



AWOnews

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

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In This Issue

- Once again the AWO comes out on top at the AWC competition, held in Nova Scotia this year. A summary of the 2008 AWC results is provided.
- The organizing committee for the 2009 AWO Festival - V.Q. EH! - provides some information about the accommodations planned for the 2009 Festival in St. Catherines.
- Don Panagapka is back with Gap's Corner. In this issue, Don talks being more efficient in your winemaking - doing things to maximize your results in the minimum amount of time.
- The Pickering Wine Guild celebrates their 30th anniversary.
- An article that explores whether the widespread summer wildfires in California may leave a smoke taint on some wine grapes.
- In the trivia corner - how the U.S. presidential election is affecting a small Chilean winery

President's Corner

The fall season is a very busy one for winemakers. The west coast grapes are heading this way and the Niagara harvest is well underway. I hope your grapes come in better than expected and that the resulting wine will all be of Gold medal quality!

This past August and September I took an extended road trip to the East Coast, through the Gaspé Peninsula, New Brunswick and then into Nova Scotia. It is quite apparent that the wine industry is thriving almost everywhere, with new wineries popping up seemingly everywhere. The highlight of

my trip was attending the Amateur Winemakers of Canada competition in Wolfville NS. Wines from across Canada were judged and the quality was quite impressive. The organization of the competition was superb as was the hospitality of the host province. There have been changes to the eligibility rules for entries in the coming year. New classes have been created and many more wines from the Ontario will be eligible. This will allow many more of our members to enter the Amateur Winemakers of Canada competition.

Just a reminder that this is the time of the year for renewing your AWO membership.. Please submit your fees as soon as possible.
Thanks!

Editor's Notes

As my neighbour noted the other day, fall must be on us once again because Burton is out in his driveway pressing grapes and all the wasps in Peterborough have descended on the neighbourhood. It promises to be a challenging year for Ontario grapes, given the cold and wet summer that we have had, but that just makes it more interesting for the winemaker. After all, if we all wanted perfect grapes like last year's Ontario vintage every year, we would have moved to California long ago. Speaking of California, there was some concern that the widespread wildfires this summer would cause a smoky character to some of the wines produced from grapes growing in the most affected areas. I haven't noticed any real smoky character in any of the California grapes that I got, but there seems to be some real concerns for some areas. I've provided more detail in the article below.

Much as I hate to compliment AWC President, Larry Paterson, because I'll never hear the end of it, I was very impressed to receive my AWC medals in the mail not much more than a month after the competition had been run. This is a big improvement on previous competitions where it might take a year to get all the medals out to participants. One of the medals was especially gratifying, as one of my entries was broken in transit and I had to send a replacement.

2008 AWC Results

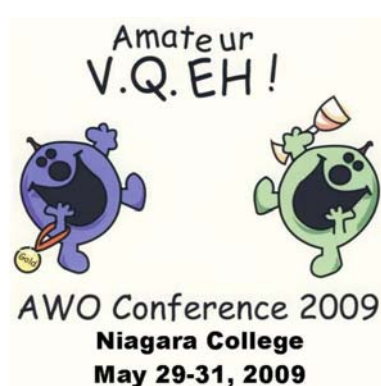
Once again, the AWO emerged as the top province after the 2008 Amateur Winemakers of Canada competition, held in Wolfville, Nova Scotia this year. However, you can see from the following chart that the competition was pretty close, with British Columbia not far behind. Congratulations to all the AWO members who entered wines and contributed to the Ontario total. Congratulations also go to the Grand Champion Winemaker, Larry Paterson from Quebec (who looks suspiciously like the littlefatwino who lives here in Peterborough), Grand Champion Brewer, Ed Saunders from Manitoba and Cider Winner, Tommy Kucera from Manitoba. Special congratulations also go to Bill Peters from the Niagara Vine-to-Wine Circle who garnered Best Wine in Show for his late harvest Riesling in the Social class.

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<u>Province</u>	<u>Entries</u>	<u>Gold</u>	<u>Silver</u>	<u>Bronze</u>	<u>Merit</u>	<u>No Award</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
Ontario	74	14	28	21	7	4	3738
British Columbia	74	10	35	19	4	6	3676
Manitoba	70	8	19	24	6	13	2218
Quebec	26	5	12	6	2	1	1400
Nova Scotia	25	3	6	10	3	3	1088
Alberta	23	2	8	12	1	0	1072
Total	292	42	108	92	23	27	13192

Kudos to John Starr and the rest of the organizing committee - I understand it was a very well organized and run competition this year. John has provided a very complete report on the competition on the AWC website. Complete details on the AWC results are available on the AWC website at www.littlefatwino.com/awc.html. As I mentioned in my notes above, they also did a great job of getting the medals organized and mailed out in a timely fashion.

Festival 2009 - Accommodations Update



The committee has been laying low during the summer, but now we are in high gear to provide you with the best possible AWO Conference.

Dates: Friday, May 29 to Sunday, May 31, 2009

Place: Niagara College, Niagara

It is not too soon to book your accommodations for this event. Here are the particulars:

Accommodations:

Each suite features: Air conditioning, two bedrooms, each with a double bed; kitchenette with fridge and microwave; three piece bathroom, cable television; free local phone calls, electronic card locks and a complimentary 24 hour coffee service. There is a small continental breakfast in the lobby.

Rates - Based on Double Occupancy - \$79.95 per suite per night.

Add \$5.00 for each additional person per suite. Maximum 4 persons.

Subject to 5% GST and 5% Room Tax.

That means 2 couples or 4 guys for about \$100.00 per night!!

*ONLY 80 2-bedroom suites have been reserved for our conference. **DO NOT HESITATE!!**

Your AWO Niagara organizing committee does not book rooms. You need to do it yourself as follows:

Call the Niagara College directly. 1-877-225-8664 or 905-641-4435

Tell them that you are booking for the AWO 2009 conference.

They will take it from there.

This is a special rate. If you wait too long, the rate could go up! You can cancel up to May 1st without penalty.

See you in Niagara!!

Al Johnson, Chair

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Gap's Wine Corner

Efficiency In The Wine Cellar



I don't know about you but I get excited when I go down into my wine cellar during the fall and take in those fermenting odors of wine bubbling away. I also get excited about creating new (and hopefully) better wines and wine blends this year than last. The creativity of making the best wine possible is the fundamental attraction of all winemakers (along with the consumption of the wine, of course). However, having said this there are times when winemaking is somewhat boring and laborious, especially while cleaning bottles and bottling the wine itself. The process is very time-consuming and not very exciting.

Hence, what can we do to make the 'boring' part of winemaking more enjoyable so that we can keep that excitement and edginess that we need to make the best product possible?

Here are some suggestions that will help to make your winemaking more efficient and productive:

- **Do as much "bulk" work as you can all at once:** That is, if, for example you have a lot of bottling to do why not assign a full day dedicated to your wine project? Get up early in the morning and work through the day (especially in bottling) and you will achieve a huge amount of work instead of doing the work 'piecemeal'. Using this theory you will be able to completely bottle numerous cases of wine and will feel great at the end of the day that you have accomplished so much.

- **Do much of the work ahead of ‘crunch time’:** Especially with bottling, if you are bored some day and your new wine is in a “holding pattern” why not spend a few hours and clean all of your equipment and bottles so that they are ready for that big day of bottling
- **Ready your labels ahead of time and have a common template for your wine labels:** You can determine ahead of time what labels you need and how many. There are many programs (e.g. Corel) that will produce great labels. In my case I have a template (permanent information) for my labels and merely change certain information such as type of wine, year, vineyard, e.t.c. Having your labels ready ahead of time makes the bottling more efficient. On a side note, use milk to dip your labels in as it is a great adhesive and the label washes off easily.
- **Bottling:** likely the most efficient piece of equipment that I own (and is worth its’ weight in gold) is my Enolmatic Bottle Filler. You put the bottle in and it fills automatically and stops when full so that you can be doing other minor things while you are bottling. No more splashing of wine, adjusting fill levels, e.t.c. The bottle fillers (electric) are priced around \$400/\$600 but are an absolute must if you want efficiency.
- **Re-think the size/location of your wine cellar:** I see so many winemakers working in closets, crawl spaces, and other small locations in their house. The problem is that these winemakers are spending excessive amounts of their time moving carboys around to make space for the ‘new batch of wine’. Why not just make a decision to increase the size of your wine cellar so that you can operate more efficiently . After all winemaking is a serious hobby and you should be in the best environment possible instead of struggling around in some small location in your house that is cramped and inefficient.
- **Do group projects within your wine club:** Our club has at least one group project each year, and, in many years more than one. Think of the efficiency. If you are busy when the project starts other members will take over. Mass crushing/pressing is more efficient than the individual can achieve (and less messy – spouses like this). One member of your club can be assigned as cellar master for the project saving duplication for all members. Have you considered a separate shed/building that one member may have access to to do all of your group work? There are tremendous efficiencies in club projects, let alone the sharing of knowledge that arises out of members being together
- **Making bulk wine:** instead of making one carboy of 5 different wines why not make 5 carboys of one wine, or 5 carboys of 5 wines? Clearly space and consumption constraints are serious deterrents, but if they aren’t then bulk winemaking should be considered as you only have to do one task at a time instead of 5 (and the excess wine has more time to age properly).

In summary, there are exciting and boring parts to winemaking. Why not decrease the boring parts and spend more time being excited about the art of winemaking. One small improvement in efficiency will re-generate your wine cells and put a smile on your face.

Happy winemaking

Don Panagapka

Pickering Wine Guild Celebrates 30th Anniversary

On May 8th this year the Pickering Wine Guild (PWG) celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a meeting at my home that featured the return of many previous members, some of whom had moved away and others who no longer make wine but enjoy a good party!

When I moved to Pickering in 1978 I belonged to the Scarborough Winemakers. My neighbour Jim Fraser had started to make wine and we thought it would be good to organize a new local wine club. In order to locate winemakers we asked Buzz Arthurs of Wine Art if we could review his "mailing list", which consisted of 3x5 cards in a drawer above the Avenue Road store. Buzz didn't hesitate and within an hour or so we had about a dozen winemakers who lived within a few miles of us.

The first meeting took place May 18th, 1978 with 5 members who enjoyed some respectable concentrate wines. Over the years PWG has had over 60 members, but rarely more than 15 at a time. We have co-hosted the annual Festival twice (plus a third time when the Executive organized it in 1990) and we have, despite a small membership, been Champion Club a few times and still rank in third place for historical Club points.



Former member Dan Sullivan has progressed to being a top winemaker in Prince Edward County with Rosehall Run Vineyards and four other members also have County vineyards. At our anniversary meeting Dan delighted us with several of Rosehall's award winning wines. AWONews editor Burton McClelland came down from Peterborough and Dave Nicholson called from Nova Scotia to congratulate the club and chat with the members. The wine and food flowed for many hours and John Yip acted as photographer, capturing over 50 great shots of the evening, which can be viewed at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jcyip/sets/72157607092382159/>

Smoke Gets in Your Wine

Many California wineries, especially in the North Coast and Mendocino areas, were worried that the wildfires that blazed across large swaths of northern California earlier this summer may have added a smoky taint to their wines. Research in Australia following the extensive bushfires in 2003 demonstrated that prolonged exposure to wood smoke could produce what the Australian researchers termed smoke taint.

The research conducted in Australia in 2003 and 2004 following a couple of bad wildfire years did demonstrate that wines and juices from grapes grown in the affected areas showed the effects of prolonged exposure to wood smoke. In particular the tastes noted by the tasting panel at the Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI) were described as smoky, burnt, ash, ashtray, salami, smoked salmon, etc.

The AWRI research team was able to determine that the smoke effects were primarily due to two chemicals: guaiacol and 4-methylguaiacol. Guaiacol and 4-methylguaiacol are normally found in wines aged in toasted oak barrels, but in much lower concentrations than the wines made from grapes exposed to wildfire smoke. Some of the smoke tainted wines had concentrations over three times that of normally oaked wines. There may have been other compounds that contributed to the smoke taint but they were in such low concentrations that they weren't discovered in this research.

The Australian researchers tried a number of methods to wash the smoke off grapes prior to crushing and fermentation, including cold water, warm water, cold water with 5% ethanol and milk. None of these provided a significant reduction of guaiacol or 4-methylguaiacol. Further investigation revealed that grapes that had been machine harvested or had significant skin contact had much higher concentrations than hand-picked grapes that had no maceration. This led researchers to discover that the smoke taint chemicals had been absorbed in the grape skins, but not in the pulp.

Further investigation showed that a 24-hour maceration period would extract about 25% of the guaiacols from the crushed grapes, while a 10% ethanol solution would extract up to 75% of the guaiacols. Not surprisingly, the wines that showed the greatest impact of smoke taints were red wines with long skin contact and high alcohol. Based on this, researchers suggested whole bunch pressing of hand-picked grapes to minimize the effects of wood smoke.

Work is still ongoing to see if there are fining or filtering techniques to minimize or eliminate the effects of smoke taint. The only fining agent that seems to have any impact is activated charcoal, and even that only removes about 5% of the guaiacols from the affected wines. Reverse osmosis treatment seems to hold some promise for red wines with initial tests showing a one-third reduction in the level of guaiacols and a marked decrease in smoke taint in taste tests.

Although I haven't seen any trace of smokiness in any of California grapes I got this year, with the impacts of climate change and the increase in wildfires throughout California, smoke taint may be one more thing we have to deal with as winemakers.

Palin Wine - Love It or Hate It

A small boutique winery in Chile, specializing in organic wines, has seen some strange things happen to the sales of its wines in the United States after John McCain named Sarah Palin as his running mate on the Republican ticket.

Palin Wines (pronounced pay-LEEN) are not named for the Governor of Alaska, but rather the ball used in an ancient game played by the Mapuche, a tribe indigenous to central Chile. That fact has not changed the reaction on both sides of the political spectrum. In liberal Democratic San Francisco, sales of previously popular Palin wines have dropped precipitously. On the other hand, in Houston, the Republican heartland of Texas, Palin wines are just flying off the shelves. If the Democrats win the election, Palin might be wise to consider a name change for wines shipped to the U.S.