

# BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

May 2015

## CLASS C4 – OTHER DRY WHITE (Sauvignon Blanc)

Presented by John Matkovich (Mainland Chapter)

### **BCAWA DEFINITION: Class C4 – Other Dry White**

This class contains all other white wines, either varietals or blends, which do not fit the descriptions of Classes D1 (Chardonnay), D2 (White Pinot), or D4 (Aromatic White Grape). A white wine to be consumed with food. Varietal vinifera wines in this class must contain 85% or more of vinifera varieties such as Auxerrois, Chasselas, Madeline Angevine Trebbiano and Colombard, The remaining 15% may be any ingredient. Blends in this class must not fit the definitions of D1, D2, or D4. Wines that include less than 85% interspecific hybrid grapes are acceptable in this class. Aromatic white grape varieties are acceptable in blends provided their impact is subdued. Non-grape dry white table wines belong in either this class 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.

### **ENTRIES IN THIS SESSION:**

1. A Sauvignon Blanc. An interesting entry.
2. A Sauvignon Blanc Semillon Blend.
3. A Viognier, Roussanne Marsanne Blend
4. A Viognier, Roussanne Marsanne Grenache Blanc Clairette Blend
5. Epicure
6. Gruner Veltliner
7. A Chenin Blanc

These entries come from Australia, BC South Africa France Austria Chile and one made by one of our winemakers. We will have a contest and see if you can match the wine to the Country of origin.

### **DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WINES IN THIS SESSION**

#### **Sauvignon Blanc**

One of the most refreshing and vibrant white wines, Sauvignon Blanc's signature aromas include freshly mown grass, lemon-grass, gooseberry, green bell pepper, green melon, grapefruit, canned peas, asparagus, lime, nettle, acacia, hawthorn and herbal notes. Sauvignon Blanc vines are vigorous and growers must trim back leaf canopy so that the grapes get sufficient nutrients to ripen and develop their flavors.

In the Loire Valley, Sauvignon Blanc makes wines known as Pouilly Fumé and Sancerre, named after their respective towns and usually made from 100% Sauvignon Blanc and unoaked. Fumé refers to the smoky or flinty character Loire wines achieve from their marvelous minerality.

In California, this wine is often labeled as Fumé Blanc, which is oaked, a play on the Loire name and a rebranding of the wine that hadn't been successful when introduced as Sauvignon Blanc. In California this wine is oaked

Sauvignon Blanc is the leading white wine of New Zealand that Cloudy Bay winery made famous in the Marlborough region. South Africa also makes excellent, underpriced Sauvignon Blanc as does the San Antonio Valley in Chile. Australia is generally too warm to maintain the wine's vibrant acidity.

Sauvignon Blanc is incredibly versatile with food. Try the dry style with bell peppers, cilantro, smoked cheeses, shellfish, Caesar salad, Jarlsberg cheese, corned beef and cabbage, cheese fondue, goat cheese, turkey pot pie, egg dishes, asparagus quiche, guacamole, sushi, pasta with cream-based sauce, pizza and grilled salmon. Dessert styles go well with angel food cake, biscotti, bread pudding, cheesecake, fresh fruit, fruit tarts, and fruit-based desserts.

### **Chenin Blanc**

At the beginning of the 1970s, Americans began to discover that California's better-quality wines labeled their bottles with the name of the predominate grape variety, rather than standard practice of the day which was to label with [generic names](#). Made in a style popular at that time, fragrant and lightly sweet, and also easy to pronounce, Chenin Blanc quickly became the best-selling wine of the era.

Chenin blanc is arguably the most versatile of all wine grape varieties. Crisp, dry table wines, light sparkling wines, long-lived, unctuous, nectar-like dessert wines, and even brandy are all produced in various areas of the wine world, all using dominantly or entirely Chenin Blanc grapes. The versatility of Chenin Blanc may be both a blessing and a curse, since very few labels reveal any residual sugar which would indicate the style or sweetness of the wine to consumers.

It might even be said that Chenin Blanc is France's most successful export variety, if only considering the vine rather than the wine. Although the native region for Chenin is the Loire Valley (where the grape is often called *Pineau de la Loire*), there is less planted in all of France than in most wine-producing countries of the New World.

It is planted as *Pinot Blanco* in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Argentina. It is the major white variety in South Africa, where nearly a fifth of all vines are Chenin Blanc (aka *Steen*). In California, it is the third most widely planted white wine grape.

Nearly all the truly memorable Chenin Blancs are French, no matter the style, a certain floral, honeyed character, along with zesty acidity are the sensory trademarks of well-made Chenin Blanc. When conditions are right, *Botrytis cinerea* adds additional complexity and intensity.

### **Semillon**

Sémillon wine is loved for its full body, like Chardonnay, but with flavors closer to Pinot Gris or Sauvignon Blanc. It's an important blending component in White Bordeaux and is also planted throughout Australia. In the US, Sémillon wines are usually a great price for their quality. Despite how

cheap it is, Sémillon has the pedigree to be alongside the most popular white wines in the world. Find out all about Sémillon wine; how way it tastes, where it grows and what you'll enjoy eating with it. Mount Boucherie in BC makes a very good Semillon.

The primary fruit flavors in Sémillon wine are lemon, apple, pear and green papaya. There's something very waxy about the taste of Sémillon which wine writers often describe as lanolin. Depending on where Sémillon is grown it can range from being a zesty, palate-cleansing wine like Sauvignon Blanc to a rich, creamy, lemon-flavored wine like oaked Chardonnay.

1. Sémillon is a golden-skinned grape used to make dry and sweet white wines, mostly in France and Australia.
2. Notable regions: France, Australia, Chile, South Africa, New Zealand, Argentina
3. Origin: France
4. Wine color: White wine
5. Scientific name: *Vitis vinifera* 'Sémillon'
6. Rank: Cultivar
7. Higher classification: Common Grape Vine

## **Viognier**

Have you ever wondered "What is that?" when a lunch date ordered a glass of viognier with their meal? Have you scanned a wine list, seeing a number of French wines, or California wines, made with viognier and wonder what it taste like? All too often we stay in the safe zone with our wine choices, rarely venturing outside our box. After reading this, you'll not only know what to expect in that glass of wine, but you'll be able to pair it with foods, and talk about it, if you want.

Viognier is a French grape, not very widely planted there any longer, with less than 300 acres planted in it's Northern Rhone home. Pronounced VEE-ohn-yay, it's the main white grape of the French appellations of Condrieu and Chateau-Grillet, and often blended with Syrah to add an exotic bouquet to the red wine. Viognier wines exploded in popularity in the United States in the 1990s, and there are more than a thousand acres of the white grape there today. You can find viognier wines from Virginia and France's Languedoc-Roussillon regions in addition to California and the Rhone. Don't be surprised if you see it from South America as well.

Typical markers, or notes, of Viognier include white floral such as honey-suckle or jasmine, as well as orange blossom. Along with a honey or honey-suckle notes, you'll also find stone fruit flavors, peach, apricot, nectarine, as well as a nice spice component that can be described as baking spices. On the palate, you will find it to be typically fuller bodied, often with an oily or "lanolin" feel in your mouth.

Food and wine pairings with Viognier include chicken and fish dishes, from grilled to broiled to poached. Those meats, or others such as veal, with butter or cream sauces will also work well with Viognier. The white wine will enhance fruit flavors, making it s great pairing with fruit dishes as appetizers, or as a topping with those chicken or fish dishes. Viognier will pair nicely with lobster, crab, shrimp or other seafood's. This is clearly food friendly, but also very nice white wine to sip on it's own.

1. Viognier is a white wine grape variety. It is the only permitted grape for the French wine Condrieu in the Rhône Valley. Outside of the Rhône, Viognier can be found in regions of North and South America as well as Australia and New Zealand.

2. Notable regions: Australia, Canada, Chile, Rhône wine region, more
3. Sweetness of resulting wine: Dry or sweet
4. Wine color: White wine
5. Scientific name: *Vitis vinifera* 'Viognier'

## **Roussanne**

Roussanne is a white wine grape variety grown originally in the Rhone region of France. Other names of Roussanne are Barbin, Rebelot, Bergeron, Greffou, and Picotin Blanc. Today, Roussanne is an important component in the wines of Crozes-Hermitage, Hermitage, and Saint-Joseph. It can also be found in the white wines of Chateauneuf-du-Pape and in some white wines from the Cotes du Rhone AOC. There are plantings of Roussanne in a few other French regions besides Rhone, as well as in Italy, Australia, California and some experimental plantings can be found in Washington State.

The Roussanne grapes require a long growing season and ripen late. In case the grapes are picked too early, the wine produced from them can turn out to be very acidic. Roussanne is best suited for warm sunny climates with sufficient sunlight. The Roussanne vine is characterized by irregular yields. It is a difficult variety to grow, since it is vulnerable to mildew and rot, and has poor resistance to wind and drought. Besides, oxidation can affect the quality of the resulting wine.

Due to the unique combination of richness, minerality and balancing acids, Roussanne tends to age very well and benefits from barrel fermentation and aging in oak. Many Roussanne wines and blends can be enjoyed after over a decade after bottling.

The wine can be aged in oak barrels or stainless steel tanks, and depending on the method used for aging the wine, the qualities of wine, its aroma and taste, will be different. Oak aging makes the wine rich, and enhances excellent texture of the wine. Stainless steel tanks tend to bring out the floral tones and minerals of the wine.

Good examples of Roussanne wines as stand-alone varietals are elegant, complex, displaying good acidic balance. The characteristic flavors are those of melon, pears, sweet white fruit, tree blossoms and herbs. Roussanne wines are not as fruity as other white wines. The aroma of Roussanne suggests a flowery herbal tea.

As such wines age, they may also develop the flavors of honey, coffee, and almonds. However, Roussanne is not often bottled as a stand-alone varietal in Europe, as on its own it can sometimes be rather tart and not very rich.

If you want to drink the Roussanne wine young, the best time may be when the wine has aged for 3 to 5 years. The thing is that after 5 years, Roussanne seems to be in a dormant stage, which means that it doesn't taste very well. The wine will take on the characteristics typical of an aged wine only after about 7 years. So, it is worth waiting if you are after aged Roussanne.

More often Roussanne is blended with Marsanne, especially in the Rhone region. In other areas Roussanne is blended with Chardonnay. Used in blends, Roussanne tends to add acidity, elegance and aromaticity to the wine, as well as good potential to age and develop in the bottle. Wines made from Roussanne have intense aromas, usually featuring herbal tea notes. Grown in cooler climates, Roussanne wines are light, delicate and more acidic, having distinct floral aromas. In warm climates, Roussanne wines are full-bodied and rich, characterized by aromas of pears and honey.

Roussanne wine pairs well with many types of seafood: shellfish dishes, oysters. It also goes well with cheeses, bacon, chicken, smoked fish, potato salad, Caesar salad, etc. The recommended serving temperature for Roussanne wines is 50°-55° F.

## **Marsanne**

Marsanne (also known as *Ermitage*) is a white wine-grape variety from the Rhone Valley, perhaps best known for its role in the celebrated whites of Hermitage. It is also found in Savoie and Switzerland, where it is known as Ermitage, and has been warmly adopted as a specialist curio in both Australia and the United States – most notably California and Washington.

Marsanne wines generally possess good weight and structure, but often lack any depth of perfume and flavor. This explains the long-standing Rhone Valley tradition of blending the variety with its more aromatic cousin Rousanne. Together, this duo forms the core of white wines from both Crozes-Hermitage and Saint-Joseph and the sparkling whites of Saint-Peray. Both are also key ingredients in white Cotes du Rhone wines, usually alongside Grenache Blanc and Viognier.

Although dry styles of Marsanne are more common, some of the very finest examples are sweet, and made from dried grapes. The most famous example of this is probably Chapoutier's Hermitage Vin de Paille, but many excellent-quality *Ermitage Flettri* wines are produced each year in the Swiss Valais.

Marsanne is most famously found in varietal form outside of France. The grape first made its way to Australia in the 1860s and was planted in the states of Victoria and South Australia. The Tahbilk winery was among the first to grow Marsanne in the Nagambie Lakes district, and now boasts what may be the oldest productive Marsanne vines in the world, which were planted in 1927. Old-vine Marsanne has the potential to age for up to 15 years and can develop deep amber colors and nutty, orange-marmalade flavors.

In hot climates, Marsanne can struggle to develop enough acidity to prevent its weight from muting its flavor, but cooler climates can produce complex and age-worthy wine. In their youth, Marsanne wines are typically colored with straw-like hues, and even fleeting golden-green glints. On the nose the best examples have a slightly earthy minerality, lifted by notes of honeysuckle and melon.

**Synonyms include:** Marsana, Ermitage, Ermitage Blanc, Grosse Roussette, Hermitage.

### **Food matches for Marsanne include:**

- Pan-fried trout with almonds
- Soba noodles with salmon and sesame seeds
- Baked eggplant with crème fraiche

## **Grenache Blanc**

Grenache Blanc is one of the most important, white blending grapes in The Rhone Valley. Grenache Blanc is also popular in Spain, where it is known as Garnacha Blanca. In France, the grape is the fifth most popular white wine grape. In Spain, it ranks ninth. In Chateauneuf du Pape, Grenache takes up close to 2.47% of the appellation's vineyards. While most growers produce the grape to be used as part of a blend, there are some winemakers that are producing wine from 100% Grenache Blanc in the Rhone Valley. However, these wines are meant for early drinking as they are prone to oxidation.

Grenache Blanc is also used by some producers in the Cotes du Rhone as part of the blend for their red wines. The grape adds texture and floral character to the blend. In the Roussillon area, Grenache Blanc is quite popular. In fact, close to 50% of all the Grenache Blanc vines are located in that commune. In that region, the grape is most often blended with Roussanne and Marsanne. However, Grenache Blanc is planted in numerous areas in the Southern Rhone Valley including: Vacqueyras, Lirac, Tavel, Cotes du Luberon, Costieres de Nimes, Coteaux du Tricastin and Cotes du Rhone.

As the name implies, Grenache Blanc is related to Grenache, the popular red wine grape. Researchers believe the grape was first popularized in Spain, which is part of the reason for its popularity in that country.

Grenache Blanc for a food and wine pairing works well with most types of seafood. However, it's a perfect match for shellfish and of course, the famous dish of southern France, bouillabaisse.

Grenache Blanc, with its light skin adds elements of green apple, herb and minerality, along with floral scents and refreshing acidity. The grape thrives in the hot, dry and often windy conditions found in the Southern Rhone Valley.

Grenache Blanc is also planted in California. The majority of the growers from the Golden State working with the grape are located in the Central Coast area, especially in the San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara appellations. Some of the producers to look for making 100% Grenache Blanc in California are Jaffurs, Kinero, Shane and Tablas Creek. Tablas Creek is owned in part by the Perrin Family that also own Chateau Beaucastel. The grape enjoys some popularity in Australia as well where it is known as White Grenache.

### **Clairette**

Clairette is used in the Chateauneuf du Pape region as a blending grape in the production of white wine. However, while Clairette plays only a token part in Chateauneuf du Pape Blanc, it is much more popular in other areas of France. Even though Clairette is one of the oldest grapes used for wine in France, with the passing of time, the grape continues losing market share as a white wine grape for use in the Rhone Valley. Clairette is used not only in the production of white wine; it is also used to produce Vermouth.

The fruit is also known as Clairette Blanche. Clairette, with its ability to deliver low alcohol and high acidity is used to add freshness, green apple, lime, peach, licorice and floral characteristics. This is one of the few white wine grapes that is also used as part of the blend from time to time in the production of red Chateauneuf du Pape wine.

Currently, Clairette takes up close to 2.5% of the vineyards in Chateauneuf du Pape devoted to making white wine. The grape is also grown in South Africa, Algeria, Russia, Israel and Australia. In France, this is the only allowable grape used in the Clairette de Die appellation which produces sparkling wine. Clairette is also used to produce Sparkling wine in other countries which are most notably South Africa and Australia.

Clairette can be paired many different types of seafood. However, it's a perfect match for shellfish and a myriad of soft and hard cheeses.

Clairette grows best in warm weather and limestone soils. Wines made from 100% Clairette do not age well as the wines are prone to early oxidation. They need to be drunk in their youth for their up front, fruity quality.

### **Gruner Veltliner**

Finding Gruner Veltliner, a wine known for its spicy minerality and firm acidity, used to be a real challenge in the United States. But even though Austrians still keep the bulk of the wine that they

produce for themselves, Gruner Veltliner, the most distinctive and widely grown grape in Austria, is rapidly gaining popularity elsewhere thanks to its food-friendliness and engaging complexity. Culmina Winery (BC) a new winery run by Don Triggs is growing Gruner Veltliner on a high elevation vineyard on the Golden Mile in Oliver.

In Austria's Niederösterreich region, along the Danube River north of Vienna, Gruner Veltliner grows at its finest in terraced vineyards, on slopes so steep that they can barely retain any soil. Some Riesling is planted in these prized locations, but not nearly as much as Gruner Veltliner: on the whole, its plantings make up 36% of all Austrian vineyards.

Within Niederösterreich, plenty of Gruner Veltliner grows in the Weinviertel, just to the northeast of Vienna. Here, the vines grow in deep clay soils, and fruit is made into simple wines, consumed young in the many wine pubs of Vienna.

The terraced vineyards are found farther west, in the regions of Kremstal, Kamptau, and Wachau. Here, what soil does remain is heavily granite in composition, imbuing the wines with hefty stony character. Wines from Wachau are especially prized for their depth and power. In the Kremstal and Kamptau, soils retain their minerality but are still lighter than those in Wachau. Consequently, wines are somewhat more elegant: still steely but not as intense. Thanks to their acidity, wines from all three regions will age well, shedding some of their initial vegetal characteristics while gaining increased spiciness and complexity. Look for bottlings from Huber, Schloss Gobelsburg, and Prager.

Gruner Veltliner is an especially food-friendly wine: it works well with the traditional partners for mineral-rich, high-acid white wines-- chicken and fish, but it also can handle more challenging matches, like asparagus and artichokes.

### **Epicure**

Epicure is a mid season ripening white grape, often harvesting a week before Pinot Noir on the BC Coast. It is a large clustered vine with small leaves and exceptional disease resistance. Epicure is a complex cross between Cabernet Sauvignon and a number of Asian grape varieties. Wines from Epicure tend to exhibit strong tropical flavours, pineapple, guava, and passion fruit. Gooseberry can be detected in leaner seasons and in those years the wines can be more like a Loire Sauvignon Blanc.