

# AMATEUR WINEMAKERS OF ONTARIO

## Competition Class Descriptions

Updated 2016

### GENERAL COMPETITION NOTES

Many of the classes have specific restrictions on the materials used. Therefore a statement of ingredients for each class is a pre-requisite to entering. Failure to disclose contents, proportions and suppliers could result in disqualification. It is understood that some entries are the result of years of blending. Your most accurate information will help everyone learn more and give credit to the growers as well as the cellarmaster(s).

All entries become the property of the AWO. The evaluation of the Judges and the decision of the Chief Steward will be final.

## WINES

### APERITIF STYLE WINES

Although aperitifs are designed to stimulate the appetite with distinctive flavours and high alcohol, they also find use as social or dessert drinks. Alcohol levels from 14 - 20% are usually achieved by fortification.

#### **Class 11 – DRY TO MEDIUM SHERRY STYLE WINES**

Colour range of pale to deep amber, light to medium-bodied. The bouquet and flavour can reflect a range from Sherry to Madeira, finishing dry. The medium sweet, medium high alcohol Sherries are usually made from a Palomino type grape. It should have a characteristic nutty bouquet and flavour common in good Amontillado and Oloroso Sherries achieved by an oxidative process. Normally the colour is a rich golden and the finish leaves a lingering sensation of richness.

Examples include Fino Sherry, Amontillado, Dry Oloroso Sherry and drier Madeiras such as Sercial. Sweet sherry belongs in the After Dinner Class.

#### **Class 12 – DRY TO SWEET APERITIF NON-SHERRY WINES**

These are full-bodied wines that have the sharpness of a dry wine and a pleasant bitterness, which may be achieved through the addition of an herbal mix. Dry aperitif has a dry, clean and usually bitter aftertaste. These wines may be extremely dry with the upper range of sweetness demonstrated by Martini Extra Dry Italian Vermouth. Any appealing colour is acceptable.

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Sweet Aperitif is a pre-dinner drink that stimulates the appetite. These are full-bodied wines with a high herbal flavour and bouquet. Sweet aperitifs may maintain a unique behaviour pattern in which the initial flavour is a pleasant sweetness, which drops off to a dry or bitter aftertaste and a nearly complete disappearance of that initial sweetness. Alternatively, sweet herbed fortified wines can be entered in this class, reflecting commercial patent aperitifs. Any appealing colour is acceptable.

### **WHITE TABLE WINES**

These are wines to be drunk with lighter flavoured foods. The wines range from colourless to straw and even golden. Avoid brown tinges, as darker colours are less appealing in these classes and are often indicative of a problem fermentation, poor cellaring, or over-ageing.

The bouquet should be fresh and crisp, often reflecting varietal characteristics in the appropriate classes.

The sweetness of a white table wine may range from bone dry to medium dry. Stress must be placed on balance of acid and sugar so that the sugar is not noticeable before fruitiness and other qualities...

Some spritz is acceptable in a white wine, although the bubbles should not be rising in the glass. White table wines may be made from grapes, grape juice or grape concentrate.

#### **Class 21 - CHARDONNAY**

Colourless to gold is an acceptable range, but straw seems to dominate in commercial examples. A darker colour is likely to indicate age and/or barrel maturation. The bouquet should be complex with a prominent varietal aroma and rich nose. 'Butterscotch' may be present as well as an earthy 'barnyard' character. These may be the by-products of malolactic fermentation, oak aging and long exposure to the lees. Oak aging will contribute to the complexity but this should be balanced by fruit on the nose and acid, alcohol and glycerine on the palate.

The wine is light to full-bodied and the residual sugars should not exceed 1%. The wine may exhibit a filling buttery start followed through to a lemony finish, married together with a soft oak flavour. The aftertaste should be clean, lemony and persist, or it may be the crisp 'Chablis' style. Classic Burgundian style Chardonnay may hint at green apple flavours but open up to reveal mineral, earthy complexity, a big mid palate, and weight and concentration in the finish. Entries must contain at least 85% Chardonnay product regardless of source: i.e. grape, juice or concentrate.

#### **Class 22 - RIESLING**

This class is limited to traditional German, Johannesburg or White Riesling products. Many other varieties have been named Riesling, but are not true Rieslings. Two varieties commonly available to home winemakers which **do not** belong in the Riesling class are Welschriesling and Emerald Riesling.

These wines will range from colourless to golden. Golden possibly indicates sweetness. This is a light to medium-bodied wine. The bouquet must be very pronounced with a typical Riesling aroma that is fruity with an identifiable spiciness.

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The sweetness ranges from 0% to 3% residual sugar. Alsatian style wines are dry, while German sweet reserve wines represent the upper end of acceptable sweetness. The nose should follow through with an accompanying fruity flavour. It is very important to strike a balance of acid and sugar - avoid cloying sweetness. The flavour profile should be balanced, clean and crisp, with an acid finish. Entries must contain at least 85% Riesling product, regardless of source: i.e. grape, juice or concentrate.

### **Class 23 – WHITE NON-VINIFERA**

Crossing varieties of *vinifera* (European) and North American *vitis* species yields fruit known as “hybrids” or “inter-specific”. Since many of these hybrids were initially developed by the French, they are referred to as French Hybrids. Hybrid grapes developed in North America and crossings between hybrids are also permitted. “Crosses” of various *vitis vinifera* grapes, however, are not hybrids and are thus not allowed. The prominent varieties within this class are Vidal and Seyval Blanc, Traminette, Geisenheim (usually labelled GM- with numbering), l’Acadie blanc, Vignoles, Villard blanc and Chardonel. If you are not sure if the grape is a hybrid or a cross, do Internet research or ask the Chief Steward.

The residual sweetness may range from 0% to 3%. When making a dry table wine, some of the characteristics listed under Chardonnay may be appropriate. When making an off-dry wine, some of the comments under Riesling may be appropriate. These wines should be within the general standards for white table wines but must contain at least 85% of a hybrid varietal or blend regardless of source: i.e. grape, juice or concentrate.

### **Class 24 - GEWURZTRAMINER**

This class is limited to Gewurztraminer products. Sources of grapes are primarily Canadian, but other sources are becoming available, as well as concentrate kit wines. Concentrates may be used, but must meet the above restrictions. Thus it is imperative that the ingredients are known and the percentages of any restricted grape are stated.

These wines will range from pale straw colour through medium yellow to golden, maybe even a hint of pink blush. The wines can be made from dry to slightly sweet for balance. This is a light to medium-bodied wine. The bouquet must be very pronounced with herb-like aromas, including roses, jasmine, lychee fruit and peaches. Spiciness may range from white pepper to cinnamon, cloves, and ground ginger.

The sweetness ranges from 0% to 3% residual sugar. The nose should follow through with an accompanying fruity flavour. It is very important to strike a balance of acid and sugar - avoid cloying sweetness. Alcohol can be quite high – up to 14% without any fortification. The flavour profile should be balanced, soft velvety and light to medium-bodied, but finish long with decent acidity. Entries must contain at least 85% Gewurztraminer product regardless of source: i.e. grape, juice or concentrate.

### **Class 25 – OTHER WHITE TABLE WINES**

These include white table wines featuring 85% varietals and blends other than Chardonnay, Riesling, Gewurztraminer or White Non-Viniferas (which account, if present, for not more than 15% of the total). The most common varieties include: Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Viognier and Auxerrois.

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Concentrates may be used, but must meet the above restrictions. Thus it is imperative that the ingredients are known and the percentages of any restricted grape are stated. Example: 85% Other White vinifera(s), 5% Chardonnay, 5% Riesling and 5% white hybrid fits this class.

### **Class 26 – WHITE TABLE WINE BLEND**

This class is for only those blended white table wines that do not fit into any of the other white table classes. Concentrate kit wines that do not specify grape varieties (Example: Piesporter) belong in this class. To be eligible both the producer and kit name must be supplied.

## **ROSÉ / BLUSH TABLE WINE (PLEASE IDENTIFY IF DRY OR OFF DRY)**

### **Class 31 - ROSE/BLUSH TABLE WINES (dry 31A, off-dry 31B)**

Rosés are wines to be drunk with food. Colour points in this class depend upon attractiveness as a Rosé. Colours such as pale pink, orange, purple and light red are acceptable. Rosés and Blush wines are light to medium-bodied. They must be pleasant in bouquet and flavour and have a clean, refreshing aftertaste. The acid should be in balance with the fruit sweetness or the complexity should be in balance with the dryness. Rosés may be dry to medium dry. In this class they are judged as a table wine. Some spritz is acceptable in the glass. Blush wines may be pale pink as a result of brief red grape skin contact during crushing and pressing. Blush wines may be sweeter than a typical rosé. Balance is a function of acid and alcohol.

## **RED TABLE WINES**

These are wines to be drunk with richly flavoured foods. The colour range is from light red through ruby and garnet with a tawny edge indicating a well-matured wine. Red-purple edges denote a young wine. Red table wines are medium- to full-bodied with the flavour, acid, alcohol, and tannin in perfect harmony. The rich, full bouquet should follow through to match the flavour of the wine. A varietal bouquet is very acceptable. Because fermentation is carried out on the pulp and skins, considerable tannin is extracted. The astringency of this ingredient gives the effect of dryness and possibly bitterness in the mouth when the wine is young. This tannin will soften as the wine ages. A fully matured red will have some glycerine, which may be mistaken for a slightly sweet edge - this is expected and acceptable. A lingering aftertaste is desirable. Avoid entering wines before their time! Many red table wines require considerable aging time in order for the tannins and acids to properly marry; this is even true for some of the lighter style wines.

### **Class 41 – RED BORDEAUX STYLE**

Varietal wines in the Red Bordeaux Style Class must contain at least 85% of one of the following grapes: Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Carmenère, Malbec, Merlot, or Petit Verdot. The remaining 15% may be any ingredient. Blended wines in this class must contain at least 85% of two or more of the above varieties blended to create an elegant combination

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rather than a wine resembling one of the components. The remaining 15% may be any ingredient. Typical bouquet and flavour characteristics range from cassis to currant to bell pepper and cedar, depending on such parameters as fruit ripeness, acid level, yeast selection, malic conversion and use of wood. Grape, juice or concentrate may be used for your must, regardless of source.

### **Class 42 – PINOT NOIR/GAMAY FAMILY**

Varietal wines in the Pinot/Gamay Class must contain at least 85% of one of the following grapes either alone or in blends: Pinot Noir, Gamay Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes. Bouquet and flavour profile will range from spice (cinnamon) to cherry, to earthy, mushroom, leather, and barnyard, depending on fruit ripeness, yeast selection, malic conversion, use of wood and use of carbonic maceration. Grape, juice or concentrate may be used for your must, regardless of source.

Note: Zweigelt has been moved to the Other Red class.

### **Class 43 – RED NON-VINIFERA**

Crossing varieties of *vinifera* (European) and North American *vitis* species yields fruit known as “hybrids” or “inter-specific”. Since many of these hybrids were initially developed by the French, they are referred to as French Hybrids. Hybrid grapes developed in North America and crossings between hybrids are also permitted. “Crosses” of various *vitis vinifera* grapes, however, are not hybrids and are thus not allowed. These wines should be within the general standards for dry red table wines outlined above but must contain at least 85% of a hybrid varietal or hybrid blend. The prominent varieties within this class include Baco Noir, Marechal Foch, de Chaunac, Chambourcin, Chancellor, Lucy Kuhlman, Chelois, Villard Noir, Frontenac and other experimental varieties with North American scion parentage regardless of source: i.e. grape, juice or concentrate.

The grapes appropriate in this category display a range of bouquet and flavour characteristics. Regardless, all wines should display a profile of a well-made red table wine of at least 12% alcohol, dry, with a full mouth feel.

### **Class 44 – RED RHONE STYLE**

The prominent varieties within the Rhone Blend are classically defined as a combination of Syrah (Shiraz) and or Grenache with lesser portions of Carignan, Cinsault, and Mourvedre or Alicante Bouschet or other Rhone region grapes. Some Rhone white grapes (Viognier) in small quantities are permitted.

**Note:** Petite Sirah is NOT a Syrah grape and belongs in the Other Red Table Wines class.

These blends may be quite powerful: deeply coloured, highly alcoholic, tannic; or lighter blends, partly or fully fermented using carbonic maceration. Flavour profiles include violets, black cherry, liquorice, to humus and various pepper and herb spices.

A clear statement of ingredients is a pre-requisite to entering this class, in which 85% of the grape content is made up of the above-mentioned grape varieties. Concentrates may be used, but must meet the above varietal restrictions. Thus it is imperative that the ingredients are known and the percentages of any restricted grape are stated.

**Class 45 – OTHER RED TABLE WINES**

Red table wines featuring varietals, and blends, other than Red Rhone Style, Red Non-Vinifera (Hybrids), Pinot/Gamay or the Red Bordeaux Style, which account, if present, for not more than 15% in total. Some of the appropriate varieties are: Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Barbara, Brunello, Nebbiolo, Ruby Cabernet, Sangiovese, and any other red non-hybrid grapes not specifically included in other red wine categories.

**Notes: Zweigelt is now in this class. Kits or juice labelled “Valpolicella” belong in the Red Blend class.**

The ranges of grapes appropriate in this category display a range of bouquet and flavour characteristics. Regardless, all wines should display a profile of a well-made red table wine of at least 12% alcohol, dry, with a full mouth feel. Concentrates may be used, but must meet the above varietal restrictions. Thus it is imperative that the ingredients are known and the percentages of any restricted grape are stated. A statement of ingredients is compulsory in this class, for example: 85% Other Red Vinifera, 5% Cab Family, 5% Pinot/Gamay and 5% Red Hybrid, fits this class.

**Class 46 – RED TABLE WINE BLEND**

Blended Red Table Wines that do not fit in any other red class. Full disclosure of ingredients and percentages is mandatory. Concentrate kit wines that do not specify grape varieties belong in this class. For example, a kit wine labelled “Valpolicella Style” belongs in this class because Valpolicella is always a blend. Other kit wines or juices with non-specific labels and no disclosure also belong in this class. To be eligible, both the producer and kit name must be supplied.

**DESSERT STYLE WINES**

The standard Dessert and Ice Wine styles are intended either to be an interlude between dinner and dessert, to be the dessert, or to accompany the dessert. Levels of aroma, flavour, sweetness and alcohol that are higher than table and social wines distinguish them. The alcohol is derived from fermentation - not fortification.

**Class 51 – DESSERT WINES**

Any attractive colour is acceptable. The bouquet is fruity and full, but not overwhelming, sometimes exhibiting distinctive qualities of botrytis. They should be medium- to full-bodied with luscious flavour and fruitiness. These wines are sweet and should be in character with dessert. Honey may be an ingredient. The aftertaste should be clean but persistent. Oxidized wines do not fit in this class

Examples: Sauternes (France), Samos (Greece), German Auslese or Beerenauslese, Sweet Mead.

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### **Class 52 - ICEWINE STYLE WINES**

Somewhat similar to a Dessert wine, the purpose is the same: to be compatible for enjoyment with dessert. The wine should be luscious, with an inviting fruit bouquet, but not cloying. Gold to amber is the usual colour, but reds are appearing.

Some of the common descriptors for this wine include characteristics of apricots, peaches, or lychee fruit. Alcohol levels can be as low as 8% but should not exceed 13%. Unlike Sauternes and other Dessert wines, alcohol should not be a predominant characteristic of this wine. All alcohol must be achieved through fermentation; fortification with any sort of alcohol is not permissible.

Production is not limited to grapes frozen-in-the-field. The freeze fractioning of regular grape wine juice is generally a more accessible source for initiating the production of this type of wine. The amateur winemaker's chances of success are increased however, when attempting the freeze fractioning method, by starting with a "late harvest" grape juice. This may also enhance the probability of attaining some characteristics of Botrytis Cinerea. Starting levels should be at least 32 degrees Brix and probably would not be higher than 48 degrees Brix.

## **OTHER STILL WINES**

### **Class 53 – AFTER DINNER WINES**

These wines are to be drunk in place of liqueur, or with nuts and cheese after dessert. All appealing colours are acceptable. After dinner wines are heavy-bodied, and have an intensity of flavour and sweetness. They are usually fortified to a high alcohol level, typically 18% to 20%, but not so alcoholic that it masks the fruit and complexity. The bouquet is rich, full and sweet and there should be a clean and lingering aftertaste. Honey may be an ingredient. Examples include Fine Old Malmsey (Madeira), Late Bottled Vintage Port (Portugal), and Cream Sherry (Spain).

### **Class 61 – SOCIAL WINES**

These are non-sparkling wines of any colour, body or alcoholic content which, because of their character, would not more properly fit into any other classification. The general character of the wine should be drunk alone rather than in the accompaniment of food. The sweetness level should be above table wines and below dessert wines. Small quantities of flavourings may be added to these wines to create unique combinations of fruit, spice or sweetness on the nose and/or the palate. Honey may be included as an ingredient. All additives must be specifically listed.

### **COUNTRY WINES**

A country wine is any wine made from at least 95% non-grape ingredients. The Country Wine Classes are intended for those country wines which depend heavily on their non-grape origins for their interest and character and have been made in a functionally table or functionally social style. Still meads and melomels are appropriate for this class and should be entered in either class depending on sweetness. Oxidized and herbed wines are not acceptable. A wide

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latitude of colour is permissible but the colour must be attractive. The wine should be still, however, where appropriate, a slight touch of spritz is permissible. The bouquet and flavour must be inviting. Alcohol must be in balance with the character of the wine.

Competitors will be required to list the juice varieties and to quantify basic aspects of their eligible entry in the Country Wine Classes, including: approximate alcohol content, approximate sweetness, and any intentional hint of bitterness.

### **Class 62 - COUNTRY TABLE WINE**

Any dry to medium dry (0-3% Residual Sugar) country wine intended as table wine. Balance is of great importance in determining a successful wine. Flavour may range from very delicate to very intense. A touch of "spritz" is acceptable, especially in lower alcohol or lighter flavoured wines.

### **Class 63 - COUNTRY SOCIAL WINE**

Any country wine intended to be appreciated on its own, rather than to accompany food. Country Social Wines are medium dry to medium sweet (3-8% Residual Sugar) and are not sweet enough to be dessert wines. The Country Social Wine class is intended primarily for wines which are outside the parameters of Class 61 (Social wines) because of their fruit characteristics and often, sweetness. Country Social Wines typically have one or more dramatic "peaks" in their profile - an immediately recognizable intensity of fruit aroma and/or flavour, or noticeable acidity and freshness, or a hint of bitterness, or a higher alcohol level through fermentation than is suitable for Class 61 (Social wine). Astringency and/or bitterness and/or high acidity are not faults in themselves but must have been balanced by appropriate sweetness and/or flavour intensity and/or mouthfeel. A touch of spritz is acceptable, especially in lower alcohol or less intensely flavoured wines.

## **SPARKLING WINES, CIDER AND PERRY**

### **Class 64 – SPARKLING WINES**

These wines may be made from any ingredients and should be an attractive colour. A medium body is preferred. Clarity is important. In contrast to the beer classes, wines may not be presented on lees. The wine should maintain its character and effervescence for at least 30 minutes. . Mousse is highly desirable and smaller bubbles are preferable. The sparkle, or effervescence, will be judged by mouth feel.

For the purpose of judging, the sparkling wine class will be divided into two styles: Fruity, refreshing, crisp sparkling wines and Tertiary bottle characteristics usually resulting from secondary fermentation on the lees.

**Fruity Style:** Bouquet can be fruity to fresh with moderate complexity. Dry to sweet wines are acceptable, but a clean finish is essential. Sweeter wines should not be cloying. Aromas include orange blossom, grapefruit, lemon, berry, apricot, peach, apple, melon, Muscat etc. Balance should be crisp, refreshing, fruity and racy.

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**Tertiary Style:** Bouquet is acquired from ageing on the second fermentation lees. Creamy, toasty, yeasty (bread dough), mushrooms, and vanilla may be evident. Oak, if used, should not be overdone. Ideally, the wine should be smooth and fresh on the palate with the acid somewhat prominent but not excessive, and with aromatic length matching the nose.

**Bottles:** For safety reasons wines submitted in the sparkling class in a container other than a full strength, champagne-type bottle intended for wines of five to six atmospheres pressure (75-90 psi) will be disqualified. As a guideline, look for bottles that have a punt and weigh between 750-900 grams.

Be careful when sparkling. Excessively primed wines pose a safety hazard and will be disqualified. Under-primed wines will be marked down but not disqualified.

### **Class 71 – SPARKLING CIDER and PERRY**

Defined as an apple-based or pear based sparkling beverage between 5% and 8% alcohol.

**Sparkle:** must be controlled and last for at least 20 minutes. Preference is given to very fine champagne-like bubbles trailing from the bottom of the glass. You should be able to pour 80% of a wine glass without foaming over.

**Colour:** ranges from almost neutral to golden but not brown.

**Sparging:** The product may be presented on the priming yeast but must pour clear to within one inch of the bottom of the bottle or tin. The Canadian competition prefers sparged bottles but this is not required.

**Bottles:** Returnable beer bottles (glass), sparkling wine bottles, plastic bottles with screw caps or tins are acceptable.

**Taste & balance:** The product must have the balance of sugar, acid and taste expected in a champagne or sparkling wine. There must be no oxidation or characteristic harshness often found in apples. Sweetness is optional but must be in balance. Although alcohol content cannot be measured at the time of judging, any evidence of it in the nose or taste is a fault. Many concentrates and juice combinations create a neutral tasting cider. This taste is not a fault but a cider with a distinct apple characteristic is preferred in this class.

## TROPHY AWARDS

There are 4 Trophy Award categories within the AWO competition:

- **Best White Wine in Show**
- **Best Red Wine in Show**
- **Best White Wine from a 100% Commercial Concentrate Kit**
- **Best Red Wine from a 100% Commercial Concentrate Kit**

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Trophies are awarded to the top score in each category. Trophy Awards do not receive additional individual points toward Grand Champion Winemaker or toward the Club Championship.

The table wines considered in these awards are judged based on the appropriate table wine classes described earlier in this document, such as Chardonnay, Red Hybrids, etc. Failure to fully document and confirm the additional information regarding ingredients necessary to compete in the various trophy awards will lead to disqualification from the trophy awards.

There is no requirement to submit a separate entry for consideration or judging within the trophy awards. Wines that are eligible will be selected and awarded based on the highest score achieved in the appropriate table wine classes.

### **Best White Concentrate Kit / Best Red Concentrate Kit**

The wines entered for consideration in these two AWO trophy awards must be made from 100% commercial concentrate kits. Entrants are required to confirm that the wine being entered meets the requirements for the Best White or Red Concentrate Kit. Only the use of ingredients provided in the concentrate wine kit to be used in the making of the wine is permitted. Additions or use of fresh grapes, skins or other fruits are not allowed within this trophy award. Confirm with your supplier the grapes included and other methods used to produce the resulting wine. Failure to identify the kit used, or to confirm you have made it using only the kit ingredients will lead to disqualification from this concentrate kit trophy award.

Wines competing for these awards should aim for the standards of quality for Red and White Table Wines as set out in the appropriate class descriptions above. The wines will only be judged as part of an existing class and medal quality finishers will only receive medals and certificates within the appropriate class.

The best white and best red concentrate kit table wines will be awarded based on the highest score awarded to a kit wine from within the appropriate classes. There is no requirement to submit a separate entry for consideration in this trophy award competition.

## **POINT TROPHIES**

Additional awards are presented annually for the following achievements based on the judging and on point accumulations and/or highest score within the class.

**Grand Champion Winemaker**

**Grand Champion Cidermaker**

**Grand Champion Club**