

# AMATEUR WINEMAKERS OF ONTARIO

## Competition Class Descriptions

Updated 2024

### GENERAL COMPETITION NOTES

Since many of the classes have specific restrictions on the materials used, 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 cellar master(s).

**Please note:** To be eligible for the Trophy Awards, full disclosure of ingredients is mandatory (see Trophy Awards section at the end of this document).

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

#### **A Note for Winemakers using Wine Kits or Concentrates**

Although many kit wines/concentrates list the varietal(s) used by their primary names (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec etc.) some use aliases that are less commonly known. This is usually because different countries use different names for the same grape. If you don't recognize the varietal stated on the kit, check the Internet for clarification or contact the Chief Steward. Here are a few examples:

Mourvedre = Monastrell, Mataro

Malbec = Cot

Tempranillo = Tinto Fino, Tinto Roriz, Aragonez, Cencibel

Carignan = Mazuelo

In addition, some kits/concentrates use geographical regions (i.e. Tuscany) or non-specific names (ie. Rosso Grande Excellence) for their products. If you cannot determine the varietal(s) used or what is in a blend, these wines should be entered in the Red Blend class. One exception to this would be Valpolicella, which should be entered in the Other Red class.

Please contact the Chief Steward prior to your club competition if there are questions about class eligibility.

## 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.

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. With variable residual sugar, balance between sugar and acid is very important. Wines should finish clean with no cloying.

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 20 – Sauvignon Blanc**

Colour may be almost colourless to pale straw. Bouquet ranges from from grass, herbs, nettles, gooseberries, asparagus, bell pepper (presence of pyrazines) to citrus, tropical fruits, peach. Flavours range from citrus (lemon, lime), green apple, grapefruit to tropical fruit, peach, kiwi, guava and melon. Mineral and/or flinty characteristics may be present. Sauvignon Blanc generally has medium to high acidity with light to medium body. Although most examples are unoaked, judicious use of oak is acceptable. Entries must contain a minimum of 85% Sauvignon Blanc regardless of source: i.e. grape, juice or 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 malo-lactic 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 persistent. Winemakers may choose to make it in a crisp Chablis style or a broader, more classic Burgundian style. 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. Other varieties have Riesling in their name 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. Both of these varieties are actually crosses of other varietals and Riesling and should be entered in the Other White class.

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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.

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 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 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. These wines will range from pale straw colour through medium yellow to golden, maybe even a hint of pink blush. 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. 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 for, if present, not more than 15% of the total). If blends are being entered, be sure that the varietals and their percentages stay within the class restrictions.

The most common varieties include: Pinot Gris/Grigio, Pinot Blanc, Kerner, Viognier, Chenin Blanc, Grenache Blanc, Muscat (Moscato), Trebbiano, Verdicchio, Macabeo (Viura) and

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Auxerrois. Concentrates may be used, but must meet the above restrictions. 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. **Check ingredients carefully.**

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

This class is for blended white table wine using varietals from any of the above White Wine classes. **Note:** these wines must contain less than 85% of any single class in the blend. **Check ingredients and percentages carefully.** Example: 50% Vidal, 25% Gewurztraminer, 25% Kerner. Kit wines, concentrates and juices that do not specify grape varieties (Example: Piesporter, Angel Blanco) belong in this class. To be eligible, both the producer and kit name must be supplied.

## **ROSÉ / BLUSH TABLE WINES**

### **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. A slight 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.

**NOTE: Rosé is a single class. Winemakers may enter 1 wine only.**

## **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, acids and oak to properly marry (this is even true for some of the lighter style wines).

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### **Class 40 – RED BORDEAUX SINGLE VARIETALS (New class for 2020)**

This class is for wines that feature **one** of the following grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot and Carmenère. **The minimum amount of this varietal must be 90%.** The remaining 10% can be from any other class (including Bordeaux). Typical bouquet and flavour characteristics range from cassis to currant to bell pepper and cedar, depending on such parameters as terroir, fruit ripeness, acid level, yeast selection, malic conversion and use of oak. Grape, juice or concentrate may be used regardless of source.

### **Class 41 – RED BORDEAUX BLENDS (Renaming of current Bordeaux class)**

This class is for **blends** that include two or more of the following grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot and Carmenère. Wines in this class must contain at least 85% of these varietals. The remaining 15% can be from any other class.

**Important: The maximum amount of any single varietal must not exceed 89%.** The goal of wines in this class is to create an elegant and harmonious combination rather than a wine resembling one or more of the components. Grape, juice or concentrate may be used 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 profiles include spice (cinnamon, pepper) cherry, earthy, mushroom, leather, and barnyard, depending on fruit ripeness, yeast selection, malic conversion, use of oak and possible carbonic maceration. Grapes, juice or concentrate may be used regardless of source.

### **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, Marquette, de Chaunac, Chambourcin, Chancellor, Lucy Kuhlman, Noiret, Rondo, Regent, 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 varietals within the Rhone Blend are classically defined as a combination of Syrah (Shiraz) and/or Grenache with lesser portions of Carignan, Cinsault, Mourvedre (Monastrell, Mataro), Alicante Bouschet or other Rhone region grapes. Some Rhone white grapes (Viognier) in small quantities are permitted.

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**Note:** Petite Sirah is NOT in the Rhone class and should be entered 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, licorice, to humus and various pepper and herb spices.

Wines in this class must contain a minimum of 85% of the above-mentioned grape varieties. Concentrates may be used, but must meet the above varietal restrictions. Thus it is imperative that the ingredients be known and the percentages of any restricted grape 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. Example of popular varietals are: Zinfandel, Tempranillo (aka Tinta Roriz, Tinto Fino, Cencibel, Aragon), Petite Sirah, Sangiovese (aka Brunello in kits), Barbara, Nebbiolo, Touriga Nacional, Pinotage, Ruby Cabernet, Zweigelt and any other red non-hybrid grapes not specifically included in other red wine categories.

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. An example would be: 85% Other Red Vinifera, 5% Cab Family, 5% Pinot/Gamay and 5% Red Hybrid. **Note:** Kit wines or juices labelled “Valpolicella” should be entered in this class. **Check ingredients carefully.**

### **Class 46 – RED TABLE WINE BLEND**

This class is for blended red table wines using varietals from any of the above Red Wine classes. **Note:** these wines must contain less than 85% of any single class in the blend. **Check ingredients and percentages carefully.** Example: 50% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Syrah. Full disclosure of ingredients and percentages is mandatory. Concentrate kit wines that do not specify grape varieties belong in this class. Kit wines or juices with non-specific labels (Example: Rosso Grosso, Vieux Chateau du Roi, etc.) and no ingredient disclosure also belong in this class. To be eligible, both the kit name and the manufacturer must be supplied.

## **DESSERT STYLE WINES**

The 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 should be higher than table and social wines. The alcohol is derived from fermentation - not fortification.

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### **Class 51 – DESSERT WINES**

Any attractive colour is desirable. 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.

### **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 icewines made from red grapes are not uncommon.

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 permitted.

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 Madeira, Port, cream style Sherry and Mead.

### **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 lend itself to being drunk alone rather than in the accompaniment of food. **The sweetness level should be above table wines and below dessert wines.** Wines commonly seen in this class include: Late Harvest Vidal/Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Muscat and White Zinfandel as well as combinations of grape wines and fruit juices. Small quantities of flavourings



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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

Country wines must be made from **at least 95% non-grape ingredients**. The Country Wine Classes are intended for wines which depend heavily on their non-grape origins for their interest and character. Wines must be made in a table or 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 latitude of colour is permissible but the colour must be attractive. The wine should be still, but a slight touch of spritz is permissible where appropriate. 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 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 a table wine. **Residual sugar levels and balance are 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. **As in the Social class, the sweetness level should be above table wines and below 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 non-grape fruit content and characteristics. Astringency and/or bitterness and/or high acidity are not faults in themselves but must have be 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. Clarity is important and 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 Style** (refreshing, crisp sparkling wines) and **Tertiary Style** (bottle characteristics usually resulting from secondary fermentation on the lees).

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**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 grapefruit, lemon, peach, apple, berry, apricot, orange blossom, melon, Muscat etc. Balance should be crisp, refreshing, fruity and racy.

**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.

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

### Class 71 – SPARKLING CIDER and PERRY

#### Cider Class

All ciders must have apple aromas and flavours and be pleasant and refreshing. Acidity should be medium to high. Appearance will generally range from pale yellow to honey gold, but significant colour variations are acceptable depending on the subclass. Please refer to each subclass for more information on colour. Cloudy or “hazy” style ciders are permitted. Mouthfeel should be medium in body. Some tannin should be present for slight to moderate astringency. In all subclasses, a balance between sweetness and acidity is essential. Both still and carbonated ciders are permitted in all subclasses. Carbonation range may be from light to fully carbonated. Bottle fermented ciders may be presented on the lees.

**Note:** Two entries are permitted in the Cider/Perry class. Entries, however, must be from different subclasses.

#### Cider/Perry Subclasses

**A. Traditional Ciders** - must have apple aromas and flavours. Sweeter examples should be pleasant with no cloying notes. Dry ciders should have a crisp and refreshingly clean finish. (Small hints of barnyard are acceptable as is a hint of Diacetyl (butter, butterscotch). Ciders must have a pleasant body without being thin or watery and be appealing on the palate. Colour will generally range from pale yellow to honey gold, but may also include other hues (esp. pink) due to skin contact or the use of red fleshed apples. Barrel aging may darken the colour.

**B. Fruit added ciders** - must have obvious apple flavours and aromas. Added fruit may complement the apple but never mask it. This is not a cooler. Candy apple flavours are not acceptable. Colour variations are permitted, as they may reflect the added fruit. Greater

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mouthfeel may result but the overall refreshing characteristic of cider apples must be obvious. The fruit must marry with the apples in a complimentary way.

**C. Hopped/Spiced/herbed ciders** - Hopped ciders are the most common in this category. Other examples are "apple pie" spices, (cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice). Ginger, lemon grass, herbal teas etc. may be added but the overall apple component must not be masked. This cider may have more tannin but must not be bitter. Colour variations are permitted as they may reflect the added elements. Barrel aging may darken the colour.

**D. Perry** - made from pears instead of apples.