it is in the balance of these elements that we can begin to provide the proper backing to our soloist - flavour. And, without that proper backing, no amount of flavour can stand by itself without appearing one-dimensional and incomplete. Moreover the backing must continue throughout the tasting experience: greeting us with the first sip, supporting and complementing the flavour through the middle, then fading out slowly in the aftertaste. Many a promising wine is spoiled because of what tasters call "the hole in the middle", a point after the initial "rush" or "attack" of taste sensation when the flavour suddenly drops out, with only a weak reappearance in the aftertaste.

The featured soloist, flavour, is derived primarily from the fruit used in the

wine, and in part from the strain of yeast used, the acid/tannin/sugar balance, and the method by which the wine was made. It is important that the yeast used be compatible with the type of wine being made, and that the production method is appropriate for the fruit and the intended end result.

When using fresh fruit (other than grapes), for example, prolonged fermentation on the pulp will produce a greater depth of flavour, but can also cause coarseness. Elderflowers or Rose petals, frequently added to "country" wines to improve bouquet, will instead result in a stale flavour if left in the wine much more than 24 hours. Heating fruit pulp improves juice extraction but may induce a flat, "cooked" taste, while allowing air to enter the wine will destroy the freshness of the wine and ultimately lead to a sherry-like taste. Finally, the length of skin contact in a fresh red grape wine directly affects the colour, body, maturation time and longevity of the finished product, as well as the astringency.

As the wine matures, whether in cask, carboy or bottle, other effects come into play. Products called "esters" are formed as a result of reactions between the alcohol and the several acids present in the wine. These are aromatic and add to

the overall flavour profile. In addition, the long-chain tannin molecules break down into milder-tasting short-chain molecules and, if the wine has been put into a barrel, flavours from the barrel itself are introduced. As well, tannins and other polyphenols become progressively more insoluble over time, and settle out, causing even more softening of flavour (recently a friend of ours held a tasting featuring a 1923 Château Montrose, a 1925 Château Lafite Rothschild, and a 1929 Côte de Beaune; all three had thrown so much tannin that the inside of the bottles were coated from the bottoms to the corks; when the bottles were empty, they still appeared to be full). It is the result of these several changes that brings into being the "backing group", the underlying complexity that supports and enhances the wine's flavour, and it is for this reason that wines should be allowed adequate time to mature.

How will you know when that time has been reached? About the only way is to taste your better wines periodically - say every six months - until they appear to be at optimum drinkability (I know, I know; it's a dirty job, but someone has to do it).

Body, for its part, is the sense of fullness which a wine imparts. It is a complex

thing, depending on fruit content, alcohol level, unfermented solutes such as proteins and other buffering agents, depth of flavour, and residual sugar, and is also to some extent subjective; yet it is of considerable import in the enjoyment of wine.

Our reflections on music serve to illustrate the concept. Both Shania Twain, with a small backing group, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, are "just right" for the music which has become their respective trademarks. Yet, they are very different. Is it volume? Yes and no. A CD of each can be played back at the same volume, but the choir has greater "body". A Dry Madeira and a Niersteiner differ somewhat in sweetness and in flavour, but even more so do they differ in body, although each is "just right" for its own use.

The term "body" probably originated in the Middle Ages when some winemakers literally added raw meat to their fermenting wines to increase its heaviness. This is not a practise that we recommend, but attention to the body of a wine is still of importance to the amateur. Even if flavour, acidity, tannin and alcohol level are correct for the intended type of wine, the result can still be substantially different from commercial wine if the body is not right.

In a fresh grape wine one means of increasing body is to increase the period of skin contact during fermentation. Consequently, most white grape wines, having no skin contact period, are light in body; those with limited skin contact, such as California-style Chardonnays, have greater body; and red wines have still more, with those undergoing lengthy pulp fermentation having the most.

Wines made from other fruit frequently require amelioration to increase the body beyond that contributed by the original fruit alone. In particular, most wines produced from extracted fruit juices may be overly light in body without adjustment.

Fortunately the solution is fairly simple. What is needed is something high in protein or non-fermentable substances, but with either little flavour, or a flavour which is complementary to that of the wine. The most common adjuncts in current use are glucose chips (often found in recipes for heavy beers, for instance), and bananas, either fresh or dried.

When using fresh bananas (the ones turning black, and sold with the annotation "price reduced to clear" at the local supermarket are ideal), simply slice them and add to a fermenting must. Fifty grams of bananas per litre of wine (one half

pound per gallon) is about right to improve the body of a table wine from light to medium. The bananas can be strained out in one to two weeks, by which time they should be spongy and soft. Alternatively, if the wine is particularly light in body (as, for example, a Rhubarb wine tends to be), the bananas can be pulped in a blender and left in until the first racking, at which time they will be left behind with the other fruit pulp. This results in a greater extraction of flavour, and is also suitable in the production of Sherries and Ports.

Bananas will also make a small contribution to the sugar content, which should be taken into account in calculating total S.G. drop; one pound of ripe bananas contains about two ounces of sugar (or 125 grams of sugar per kilogram of bananas).

THE CHEAP CHOICE

by "The Frugal Winemaker"

Blake Galloway ©

The best source of cheap winemaking is to buy canned apple juice. Wait until it's on sale in the fall and buy Bright's or Fairlee (48 oz) or Rougemont etc for 99¢ or less. In October 2000 it was 87¢! Now the trick: "Not from Concentrate". Fresh juice is much better. They do make it in the Spring when they bring the apples out of storage and it's supposed to be better (no soft spots, bruises or windfalls), but it's seldom on sale.

You may need a minimum of 14 to 20 cans, depending on your carboy, so insist that the supermarket provide a carry-out to your car, and take it to your cellar 2 or 3 cans at a time (cheap and lazy!).

Ingredients for 19 litres:

13 cans, 48oz, Allen's Apple Juice

2 oz realemone reconstituted lemon juice or 4 tsp Acid Blend.

½ tsp nutrient

1 tsp Grape Tannin or 1 cup cold tea

¼ tsp Pectic Enzyme

2 kg (1 bag) sugar

1 packet EC 1116 yeast

Starting SG: 1.090

Add the yeast to the other ingredients the same day since they are all at room temperature. It ferments slower than grape so don't rack until ferment is almost over (about one month). Rack every three or four months and top up from the extra cans you saved. Keep it well topped up to prevent darkening. Don't bother with Ascorbic Acid (this is a cheap wine) but you could use Potassium Metabisulphite ($\frac{1}{4}$ tsp) when syphoning.

Bottle after 1 year using the least expensive corks. You're not going to keep this around more than 2 years. Alternatively use screw cap bottles or 1.5 l bottles.

Now the cost:

Juice @ 99¢ x 14: \$13.86

Sugar \$ 1.59

Corks \$ 5.20

Labour priceless

Total \$20.65

Yield: 26 bottles (750 ml) which means 80¢ each or 60¢ if you used screw caps. I didn't count the chemicals because you have them anyway. SIXTY CENTS!

Optional: I've had great success with oak (7 oz Nevers by volume); Cyser (replace half of the sugar with Bulkbarn honey); and sparkling it.

I'll leave the sparkling option for another time as it may be the Convention Sunday Brunch wine but not made by my "frugal" method which leaves cloudy sediment and only consists of adding ½ tsp of sugar per bottle after first racking and crown capping (the right bottles are essential).

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Glenn Keown

Here we are at the end of January 2002, and luckily for most of us in the Golden Horseshoe the ground surface has little if any snow showing. This type of

weather gets one starting to think about the warmer weather of Spring, so we can get outside and enjoy fresh air.

The Festival for 2002, "Grape Expectations" is now fast approaching. The festival's Chairman, Pat McPhail, attended the most recent Directors' meeting and presented the agenda for the weekend of June 7-8-9th. We were impressed with the program The Hamilton Wine Circle and The Other Hamilton Wine Club have put together. When you read the list of seminars, with all the interesting speakers, I am sure you will want to fill out your registration form (see last page of this issue) and get it in as quickly as possible.

The Club judging will be getting underway shortly. I hope all the wines you submit at the club level, do well. It will be gratifying to see the smiling faces as you receive your medals for all the hard work you have put into your winemaking.

We now have a group of dedicated people who are willing and able to handle the important job of looking after the Ontario judging. Special thanks to Gary Maldaver for stepping forward to help out with the Chief Steward's functions.

By now everyone should have received their copies of the Winemaker magazine. I

would be interested in any feedback you have.

For those who are interested, we now have available AWO lapel pins, which will sell for \$5.00. They will be on sale at the June Festival.

We are still looking for articles to be published in the newsletter, so if you have anything worth while, please submit them to our Editor, Paul Dunseath.

Final issue, we are still looking for club/s to host the 2003 Festival, any takers?

Time is getting short to get this one off the ground.

Glenn L Keown

President.