



# AWOnews

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

Produced by the Amateur Winemakers of Ontario  
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## **In This Issue**

- Don Panagapka follows the first Gap's Corner, which talked about developing an award winning club, with a new article that focuses more on individual achievement. Don shares his secrets on how to be successful at the AWO competition.
- An article on a kit that helps non-winemakers to learn more about the intricacies and value of blending.
- An article on super premium beers - high in alcohol, abundant complex flavours and stratospheric prices.
- Information on the program and registration for

the 2008 AWO Festival in Hamilton.

## **President's Corner**

I'm sure everyone has had their fill of all of the snow and is looking forward to the warmer weather. One of the first signs of spring is the club judging. Hopefully everyone got their wines bottled in time to rest for at least a few days before the judging. After the club judging the best wines go forward to the Provincial competition in May. Don't forget about the 'One Bronze Rule' This helps ensure that anyone who has won a bronze medal can participate in the competition. I wish everyone the best of luck. All the results will be presented at the June Convention in Hamilton.

The Other Hamilton Wine Club and the South Coast Winemakers Guild have put together a really interesting set of seminars for this year's convention., including some of the best winemakers from AWO as well as the local wine industry leaders. The Mohawk College Residence and seminar rooms are really convenient and comfortable. Parking is right in front of the residence and the seminar location is really super. It is one of the best locations I've seen in quite a few years.

I hope to see everyone in Hamilton at the Convention.

Bob Gibbon

## Editor's Ramblings

I hope that all of you had or will have an easier time putting on your club competition than we did at our club. We managed to schedule ours for one of the worst storms of the winter. Luckily our judges have family and friends in the local area so they came up the day before and were able to get here despite the weather. It really makes you appreciate the difficulties that judges are willing to overcome to help to make your club competition a success.

On a different note, this issue of the newsletter features information on the program and registration package for the 2008 Festival being hosted in Hamilton by the Other Hamilton Wine Club and the South Coast Winemakers Guild. It will give you something to look forward to as you wait for the snow to melt.

## GAP'S WINE CORNER

### INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS AT AWO



As a follow up to my previous article, as mentioned, I would do an article on "individual success at AWO". It should be noted that although this article aims to provide guidelines for

success at AWO for those who wish to become AWO individual champion and/or place in the top 5 or 6 individuals, it also applies to winemakers who "specialize" in one or more classes.

To become individual winemaker of the year at AWO it requires a tremendous amount of time, investment, patience and dedication to the hobby. As such, not many winemakers are prepared to commit to this task. However here are some guidelines to follow to be more successful:

Build a library of quality wines in your cellar: without quality wines there is not much hope of receiving a medal, let alone a gold medal at AWO. Hence, in good years (such as 2007) bulk up on most wines as they will rise to the top of the quality scale and

will last for years before they "peak". Your objective would seemingly to be to have most of your wines peak in 2-4 years and during that time you will have the greatest chance of success. Good wines can be entered year after year until they begin to fall off in quality. The more classes you can cover with quality wines the better the chance of success at AWO. So, a cellar of quality wines is a huge step towards success at AWO

Cover all of the wine classes (if you can): a good winemaker should be able to acquire at least a medal in 70% to 80% of the wines that he/she enters into AWO. Thus, if you have 10 wines going forward and your fellow competitors have 15 or more wines going forward it's not hard to calculate who will come out ahead. Many winemakers do not enjoy making some of the "odd" classes such as sherries, aperitifs, social wines e.t.c., but think of it this way " why not make as good a sample of each class as you can and keep improving on those classes each year (even improving the same wine you entered the year before e.g. aperitifs). Once you have made a good wine in these classes they will almost last indefinitely and you should be able to score medals with them year after year.

Some classes, of course have to be made more often and possibly each year. Examples of these are the classes social, dessert, and possibly rose. With attempts at all classes each year you will move up the scale of quality and success.

Preparation for club and AWO competition: most winemakers start too late in preparing their wines for competition. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- **When to start:** I generally start in the Christmas holiday preparing the fortified wines such as port, aperitifs and sherries. Since fortified wines (and wines that require sweetness modification) take longer to "marry" it is important to start months ahead of any competition.
- **Prepare only one class per day/night:** this is important as you will lose the ability to taste after a few samples (especially fortified wines) if you try to do more than one class, especially if you have many choices for each class.

- **Use all wines that might fit a class:** take out all wines from your cellar that might fit a particular class and stand them upright at room temperature and leave for a day (allows sediment to fall, off noses to dissipate, and temperature to approximate judging temperature). Then the next day sample each wine and determine which wine(s) would be best for that class (the worst possible way of entering is to pull a bottle off the shelf and enter it as is, as possible faults/sediment/malolactic could be in that bottle)
- **Blending is the key:** a wine that may seem the best you have will very likely be slightly better (from a silver to a gold??) with blending. Experiment with different blends but stay within the parameters of the class description. I have often entered a single wine and that same wine with a slight blend and have always come out better with the blended wine
- **If possible enter at least 2-3 wines in each class at the club level:** I know that this is a tall order BUT the reasoning here is that a judge may not be particularly fond of one of your wines but may like another that you entered into that class. You need at least a silver to get to the Ontario's and once it is there you will likely do well. But if you don't get there in a particular class you have eliminated a possible medal at AWO
- **Read the class descriptions carefully and use your imagination:** staying within the parameters of each class there are a multitude of possibilities for interesting and successful unique wines. A prime example of this is the "social" class where fruits and grapes are used to make a "social" wine
- **Make 3 identical wines for each entry you have:** reasoning here is that if you qualify out of your club to AWO and then qualify from AWO to AWC you will need 3 identical bottles. Often winemakers do not have more than one entry and when they make up the second and/or the third entry the wine is not the same as the original. P.S. if you don't go on to a higher level of competition, then simply drink your fine wine with your spouse
- **Refrigerating entries:** have you ever made a blend and/or modified sweetness in a wine only to have it fermenting during your club competition? My experience is that with the chemical differences in each wine, when I blended them (especially whites) they tend to give off CO<sub>2</sub> for a few days. So, if I bottled them immediately then that CO<sub>2</sub> will be present when they are being judged. Hence, disqualification of that entry. The possibility of a malo and/or re-fermentation is there as well but your refrigeration will tell the story. So, a solution that has been successful for me is to put a tapered cork loosely in the blended wine and put it in the fridge until the competition. Checking it periodically you will likely note that the wine has become stable at which time a "real" cork can be inserted. Note that this procedure is not necessary for red wines although they should be at least left overnight with a tapered cork before permanent corking.
- **Balance your wines prior to entry:** balance is the key in successful winemaking (ask any wine judge). If the wine is too flat dissolve small amounts of citric acid in a small amount of the wine and add in small amounts until the acid balance is there (note that acid should be dissolved and stirred in completely and left overnight before any more additions to prevent over-acidification). Tannin addition is out of the question at this point but non-fermentable sugar can be used to "take the edge off an acidic finish". Finally, use your family members (usually your spouse) to get feedback on balance. Some people have better sensory taste than others and so 2 tasters are better than one.
- **Have the most experienced winetaster in you club taste all of your wines prior to preparation:** as they may give you valuable hints as to which wines are the best to enter and how they might be blended

Happy winemaking and stand by for the next article "the art of blending wines"

Don Panagapka

## Blend in a Box

In his article on how to become an AWO champion, Don talked about the value of blending and knowing how to blend.

Crushpad, an urban winery in the San Francisco area has come up with a kit for wine enthusiasts who aren't blessed with a cellar that has the range and quality of Don's.

The product is called Fusebox, a wooden box containing six 375 ml bottles of different red wines, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc, all sourced from premium Napa vineyards. The kit also includes a graduated cylinder, pipettes, recipe cards outlining classic Bordeaux blend components, a corkscrew and an aroma wheel.

Wine enthusiasts can use the kit to try to duplicate classic Bordeaux wines or experiment with their own blends. The kit also includes a bottle of "mystery wine" which challenges your palate and your ability to identify an unknown wine.

The kit is not inexpensive at \$120 U.S. but it does sound like an interesting way for neophytes to learn more about the intricacies of blending. For more information check out their web site, [www.fuseboxwine.com](http://www.fuseboxwine.com).

## Beer On a Champagne Budget

In the last issue, I talked about using "fish eggs" (encapsulated yeast) to make a very passable sparkling wine out of homemade wines, essentially "Champagne" on a beer budget. In this issue I'm going to talk about the exact opposite - beer on a Champagne budget.

As the population ages and the beer buying trend is moving from quantity to quality, the appearance of 'super premium' beers shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone.

Boston Beer has introduced Sam Adams Utopias at the mildly astonishing price of \$120 for a 24 oz bottle. Even more astonishing is the alcohol level - Utopias checks in at 27 per cent alcohol by volume. The brewer insists that the alcohol level is entirely the result of natural fermentation - no distillation, no freeze-fractionation, no alcohol added. The brewmaster won't reveal his secret method but it does entail the use of two different

yeasts - an ale yeast and an alcohol-tolerant Champagne yeast.

Just so you don't think that the sticker price is a little excessive, each Utopia comes in a ceramic bottle shaped like a brew kettle, a collectable in its own right. In addition, you also get a coupon redeemable for a snifter custom crafted by Reidel to enhance the beer's aromatics. The brewery recommends serving Utopias at room temperature in a two-ounce pour in the snifter.

The beer is aged in oak barrels that previously held sherry, Scotch, bourbon and brandy to give a complex caramel, woody aroma and a sweet sherry-like flavour.

Not to be outdone by Boston Beer's Utopias, those wild and crazy Danes at Carlsberg have created Jacobsen Vintage #1, a special "Grand Cru" beer that sells for a lofty 2,008 kroner (\$400) per bottle.

Vintage #1 is a barley wine, at 10.5 per cent alcohol by volume, that has been aged for six months in new oak barrels. The brewer claims that this beer can age for up to 10 to 15 years, much like fine wines.

The brewmaster claims: "it has the flavour of vanilla, caramel, smoky oak, sherry and Madeira. It is perfect to accompany strong cheeses, such as Roquefort."

To enjoy these beers, you'd have to start looking a beer with an entirely different perspective. Neither of these brews sounds like the kind of thing that you'd want to chug down after mowing the lawn on a hot summer day. Instead it sounds like you'd approach Utopias like a fine oloroso sherry or vintage port and Jacobsen Vintage #1 like a well-aged Bordeaux.



# AWO Convention 2008

*June 6 – 8 2008*  
“Building wine making in  
Ontario”

The Other Hamilton Wine Club and the South Coast Wine Makers Guild are proud to present the 2008 Amateur Wine Makers of Ontario Convention in Hamilton at the Mohawk College main campus 245 Fennell Avenue West, Hamilton, Ontario, L9C 7V7.

The program includes a BBQ and the popular ‘Showcase of Wines’ on Friday night as well as the ‘Taster’s Choice’ on Saturday night.

We have put together a seminar list that draw upon the abundant expertise of many of our own current and former members. Some of the seminars have limited attendance so be sure to register early and save money as well.

Excellent quad accommodations have been reserved in the name of AWO at the college residence. Each room has two bedrooms, each with a double bed and kitchenette.

Reservations may be made directly at

<http://www.checkintothecentre.com/properties/hamilton/index.html> or by phone at 905-385-3200 or email at [mohawk@stayrcc.com](mailto:mohawk@stayrcc.com) at the rate of \$84.95 per night + tax for each two bedroom room. Be sure to tell them you are an AWO delegate. Parking is free.

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Dundas ON L9H 1T7

# AWO 2008 Seminars

June 7, 2008

	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
09:00 AM	<b>Ready Set Bottle!</b> - John Tummon gives tips & tricks before you fill your bottle Code A9	<b>Testing is as easy as 1-2-3</b> - Dr. Tom Schultz showcases the newest equipment for home use Code B9	<b>Cold Climate Hybrids</b> – Larry Paterson, the little fat wino, hosts a tasting of new cold climate varietals Code C9	<b>Whose fault is it?</b> Terry Rayner conducts an identification of wine faults Code D9
10:30 AM	<b>Jim Warren</b> hosts a perspective of the Ontario Wine Industry. Code A10	<b>David Johnson</b> from Featherstone Winery explores the nuances of Riesling wine Code B10	<b>Fortify your Cellar</b> – Don Panagapka on making award-winning aperitifs & sherries Code C10	<b>Wine Longevity</b> – Winemaker Natalie Spytzkowsky on how to give your wines more “legs” Code D10
12:00 PM	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
01:30 PM	<b>Bordeaux vs Ontario</b> – Larry Paterson stages his famous comparison tasting of France's best versus ours. How will the wines fare head- to- head? \$10 Extra Charge (double seminar) Code A1	<b>Roll out the Barrel!</b> Barrel whiz Anna Tuschak explains barrel care and maintenance. Code B1	<b>Wine &amp; Dine</b> – Featherstone Winery's David Johnson conducts a wine & food pairing on the matching of sweet/sour/salty/bitter Code C1	<b>Back from the Dead</b> – Winemaker Terry Rayner presents a tasting of the wines of Coffin Ridge Winery Code D1
03:00 PM		<b>Grow your Club</b> Community affairs expert Adelle Richards explains how to grow your club's ranks Code B3	<b>Mastering Wine Kits</b> – Industry expert Dinesh Nair tells you how to make your wine kit stand out Code C3	<b>Fine Wine</b> – Joe Baker gives tips and techniques on fining & filtering Code D3

# AWO 2008 Registration Form

Please complete ONE form per person and print clearly. Photocopy as required.

Member's Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your club want a table for the Showcase of Wines? Yes or No (please circle)

<i>Packages</i>			
	Early Bird	After May 1	Enter amount
Sabrevois Package (Friday night, all Saturday events, Sunday awards brunch)	\$180	\$190	
Kay Gray Package (Saturday seminars/lunch, banquet / Sunday brunch)	\$155	\$165	
Frontenac Package (Friday night / Sat. seminars, lunch, banquet)	\$150	\$160	
Louise Swenson Package (Friday night, Sat. seminars & lunch)	\$140	\$150	
Landot Noir Package (Sat. seminars, lunch, banquet)	\$130	\$140	
L'Acadie Blanc Package (Friday night BBQ only)	\$30	\$35	
Vandal-Cliche Package (Sunday awards brunch)	\$45	\$50	
Official Convention Tee Shirt: circle size(s)    M L XL	\$18	\$18	
Official Convention Tee Shirt: 2XL 3XL	\$20	\$20	
AWO Membership (for non-member attendees)	\$10	\$10	
Bordeaux Tasting	\$10	\$10	
<b>Total</b>			

<b>Seminar Choices</b>		
<i>Insert Code from Seminar Page</i>		
	First Choice	Second Choice
9:00 AM		
10:30 AM		
1:30 PM		
3:00 PM		

Payment may be made by cheque, bank draft or money order payable to AWO 2008

Mail to 4 – 44 King St. W, Dundas ON L9H 1T7

Email payments accepted – please email [awohamilton@hotmail.com](mailto:awohamilton@hotmail.com) for details

**All payments will be confirmed by email or phone.**