

BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

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CLASS C4 – OTHER DRY WHITE (Sauvignon Blanc)

Presented by Laurie Dane (Victoria Chapter)

Other Dry Whites (Class C4)

This class includes all other white wines, both varietals and blends, that do not meet the criteria for Classes C1 (Chardonnay), C5 (White Pinot), or C2 (Aromatic White Vinifera). It is intended for white wines designed to be enjoyed with food.

Varietal vinifera wines in this category must consist of at least 85% vinifera grape varieties such as Auxerrois, Chasselas, Chenin Blanc, Colombard, Grüner Veltliner, Madeleine Angevine, Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon, or Trebbiano. The remaining 15% may include any other ingredients.

Blended wines in this class must not fit the definitions of C1, C5, or C2. Wines containing interspecific hybrid grapes are permitted. However, their ingredient percentages must be specified to confirm eligibility for the appropriate AWC category. Aromatic white grape varieties may be included in blends as long as their influence remains subtle.

Non-grape dry white table wines should be classified under this category or J1 (Country Table).

Technical Characteristics

- Alcohol: 9% - 13.5%.
- Colour: Pale bronze or bronze-pink to pale straw to light gold. No amber, brown or grey tinges.
- Sugar: 0.0% - 1.5%.
- Specific Gravity: 0.990 - 0.998.
- Acidity: 6.0g/L - 7.5g/L. pH: 3.0 - 3.7

Sauvignon Blanc (The Wild White)

Sauvignon Blanc is a white grape variety that originated in the Bordeaux region of France and is believed to be a descendant of the ancient grape Savagnin. The name "Sauvignon" is derived from the French word sauvage, meaning "wild," echoing its origins as a native grape in southwestern France. Historically, Sauvignon Blanc was primarily used in white Bordeaux blends alongside Sémillon, contributing to both dry white wines and the famous sweet wines of Sauternes. By the 18th century, the grape had also gained prominence in the Loire Valley, particularly in Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, where it was celebrated for its crisp acidity and distinctive mineral-driven character.

The 20th century saw Sauvignon Blanc expand globally, where it thrived in regions such as California, Chile, South Africa, and especially New Zealand. It became the country's flagship white variety. In the Marlborough region, Sauvignon Blanc developed an intensely aromatic profile with

pronounced notes of passionfruit, gooseberry, and fresh-cut grass, setting a new bar for the variety. Its adaptability to different climates and soils has led to diverse styles, from the lean, flinty wines of the Loire to the tropical and fruit-forward expressions of the New World. Today, Sauvignon Blanc remains one of the most widely planted and popular white wine grapes, prized for its refreshing acidity and vibrant flavors.

Old World vs. New World: The Ultimate Grapevine Showdown

Old World (France, Italy, Austria, Spain): These wines are more restrained and mineral driven, often with flinty, herbal, and citrus notes. Loire Valley Sauvignon Blanc (e.g., Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé) tends to have high acidity, green fruit flavors, and a chalky minerality. Bordeaux Sauvignon Blanc is often blended with Sémillon, producing a rounder, more textured style.

New World (New Zealand, California, Chile, South Africa, Australia): These wines are more fruit-forward and aromatic, with intense flavors of tropical fruit (passionfruit, guava), citrus (grapefruit, lime), and green notes (gooseberry, bell pepper). New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, especially from Marlborough, is the most famous example of this vibrant, zesty style.

How to Spot a Wild White: It's Not Just the Wine, It's an Adventure!

The defining characteristic that immediately identifies Sauvignon Blanc is its high acidity and distinctive green and citrus aromas—especially gooseberry, fresh-cut grass, and grapefruit.

If you smell a wine and get a burst of zesty citrus, tropical fruit, and herbaceous notes (like bell pepper or freshly mowed lawn), it's almost certainly Sauvignon Blanc. No other white grape consistently delivers that combination of crisp acidity, bright fruit, and green vegetal tones quite like it!

The Nose Knows: A fragrant Tale of Sauvignon Blanc?

Sauvignon Blanc often has a distinctive, aromatic profile that can vary depending on the region and growing conditions, here are some familiar aromas you might encounter:

- **Citrus:** Lemon, lime, and grapefruit are typically fresh, zesty notes.
- **Green fruits:** Green apple, gooseberry, and even kiwi can be present.
- **Herbaceous:** Often described as grassy, with hints of fresh-cut grass or even bell pepper.
- **Tropical fruits:** In warmer regions, you might get the aromas of passion fruit, pineapple, or mango.
- **Minerality:** Some Sauvignon Blancs show a flinty or wet stone characteristic, giving them a more earthy, mineral smell.
- **Floral:** Light, subtle floral notes like elderflower or jasmine can also appear, especially in cooler climates.

But, is it worthy of a medal?

One thing that identifies a solid-medaled Sauvignon Blanc wine is balance. The harmony between its crisp acidity, vibrant fruit, and aromatic intensity are critical for medal quality wines.

A great Sauvignon Blanc should have zesty freshness without being overly sharp, bold aromas without being overpowering, and a long, clean finish that leaves you wanting another sip. Whether it's a mineral-driven Sancerre or a tropical Marlborough style, the key is that no single element dominates—the acidity, fruit, and structure all work together seamlessly.

Fun Facts

It has a signature "cat pee" aroma (in a good way!). Some Sauvignon Blancs, especially those from cooler climates, have a distinct aroma often described as "cat pee." This aroma comes from high levels of pyrazines, the same compounds that give bell peppers their green, vegetal scent.

It has an official holiday: International Sauvignon Blanc Day is celebrated on the first Friday of May each year, giving wine lovers an excuse to raise a glass of this crisp and refreshing white.

It was one of the first wines to be bottled with a screw cap – New Zealand winemakers were among the pioneers of using screw caps for Sauvignon Blanc, helping preserve its fresh, vibrant flavors.

Food Pairing: Because Your Wine Deserves a Snack Buddy

Food Pairing: Its acidity and bright flavors make it a good match for goat cheese, seafood, salads, and citrus-based dishes.

References

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