



AWOnews

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

Produced by the Amateur Winemakers of Ontario

Fall 2007 - Volume 45

AWO Executive 2007/08

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- Information on upcoming events including the 2008 and 2009 AWO Festivals.
- Opportunity to name the two new award levels recommended at the 2007 AGM.
- Summary of the results of the 2007 AWC competition.
- A story about an AWO member who has done well in a Danish wine competition.
- Article on the mapping of the Pinot Noir genome.
- Article on a company that has developed a software to produce wines that critics love.

Executive Opportunity

The AWO is looking for an organized, motivated self-starter to co-ordinate the collection, packaging and shipping of AWO entries to the AWC competitions. We're looking for someone with tenacity, organizational skills and creativity. This prestigious position comes with the same handsome compensation package provided to the AWO Executive. For more information, or to apply for this position, please contact Bob Gibbon at bgibbon@mountaincable.net. You'll want to hurry -this tremendous opportunity will be filled quickly.

Editor's Notes

You know you are a home winemaker at this time of year if:

- you have a permanent cloud of fruit flies hovering over your composter;
- you are continually worried that you don't have enough yeast in the house,
- every carboy you own is full and you still haven't gotten all the grapes you ordered,
- your dog passed out from the fumes wafting off the pails of grapes fermenting in the basement,
- all your neighbours suddenly show up for the entertainment when they see the grape press coming out.

- the table in your wine cellar looks like a Grade 9 chemistry lab, without the bunsen burners.

If you answered yes to two or more of those, then you qualify as a serious homewinemaker. I have to confess that I could answer yes to at least two of those, which is why this issue will be a little shorter - too much to do at this time of year

With your help the next issue will be up to the normal length. Please forward any ideas on tips, techniques or a profile of your club to me at awonews@sympatico.ca.

President's Corner

Fall has arrived and those of us who make wine from grapes are into a very busy season. The trucks from California have arrived and the local crop is mostly harvested. Now all we have to do is cold soak, crush, measure the sugar and acid, balance the must, add our enzymes, pitch the yeast, punch down the cap, press the must etc etc. The list goes on and on but after all the hard work we have our own product ready to be entered into our competitions and enjoyed with dinner or friends. The local grapes have had a great year and the numbers look really good on most. If you haven't used our local Ontario grapes yet I would suggest this would be a great year to start.

I hope everyone is enjoying our new website as well as the AWOnews. You can help keep both of these interesting and informative by submitting articles for the newsletter or the website. Your hardworking editor, Burton McClelland, will thank you as well as all your fellow AWO members.

Work is continuing on the upcoming convention in Hamilton and the Niagara clubs have committed to holding the 2009 convention. If your club hasn't held an annual convention yet you are missing out on a lot of fun as well as the financial gain that comes from holding the convention. If your club is interested in holding the 2010 convention please contact myself or a member of the executive.

Also, please don't forget that the AWO will pay for one member from each club to take the SmartServe course. Contact your club rep or myself if you are interested.

Here's hoping your house smells like a winery!
Happy Winemaking!

Coming Attractions

2008 AWO Festival

Work is progressing on the 2008 Festival in Hamilton. The organizing committee has Mohawk College booked for the Festival. The theme for 2008 will be "Steel Away". Mark your calendar for June 6-8, 2008 and stayed tuned for more information in the next newsletter.

2009 AWO Festival

Word is just in that the NOTL Amateur Vinters and Niagara Vine to Wine are going to host the 2009 Festival in the Niagara Area. The theme will be "Amateur VQ-Eh". Pencil in June 5-7, 2009 for your trip down to Niagara.

2007 American Wine Society Meeting

The 40th Annual American Wine Society meeting will be held in Winston Salem, North Carolina from November 1st to 3rd. It looks like they have a really interesting program planned. For more information and to register on-line, check out the AWS website at www.americanwinesociety.org.

Thanks to Steve Kampers for forwarding this information.

Name Those Awards

We received no creative suggestions for the two new winemaking award levels recommended at the 2007 AGM. As nature, and the AWO executive, abhors a vacuum, we came up with a couple of suggestions for the new awards:

- 2,500+ points - Senior Grandmaster Winemaker
- 5,000+ points - Ultimate Winemaker

If you think you can provide a better name, we're still open to suggestions. Get your ideas in to Bob Gibbon (bgibbon@mountaincable.net) before December 31st.

AWC Results

Based on the preliminary results and my suspect counting skills, it looks like Ontario did very well in the 2007 AWC competition held in Calgary. Don Panagapka was the top winemaker with two gold, two silver and three bronze medals. Don was also the top cider maker with a silver medal. The top beer maker was John and Frances Ayris from British Columbia with a medal in all five beer classes - one gold, two silver and two bronze.

Ontario also had the high point total in the wine classes, although B.C. garnered more medals. We had 5 gold, 17 silver and 29 bronze, while B.C. had 3 gold, 12 silver and 34 bronze. The top province in the beer classes was B.C., with one gold, three silver and six bronze.

Congratulations to Don and to all the other AWO members who entered and received medals.

Danish Vinskue Winecompetishen Results

Not only did AWO members do well at the AWC competition, but our Danish AWO member, Jens Madsen had the Wine of the Year at the Danish Competition. The winning wine was made from KW87 made from vines obtained in Nova Scotia. Jens also got a bronze medal for another wine made from a Nova Scotia grape variety, L'Acadie Blanc. Jens has been working with Larry Paterson and Sigrid Gertsen-Briand on his grape growing and winemaking skills and his work has obviously been well worth it. Congratulations to Jens.

Thanks to David Burns for forwarding this from Jens.

Wine and Science

1) No Wonder It Is So Complex

Pinot Noir has the reputations for being a finicky, fickle grape, for both growers and winemakers. At its best, Pinot Noir can produce heady, complex wines that have sent many a wine writer into paroxysms of purple prose. At its worst, it can be a tremendously expensive disappointment.

New work by French and Italian researchers in mapping the Pinot Noir genome, recently published in the journal *Nature*, can explain some of that complexity. It has some 30,000 genes in its genetic makeup. Compare that to the human genome, with 20,000 to 25,000 genes.

Not only does Pinot Noir have a lot of different genes overall, it has an unusually high number of genes whose role it is to create different flavours. More than 100 of its genes are devoted to creating flavour compounds, such as tannins and terpenes, compared to about 50 for most plants. The large variety of flavour-producing genes, influenced by external factors such as soil, climate and viticultural practices, help to explain the huge range of flavours and aromas in wines made from the Pinot Noir grape.

Although rice and some other crops have already been mapped, Pinot Noir is the first fruit to be sequenced. It took the team over two years to complete the task. This research not only provides an explanation for the variability and complexity of Pinot Noir wines, but also opens the door to further research to develop new, more disease-resistant or cold-hardy varieties of Pinot Noir. It also increases the potential for genetic manipulation to develop varieties with specific flavour and aroma profiles. This kind of genetic manipulation is still years away but it promises to have a significant impact on the world of wine and winemaking.

2) Better Living Through Chemistry

While the French and Italian researchers mentioned in the previous hope to use genetics to improve the characteristics of the Pinot Noir grape, a California company called Enologix is using chemistry, coupled with their extensive database to improve finished wines.

Enologix website describes their business as: *“Enologix offers wine quality metrics to both winemakers and consumers - providing active insight into fine winemaking in the United States. Our turn-key QMS™ software offers wine growing, winemaking and wine marketing metrics that assist winemakers in improving wine quality and boosting average national critics’ ratings.”*

For about \$20,000 per year Enologix offers a service that analyses a wine sample through a liquid chromatograph for a red wine and both a chromatograph and mass spectrometer for a white wine to identify and measure chemical compounds. The owner of Enologix, Leo McCloskey, says that he has identified about 100 different compounds that can influence a wine drinker and has used these to develop a wine quality index. The score that is derived out of a 100-point scale, similar to those used by major critics, such as Robert Parker and James Laube. These scores are compared to the average rating that wine got in five major publications: Wine Advocate, Wine Spectator, Wine Enthusiast, Stephen Tanzer’s International Wine Cellar and Connoisseurs’ Guide to California Wine. The Holy Grail for Enologix clients is a 90+ average score in those publications.

Enologix divides wine into four categories. For reds, Style 1 is pale in color and low in tannin, like most pinot noir or French Burgundy; Style 2 is also pale, but higher in tannin, like Italian Barolo; Style 3 is dark and tannic, like a great many cabernet sauvignons and first-growth Bordeaux; Style 4 is similarly dark but only moderately tannic. This last category, McCloskey told me, represents "the vast majority of successful, flagship mainstream wines, the most elegant and popular wines in the world."

The target for Enologix clients is Style 4 wines and McCloskey guides them through the whole

winemaking process, from deciding when to pick the grapes to managing the fermentation to blending and finishing the wine. He claims that a typical winery signing up with Enologix can raise their scores by five points for red wines and six for whites over their previous year’s score.

Enologix critics claim that wine is too complex to be summarized in a single numerical score. Many also feel that it leads to the homogenization of wine produced by their clients, as their process is designed to lead to a single style of wine with a very narrow definition of taste. It also ignores the fact that wines that do very well on critics’ scoresheets often fare worse in the real world where wine is usually consumed with a meal. The system’s key assumption seems to be that intensity and concentration are synonymous with quality. The system seems to miss some of the other key qualities of a fine wine, such as balance.

Critics notwithstanding Enologix has developed a booming business with a customer list that includes such prestigious names as Beaulieu, Neibaum-Coppola, Ridge and Sabastini.

For Sale

Wine press for sale. 15" diameter.
Contact rsubden@uoguelph.ca

