



AWOnews

***A forum for the exchange of news and opinions on
homewinemaking in Ontario***

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AWO Executive 2006/07

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Thanks, Paul

This is my first issue as the AWOnews editor and I'd like to start off by acknowledging the large debt of gratitude we all should have for the dedication of the previous editor, Paul Dunseath, over the last 10 years and 40 issues.

This issue is coming out a few weeks later than I had hoped as I learn what a challenge it is to get content in quickly from a volunteer organization. I'm sure that Paul learned that lesson very quickly and that it was reinforced many times over the ensuing ten years.

As I mentioned in my introduction in the last newsletter, I'd like to focus on being your newsletter editor, as opposed to your newsletter writer. I need your help providing ideas for articles, subjects you'd like to read about in the newsletter or comments on content, format or style. To that end, I've set up a separate e-mail account at awonews@sympatico.ca for any contributions or comments.

From the President

As I write this letter harvest season is fast approaching. The past winter was kind to the vines in Ontario and the weather in August has been good so far. Hopefully we will have a bumper crop of grapes followed by some fine wine and a bumper crop of medals from the AWO.

The convention was one of the highlights of the year and everyone enjoyed the wines, seminars and meeting old friends. Congratulations to the many medal winners. The Friday night showcase gave us an opportunity to try many of the awarded wines as well as many others. On behalf of all the attendees I want to thank the organizing committee from Ottawa for a well-organized and interesting weekend...

Plans are well underway for next year's convention in Kitchener Waterloo. We look forward to another fun and educational weekend. If any clubs are thinking of hosting a future convention please contact any member of the Executive and we would be happy to discuss plans. Hosting a convention is a lot of hard work but can be very rewarding financially for both the Host clubs and the AWO.

The executive has met and has started work on many different fronts. Increasing memberships is our main goal. We are looking at revitalizing the website, the winetalk format and our communication with our members. All ideas are welcomed. Just call a member of the executive or send a note to winetalk.

Festa del Vino - 2006 AWO Festival

by Paul Dunseath

First, the stats. As of June 4 we had 146 registrants. The most popular seminars were on Amarone, with a total of 51 in two sessions; Sangiovese with 43; Tannins with 40; Yeast, with 35; Storage with 23, and Sherry with 22 signed up. Our direction signs were recycled from civic election campaign signs, and served admirably in their new role.



Toga Party - Club Showcase

Planning for this year's Festival began shortly after the last one in Ottawa, a 5-year head start. Advance planning is always wise, but it is essential that it be carried through, and in high gear at least a year before the event. If not, unexpected problems can arise at the most inconvenient time.

One of those I have to say was the choice of location. We have had five, maybe six, Festivals in Ottawa, two of them at a University or College, and both had some difficulties. In the first place, no matter how well organized they appear to be, these institutions are not really set up to do business with a group, and tend to have several people to contact for the basics, whereas a hotel will usually have a single conference manager. Secondly, they are usually not licensed, so the Festival organizers have to arrange this themselves, and submit to all of the restrictions that the LCBO and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission can think up. Thirdly, they are often not in the downtown core, which is where non-winemaking spouses would like to sight-see. Our previous Festivals, held at a budget-priced downtown hotel, avoided all of these predictable problems. Caveat emptor.

It is also important to have clear lines of authority and for everyone on your Executive to respect them. This ensures that people bring their talents to the table and do not feel that they will be countermanded on minor items. It also ensures an equitable division of work and that nothing falls between the slats.

The idea of a silent auction, as part of fundraising, is a good one. While few if any items will be bid over the actual price, many bidders will run up the final amount to very close to it, and the Festival's finances will benefit. This happened in a number of cases in 2006.

A barbecue on Friday is also a good idea, provided there is enough room for people to spread out and enjoy themselves, and enough food and beverages. If there is a problem with actually doing a BBQ, think about perhaps a pizza night; much easier to cater to uncertain numbers, and if held indoors, a hotel meeting room or two will serve nicely.

Check with previous Festivals on what seminars were most popular and which possible donors may be expected to contribute. We did this, and had a list of both

available a year before the Festival got under way. Publicly acknowledging contributors is also important, and helps to ensure that they will be around next time. By the same token, advertising in the program book is a direct revenue enhancer, and an inexpensive way for supporters to have their name seen. Our rates were \$150 for the inside front or outside back cover, \$100 for an inside full page, and \$60 for a half page. We had our booklet produced by Staples Business Depot, which turns out to be much cheaper than a printer, and of the same quality.

Do make your wine in advance. We had the expertise of some award-winning winemakers available to us, and started them off 2 years before the event. Definitely recommended.

Finally, keep minutes of your Executive Committee meetings, and ensure they are accurate. They will be your record of who agreed to what.

Issue no. 7 of AWOnews included a fairly lengthy article on How to Organize a Festival. For future organizers, it is worth reviewing.

NOTES FROM THE CHIEF STEWARD

John Peters, Chief Steward
(john_peters@sympatico.ca)

2006 Competition Results: As I said at the AWO convention, congratulations to all the members that participated in the 2006 AWO Provincial Competition. With more than 770 entries we had a record number to judge again this year! The wines were of general high quality, with 70% being awarded a provincial medal. The large number of medals awarded also led to the confirmation of ten members as Grand Master Winemakers in the AWO this year!

For those of you who attended the awards ceremonies in Ottawa, it was inspiring to see all the medal winners being honoured by their colleagues. I also made a point during the presentation to thank the many volunteers that

make the Chief Stewards job a "breeze". I particularly acknowledged the efforts to Larry Paterson who has maintained the records and reported our results through his website in record time again this year. Thanks again Larry.

I also named and thanked all the 30 judges and 15 stewards. Our team of 45 volunteers worked steadily from Friday at 4:00 PM to Sunday evening to complete the judging of all the entries. The high standard of our competition (at least 4 judges independently blind tasting each entry and providing written feedback for each entry) remains unparalleled in any other wine competition in Canada. An AWO medal is a real measure of high quality!

Another 100 volunteer hours were required to assemble all the medal and certificate packages for each participant. This allowed us to award all medals for 2006 and all AWO Merit trophies for 2005 and 2006 at the Convention. By now all clubs will have received their packages from the 2006 competition and distributed the results packages to their members. If members have questions, don't hesitate to get in touch with me (preferably by email) and I will follow up with you individually. I am also willing to attend Club meetings to advise on competition strategies if it would help your club.

Advice for the Competitions Ahead: And now some advice for competitors - ideas to contemplate as you begin to ferment the 2006 harvest.

- **Please reread the class descriptions** (www.makewine.com). Plan your blending plan to fit in a particular category in advance. We had several dozen wines that were entered in the wrong class this past year. I was a bit soft on entrants because of the 2006 changes that added Gewurztraminer Class and Syrah / Rhone Class. The

Syrah/Rhone Class was quite mixed up with Red Blend and Other Red.

- **Note Other Red and Other White Classes.** We require that the dominant varietals allowed amount to 85% of the content. Blends of several varietals in smaller percentages (say 30% to 50% each) should be in the White Blend or Red Blend classes.
- **Check your entries just prior to submission.** We had more than a dozen bottles with cork taint, and other major faults that would have been detected if the entry was opened and tasted before being submitted.
- **Ask for advice early in the competition process.** Start organizing well before you hold your club competition if you are not sure of rules and procedures for Provincial entry.
- **Electronic data entry is now the norm.** 80% of clubs now email their electronic data correctly on the first try. Remember that your errors in spelling, content description all affects how you will get judged and what the certificate coming back to you will look like. "**Garb@gE in = gerbAge out**". Every club needs to have someone who knows how to use an *Excel* electronic spreadsheet to submit the data for their club. Many clubs are now using the same electronic spreadsheet to document club competition so it is done right from the beginning.

I offer these thought because I have seen some great wines not get the medal they might have deserved. I want to help everyone get the gold medal they strive for with each entry they submit. Attention to these details early, as you prepare to entries for competition, will do a lot to ensure you reach your goal.

Good luck with this years crush!

WJC's Secret Weapon

John talked about some of the challenges that the Wine Judges Commission faced at the 2006 competition. One thing that he didn't mention is the new secret weapon they have commissioned to make their job easier.

Recent media article have uncovered John's secret - a robot developed by NEC and Mie University in Japan that can "taste" - an electromechanical sommelier that can distinguish dozens of different wines and cheeses. The research team decided to focus on wines because they felt it would provide an interesting challenge.

Recently, they unveiled the fruits of their labours - a green and white prototype with eyes, a head that swivels and a mouth that lights up whenever the robot talks. The "tasting", however, is not limited to the same tools used by the WJC judges.

At the end of the robot's left arm is an infrared spectrometer. When objects are placed up against the sensor, the robot fires off a beam of infrared light. The reflected light is then analyzed in real time to determine the object's chemical composition. The robot relies on the fact that all foods have a unique fingerprint under the spectrometer.

I don't think the robot is quite ready to help John and his crew with the 2007 competition. Only a few dozen of the thousands of wine profiles have been programmed in the robot's memory, and memory is still limited. In addition, the robot seems to have trouble when the wines have been opened and allowed to breath a while, thus changing the chemical fingerprint.

In some tests, the robot made errors that you wouldn't even expect from local MacDonald's patrons. For example when one reporter held his hand near the sensor it was mistaken for prosciutto, another was thought to be a slab of bacon.

The final barrier to introducing the winebot at the next AWO competition is the matter of cost. A production version of the robot would probably cost about the same as case of '62 Cheval Blanc or the like - well above the spartan WJC budget.

AWC Results

Congratulations to all the AWO members who sent wines to the AWC competition. Once again, Ontario captured top place with 11 Gold, 31 Silver and 21 Bronze medals for the 73 wines entered.

The top winemaker in show was Larry Paterson, who entered from Quebec. Larry was awarded 2 Gold, 5 Silver and 1 Bronze medal.

Top cider maker was Martin Nygard from London Wine Pros.

Little Maniacal Fat Wino

Courtesy Cottage Life and John Degen

Imagine my surprise when I saw a copy of the August issue of Cottage Life magazine. The cover boasted a section entitled "A Toast to Wine" and one of the articles was "Where the Grape Grows in Cottage Country". Curious, I quickly turned to that article and there staring me in the face on the second page of the article was the LittleFatWino himself, our own Larry Paterson, with John Rufa from Kawartha Country Wines. I quickly scanned through the article and saw that Larry was prominently featured in one segment of the article.

Reading more carefully, I saw that the writer, John Degen, had captured Larry perfectly. It was one of those articles that you read and say to yourself: "Boy, I wish I wrote that." I brought the magazine with me to a tasting at Larry's house later that week and Jim Warren was laughing so hard at some of the descriptions that we were worried that he was going to fall off his chair and injure himself.

For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to read the full article in Cottage Life, the following are excerpts from that article, reproduced with the kind permission of John Degen and Cottage Life magazine:

"One man who thinks that he may have the key to grape wine success, for John Rufa and others, is Rufa's pal, Larry Paterson, a gruff, irreverant, and maniacal guy from Peterborough with wine on the brain. His calling card reads "Little Fat Wino," and he is the epitome of the non-traditional oenophile. Paterson on the subject of wine is like a bear on the subject of garbage, which is to say that while he gets the science of it, you sense that what he really wants to do is just roll around in the stuff. Paterson promised to blow my mind on the subject of cottage-country wine. He did not disappoint.



The 2006 AWC Champion Winemaker enjoying his other passion - guess who caught the most fish

Paterson envisions hundreds of little cottage wineries growing grapes in all climates and making superb 100 per cent Ontario wines. How would these growers survive temperatures downwards of -35°C? Well, Paterson is a grower and his own grapes survive just fine, thank you very much. In fact, he boasts of wine grapes that won't even blink at - 41°C.

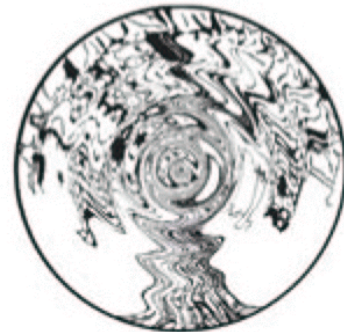
Asked for a tour of these mystery vines, Paterson hops in his pickup, a twinkle in his eye, and suddenly we're off. He's fast, but easy to follow on even the curviest, hilliest Kawartha road. I just keep an eye out for the mud-caked ATV topped with the canoe he keeps strapped in his truck bed (when he's not making, talking or thinking wine, Paterson's other passion is backwoods fishing). After a half an hour of dirt road twists and turns, I'm pretty sure Paterson himself is lost when, suddenly, we're at the outskirts of Peterborough, pulling up beside a small stand of vines. Paterson first walks me through a plot where he is trying, in vain it seems, to baby into life some European vinifera. No luck. The Pinot Noir is rotting on the vine, and the production is minimal to begin with, shocked and all but killed off by the harsh winds of winter '04/'05.

But then there's a test plot of Minnesota hybrid grapes - vines developed in about as inhospitable a climate as exists for the production of wine. These grapes are new breeds, so new they have numbers rather than names. Hybrid DM8521-1 is the rough customer that survives -41 °C in its home plot in Minnesota. These aren't even what is known as "winter hardy" grapes in the biz; these are "winter? - you call that winter?" grapes. Paterson smiles his impish grin and hands me a grape off the vine. Mmmmm,

that's good 8521-1. And judging from the mini-winery in Paterson's Peterborough basement, the science of coaxing subtle tones out of the Minnesota hybrids is well underway.

There was more to the story so if you are interested, check out the July issue of Cottage Life magazine.

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AWO FESTIVAL '07
June 8-10, 2007, Kitchener

Expect the Unexpected...Again!