



AWOnews



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A forum for the exchange of news and opinions on home

winemaking in Ontario

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The 2002 Winter Edition

"The discovery of a new vineyard does more for the happiness of mankind than the discovery of a new star." Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (d. 1826)"

IN THIS ISSUE:

by Paul Dunseath



We say a sad farewell to an old friend. On a happier note, Blake Galloway, reborn with a new "nom de plume", gives a number of suggestions on value-for-money with Bulgarian reds. Blake also warns that concentrating alcohol by freezing ("freeze fractionating") is illegal, so don't do it! Are you going to be organizing a Festival? Here are some hints on easing the process. The role of lees in diacetyl formation; a mild rant on "spurious accuracy"; congratulations to 2002's "Winetaster of the Year"; the wisdom of our President; it's all inside. Put up your feet, fill the glass of cheer, and enjoy!

IN MEMORIAM: "BUZZ" ARTHURS Members will

be aware that one of the stalwarts of our hobby, "Buzz" Arthurs, one of the founders (with Stanley Anderson) of Wine.Art, died in July after a brief illness.

Buzz (and Fran) were widely admired. Buzz was a true gentleman, who embodied the best principles of serving the public. He knew his clients, who quickly became friends, and what is more trusted them. If some betrayed that trust it did not stop him from believing that the average person is good, and will respect someone else who shows the same qualities. Those who knew him will miss his mischievous sense of humour, his warmth, his integrity, and his friendship.

I think we all need to reflect that, had it not been for Buzz, and Stanley Anderson before him, there would be NO amateur winemaking hobby, of the scale and quality we now enjoy. Buzz was a true pioneer: in quality, reliability, and knowledgeable advice. It might do well for those who dismiss the high-quality products that Buzz pioneered to reflect that, if they have seen

farther, it was because they were carried on the shoulders of giants.

Our deep condolences at this time to John, Mike and Linda.

DEPARTMENT OF SPURIOUS ACCURACY

A short time ago we received a newsletter from a sister organization (whose name is not revealed, to protect the guilty) in which the points awarded for First, Second, Third and Fourth were as follows: 5, 2.9, 1.682, and .9756. This obviously derives from the "Curnow rule of 58", which both AWO and EOAWC have used in order to determine final medal placing from differing judges' placements -- see "The Medal Concept" in issue #4 and Larry Paterson's excellent AWC website at <http://www.littlefatwino.com/awc.html>. However those scores were out of 100 and rounded to whole numbers to make it workable. But 1.682??

We were reminded of this when thumbing through a British book, "Winemaking with Elderberries", in which the author provides a large number of recipes for elderberry wine, and "helpfully" provides the metric equivalent

for the weights of several of the (many) ingredients included. In these, spurious accuracy overtakes common sense. Recipe 57, for example, includes "453 g Elderberries", "907 g Rhubarb" and "199 ml white grape concentrate", the equivalent respectively of 1 lb, 2 lbs and 7 oz. This suggests that if someone overdid it, and used 200 ml of concentrate, or underdid and used only 450 g of Elderberries or 900 g of rhubarb, the recipe would be ruined.

Given that other amounts are in half teaspoonsful, and teaspoon measures are hardly in the 1 part in 200 laboratory accuracy, such pedantry is not only foolish but unhelpful. An ounce or two of elderberries per gallon more or less for example is not going to have an appreciable affect on the quality of the wine, and how one would measure down to, and correct for, quantities as low as 3 grams is a mystery.

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE

Several years ago George Gibson, writing in the Nanaimo Winemakers Newsletter (and, no, it was not the source of the tortured score mathematics in

the previous article), noted as follows:

"Since wine lees contain a yeast enzyme that breaks down the diacetyl formed during malolactic conversion, if you want diacetyl's buttery character carry out ML off the lees. If you don't want the buttery character carry out the ML on the lees."

WINETASTER OF THE YEAR

by Tom Ostler

Congratulations to Linda Pearson of the Cellar Dwellers in Toronto for winning the Wine Taster of the Year competition at this year's festival in Hamilton.

Linda wins a plaque and a free pail of Riesling juice from Eastman Vineyards.

But we know that the real satisfaction will come from telling her partner David what is wrong with his wines. Linda scored a very impressive 90% on a difficult, but fair (I think), test.

I would like to thank Sheila Lauzon and Gary Maldaver, as well as volunteers

from the host clubs who helped me administer the test. We only had one hour to complete some fairly challenging wine evaluations..

This was the first time the Judges' Commission has run this competition in a few years and I am happy to report that there are a number of promising palates out there that we will be contacting when we start up another round of judge training.

BULGARIAN REDS

by "The Thrifty Winemaker"

Blake Galloway ©

(Editor's note: Blake has changed his 'nom de plume' after learning that Richard Best has written a book in which he calls himself "The Frugal Oenologist". To quote Blake "he has, I think, prior claim". We therefore say goodbye to "The Frugal Winemaker" and welcome "The Thrifty Winemaker" in his stead).

Have you found the price of non-phylloxera South American wines "edging

up"? Have your favourite Chilean Cabs climbed higher and higher? Are the Chilean Merlots too now out of reach?

The Hamilton Wine Circle and the Other Hamilton Wine Circle, your hosts at the recent 2002 Grape Expectations Convention, have searched and tasted the continents of the world, for you, looking for bargain reds and have discovered Bulgaria which claims to have originated viniculture.

Before World War II the Tsar (Czar) made significant steps to drag the primitive wine industry up to a co-op type level but the big step in Bulgaria came when they had a Stalinist dictator. Amazingly Pepsico couldn't get their profits out of the country and brought in experts from UC Davis who completely modernized the wineries and surprisingly the vineyards too. They eliminated poor native varieties except for some good ones such as Melnick, Gamza, Mavrud, etc., and planted lots of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir etc.

Then along came Gorbachev who eliminated Bulgarian exports in his campaign to reduce alcoholism, and Bulgaria, in disarray, is trying to crack the North American market by sending us their best - cheaply.

Here are the results of our T&C ("Taste and Comment", our blind monthly

testing). In descending order:

Domaine Boyar (Cabernet Sauvignon) 1998 13% \$6.45 (a bargain).

Sofay Thrace Plain (oaked Merlot) 1997 12% \$6.95

Domaine Rousse (north region Merlot) 1999 12% \$6.80

Suchindol (Cabernet Sauvignon) 1998 12% \$7.95

Lyaskovets (Merlot) 1996 11.5% \$6.80

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Glenn Keown

Now is the time for everyone to sit back and relax, the harvest is over for another year. From all reports it seems that the harvest of 2002 was a good one. With that being said, we will be looking forward to judging some excellent wines in the next couple of years.

There is not much to report at this time. The Executive is still looking at plans

for next June's Annual meeting. When the plans are finalized, the membership will be advised.

The dues for next year are still coming in. Please look after this task as soon as possible, as we do not want anyone to miss out on the WineMaker issues as well as AWOnews.

As the festive season is fast approaching, I would remind everyone to act responsibly at this time of year.

On behalf of the Executive, I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR FESTIVAL WORK FOR LESS WORK!

By Paul Dunseath ©

This article is presented in response to suggestions made at the Hamilton Festival by potential future organizers that it would be useful to have a brief summary of

what is involved in organizing an AWO Festival. It is based on experience in organizing a number and also on the good ideas several clubs have come up with which has made each Festival seem to run smoother than the last, and is an updated (and improved) version of one first published here in November 1997.

Here we go:

Start early

Eighteen months before the Festival is not an unreasonable time to start your planning. This enables the organizers to confirm the accommodation and site details, provide advance information at the Festival immediately prior to your own when everyone is in a good mood about the weekend they have just enjoyed, leaves room for last minute adjustments, provides lots of time to develop a logo and theme and get your registration forms and publicity published in AWOnews and on Winetalk, and provides time to ferment the wines for the meals, if this is your intention. Remember that publicity - getting news on the event out to those who are considering attending - can make or break the event.

Determine your target

Most Festivals are not viable with only local participation (and if they are, would

be better off as Regional shows, since AWO is intended to be a Province-wide organization).

This means recognizing two factors:

There MUST be a "draw" on Friday evening to convince people from out-of-town that it is worth their while to take half a day, or a day, of vacation leave from work to attend. If they do not attend on Friday, they are unlikely to attend on Saturday either since, for many people, a 9 am start on Saturday means either arriving Friday or leaving home at 4 am to get to the first event. If you want people from out-of-town to come, there MUST be a Friday evening event which is informal, enjoyable, and inexpensive -- such as the Showcase of Club Wines, or a BBQ if your facilities permit.

Remember that people have to drive home after the event. If at all possible, have the festivities terminate no later than about 1:30 on Sunday, to allow time to check out of hotel or lodgings, load the car, and get on the road (kudos to the organizers who have been doing this)

Determine, realistically, how many people are likely to attend

Call the organizers of the last three or four Festivals to determine the number of people who attended. Be a pessimist: base your cost and revenue projections on the lowest number (recent Festivals have ranged from 125 to 160 or more attendees)

Reach an agreement with AWO on the sharing of profits and losses

This is a two-way street, and should be fair in both directions. Both AWO and the host clubs should share mutually in any profit or loss, and this percentage can vary from a to $\frac{1}{2}$ to b, either way. AWO is unlikely to agree to accepting a high risk if you do not have a good business plan, and by the same token if the Festival loses money, the host clubs will have to pony up the difference, based on the agreed share. Be sure that you have agreement among the host clubs for the financial liability (but don't lose too much sleep; most -- indeed almost all -- Festivals are financially successful, to the benefit of both AWO and the host clubs).

Set a budget

and enforce it.

There are three categories of cost: fixed, which are independent of the number of people attending (such as printing, postage, long distance calls, honoraria for speakers, hall rental, hospitality, and so on); partially variable, such as rental of busses for tours, souvenir glasses, etc.; and variable, which depend on the number of attendees (such as meals). Don't underestimate these costs; and without dampening the enthusiasm of committee members with new ideas (although be aware that many "new" ideas have been tried in the past and didn't work), ensure that anything which will involve a cost to the Festival is thoroughly justified by realistic income projections. The higher the cost of a proposed optional program, the lower the likelihood that people will choose to attend it. Set your registration fee at a level which will recoup all fixed costs, and try to ensure that all optional events such as tours and meals have a small profit factor built in, after including all taxes and service.

Develop a spreadsheet

to track costs of the Festival (a program such as Excel or Quattro Pro works just fine for this); ensure that the bottom line is positive! Whenever an enthusiastic member of your planning committee proposes a potentially very expensive event

(such as flying someone in from California as a keynote speaker -- hey, from experience, I can tell you it has been mooted at least once!), ask the fundamental question, "how will we pay for it?"

No answer, or one such as "increase the Registration fee", are sure indications of good intentions but bad planning.

Don't be shy

about asking organizers of previous Festivals for help.

Many organizers have developed templates for badges, the Festival booklet, tracking Registrations, letters to corporate donors etc; or can recommend inexpensive commercial programs for bottle labels and the like. A couple of computer disks from a previous Festival can really cut down on "reinventing the wheel".

Don't assume

that everyone who attends is an analogue of people in your own club.

Club membership generally ranges, in our experience, from the dedicated, single-minded hobbyist for whom cost is no object, to others who are, shall we

say, very cost-conscious and make wine because it is less expensive than buying it. Your Festival MUST cater to both, or you will lose a significant number of potential attendees. This means ensuring that the base price is reasonably low and represents good value (for accommodation, meals and tours), with an optional up-scale event. Hint: if you can't afford both, drop the up-scale event; it will have the smallest attendance of any (typically, no matter what hype you receive from the persons favouring it, an event with a cost of \$25 or more will likely draw in fewer than 25 - 50 people, including those from your own metropolitan area!)

If it ain't broke, don't fix it

However, if you've got an idea that doesn't fit with the classic, don't be afraid to try it out.

The Awards Brunch was originated in Ottawa in 1980 to allow people to get on the road for home at a reasonable hour, and has been used ever since. The concept of having Bronze medals awarded Saturday night instead of Sunday morning in order to conclude the Sunday event in a timely manner, and which Toronto pioneered, is a great idea. The concept, originating with the 2000

Festival, of blank seating plans for meals is also a winner.

Develop an RFP

("Request for Proposal") and have your local Tourism and Convention authorities circulate it to hotels and campuses in your area.

Do this at least a year in advance of the event; make sure that ALL costs are included, such as PST, GST and Service charges.

Keep detailed minutes

of all your planning meetings, and send them to everyone on your Executive after each meeting.

This will help to eliminate the disruption, when everything is pretty well set in concrete, of the complaint by a member of the Executive "Gee, I don't remember agreeing to that".

In considering alternatives

remember that many people -- ladies in particular -- value their privacy.

Communal washrooms in University Residences may turn off people who gave

up camping long ago. Semi-private facilities are better than communal ones, but private bathrooms will appeal to more potential attendees.

Ensure that any potential host site will agree to a "no corkage fee" policy.

Some hotels will not agree to this; if they will not, tell them that you are not interested in giving them your business (this can be a tremendous, unanticipated cost).

Make sure that your Reception desk is open, ready for registrations, no later than 4 pm on Friday.

Make sure as well that any necessary signage (such as to Parking areas, Registration etc.,) is in place by noon Friday.

Attendees from out-of-town will begin showing up by about 4 pm. They will need information on where to park, where to have supper, and what is planned for the weekend. If people have driven for half a day to attend the Festival, only to find that there are no directions for where to check in, and no-one around who knows what is happening, where they can park, or where they can go for supper, this can be a real turn-off for the entire weekend. Remember that many

of your attendees may never have been there before, and will need assistance.

Solicit prizes that have value for people from out-of-town.

A prize of 25% off at a specific U-Brew in the city where the Festival takes place is of NO interest to people from outside your local area. In addition, prizes that have to be picked up several days later at a specific store or winery are equally problematic. Bring as many prizes as possible to the Festival so that winners can take them with them when they leave; gift certificates should be honoured at several stores, not just one in the downtown area of the host city.

Develop a means of verifying that people attending a function have actually paid for it.

Even winemakers have been known to try to "crash" luncheons and dinners for which they have not paid -- and this is a direct loss to the organizers.

As noted above, the simplest approach, and one which works (it was introduced in Ottawa in 2000 and has been used successfully twice since), is to post a blank "seating plan" for each meal for which there is a choice (and a charge). This allows attendees to select with whom they wish to be seated and ends the unholy

scramble for places with tipped-up chairs to mark places. It also permits you, the organizers, to ensure that only the number of seats that have actually been paid for (or sponsored) are in fact occupied. The alternative, that of colour-coding name tags, can work but is much more labour-intensive for the organizers.

Give sponsors appropriate recognition

in your program, such as by increasing levels of "title" - Grand Patrons, Patrons, Sponsors, Supporters etc.

This helps to ensure that their support will continue in future, which you will find handy when you next organize a function. Letters of appreciation, and copies of the booklet with their names included, are also appreciated.

Check your invoices for double-counting

Even University Campuses have been known to charge twice for the same service, or for two similar services performed within the same "minimum hours charge".

It's all over but the shouting...

Thinking ahead, and anticipating potential problems, is a sure way of ensuring that your next Festival is as enjoyable for the organizers as it is for your guests!

YOU COULD BECOME THE NEW CHIEF STEWARD!

by Steve Gunning

Looking for an opportunity to expand your knowledge of winemaking and wine judging? Are you reliable, responsible and committed to ensuring fair and equitable competition opportunities for all home winemakers? Can you find a few hours each month to organize competitions, educational and training sessions for judges, judge trainees and stewards?

AWO and the Wine Judges Commission of Ontario (WJCO) are looking for a Chief Steward. This is an important position of responsibility and authority within both organizations. Most importantly, the Chief Steward will ensure that the annual AWO province-wide competition is conducted in a professional and unbiased manner, and that the results are reported to all members. The Chief Steward is also responsible for the conduct of the Canada-wide judging when it is Ontario's turn to host the Amateur Winemakers of Canada competition,

generally once every three or four years.

That is the simplest description of the job. Of course there are many duties to be performed throughout the year between competitions. These duties all involve ensuring that appropriate facilities are available for the annual competition, that club entries are registered and paid for on time, that entries arrive undamaged, and that sufficient judges are booked for the competition. In the past, the Chief Steward has been responsible for the periodic review of AWO Competition Class Descriptions and for making recommendations to the AWO Executive. The Chief Steward has also been responsible for preparing positions for the AWO Executive with respect to National Competition Classes and competition procedures.

The WJCO has recently re-organized and has created an affiliated "Stewards Commission" with the objective of ensuring that there are trained and experienced stewards available to conduct the annual AWO competition, and any other competitions or major events that the Judges Commission undertakes. For the past three years this has included the Fruit Wines of Canada competition – recognizing excellence in the commercial fruit wine industry. The

Chief Steward will have the opportunity to participate in educational events that are part of the ongoing training and development program for Ontario Judges, such as the Masters certification seminar series.

The position of Chief Steward is a formal part of the administrative structure of the Wine Judges Commission and is in an important position to give guidance to both the Judges Commission and to the AWO Executive. The position does not require a huge amount of time, but there are critical times during the year when communications with the Judges Commission and the AWO Executive are crucial and deadlines must be met.

If you are interested in taking on this duty you will have lots of help. The AWO Executive and the Wine Judges Commission will be there to advise and help.

Also, there is a roster of experienced stewards who can help with specific duties.

Experience shows that there are also a lot of AWO members out there who would like to help, but with discrete tasks. The Chief Steward serves an important leadership role in the AWO community as the respected arbiter of competitions. Two past Chief Stewards have gone on to commercial winemaking and judging. It is a great opportunity to learn more about winemaking and wine

tasting. Along with the above responsibilities come numerous opportunities to develop your palate and expose yourself to some interesting wines and winemaking techniques.

If you would like to take on this position please contact Steve Gunning or Glenn Keown as soon as possible.

A NOTE ON YOUR ADDRESS

This is just a reminder that if you change your paper-mail address, change of address notification should be sent to David Burns, not to AWOnews. Your mailing address is linked to your membership information in AWO's files and must be amended there or it will not appear on the mailing labels used by us and which are generated from the membership records. Your e-mail address, however, is maintained by AWOnews if you are on e-mail distribution.

... AND SPEAKING OF MEMBERSHIPS...

David also reports that each year some clubs are very slow in sending in their membership fees and revised membership lists. If they are received too late, it may mean that the affected club members will miss the December issue of AWOnews (this one), and may - even worse - jeopardize their chances of competing in the annual competition. If your club is one that is usually tardy, please have a word with your club executive.

NOTES FROM OVERSEAS

Maureen and I recently returned from a trip to Europe, at the end of which we attended the Annual General Meeting of the (British) National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges, held this year at an old "Coaching Inn" at Barnby Moor, several miles north of Nottingham and Sherwood Forest. This annual meeting of "National" judges (the highest level in the UK hierarchy of County, Federation and National levels) features "self assessment" sessions in which the judges evaluate several wines and then compare notes, in both small groups and as a whole, to determine how close each member is to the group assessment; social

functions; and talks on various aspects of winemaking. This year a commercial winemaker spoke of the difficulty of growing various types of vinifera grapes "north of 50" (latitude). Our British cousins were astonished to learn that all winegrowing areas in Ontario are no farther north than 45° north latitude, with the Niagara area lying at 43°.

The trip also gave us a better appreciation of the prices at the LCBO. Wine is readily available for purchase at both supermarkets in the UK and at specialty wine and spirit shops labeled as "Off Licence", but the prices are higher than at your local LCBO outlet. Even mediocre quality wine is likely to cost at least £3.99 at retail (equivalent to about \$10 Cdn), although some can be had for several pence less. Prices are even higher in Switzerland, although Italy shows good sense by pricing wine well below soft drinks, coffee and even water.

Bellissimo!

**[Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah to all from
AWOnews!](#)**