

**BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES**  
October 2013  
**CLASS E3 – non-VINIFERA RED**  
Presented by Sam Hauck (Mainland Chapter)

*Keep an open mind*

**After completing this session you should know:**

1. The description and technical characteristics of the class.
2. Typical descriptors for Baco Noir, Leon Millot and Maréchal Foch.
3. Which WW 1 war hero has a grape named after him.
4. Why these varieties were developed.
5. The important role they have played in the development of the North American wine industry.
6. Some foods that pair well with these wines .

**Class C7. Non-Vinifera Red Grape**

A red table wine made from grapes of which at least 95% are interspecific hybrid varieties. They include, as varieties or blends, Baco noir, Castel, Chambourcin, Chancellor, De Chaunac, Frontenac, Landal, Landot, Lucie Kuhlmann, Léon Millot, Maréchal Foch, Michurinetz, Sabrevois, and St. Croix among many others.

The remaining 5% may be any ingredient. As with any table wine, the sugar-acid balance must convey the impact of dry table wine style. [Judges should have sufficient general familiarity with these wines that they recognize their positive attributes and realize that entries should not be penalized for characters that are typical of the varietal.](#)

**Guild Master's note:**

These are not vinifera grapes; so do not judge them that way. They are what they are – non vinifera. They tend to be easy drinking due to their low tannins and they have different flavour profiles. They provide a good introduction for non-red wine drinkers or for those new to drinking wine. Set your preferences and prejudices aside, open your mind and imagine these wines with a grilled hamburger, some BBQ ribs or a pepperoni pizza.

**The Flight**

This flight includes three varieties, Baco Noir, Leon Millot and Maréchal Foch.

**Overview**

Non-vinifera grapes have played an important role in the development of the North American wine industry. They provided the necessary transition from the foxy native labrusca grapes (such as Concord, Emperor, Catawba, Niagara, Delaware, etc.) to vitis vinifera grapes. French hybrid grapes were first developed two hundred years ago in Europe with the aim of producing pest and disease resistant grapes that had the winemaking quality of vinifera varieties. They were trying to create vines that would be resistant to the Phylloxera louse that had devastated vineyards throughout Europe in the mid 1800's.

French hybrids are crosses of hardy native North American grapes with vinifera varieties. The solution for Europe turned out to be vitis vinifera vines grafted onto American rootstocks. Regions with long, cold winters, such as eastern Canada and the US, have had much better success growing these robust hybrids, though some regions have had some success with cool climate vinifera grapes such as riesling, Kerner, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Auxerois, Pinot Gris, Siegerrebe, etc.

In the 1980's, following NAFTA, when subsidies for Canadian wines were removed, most French hybrids were pulled out and replaced with vitis vinifera varietals. Few plots remain. In BC, the following are some of the Okanagan/Thompson wineries still producing non-vinifera wines:

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Ancient Hills  | Baco Noir     |
| Lang Vineyards | Maréchal Foch |
| Larch Hills    | Maréchal Foch |
| Little Straw   | Maréchal Foch |
| Niche          | Maréchal Foch |
| Quail's Gate   | Maréchal Foch |
| Recline Ridge  | Maréchal Foch |
| St. Hubertus   | Maréchal Foch |
| Saxon          | Leon Millot   |
| Sperling       | Maréchal Foch |

In addition, the three varietals mentioned above are commonly found on the more than seventy vineyards of the Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island. Hybrids can be challenging to make into good wine as they can lack sufficient tannin and can be high in acid. *One advantage of these grapes is that they usually lack any 'green' character in poor vintages, unlike red vinifera wines.*

Some would argue that there is no need for non-vinifera grapes in BC, now that the vinifera grapes have proven themselves. However, there remains a cult following for the wines as well as those wine drinkers who search for new wine experiences and enjoy difference flavour profiles.

### **Baco Noir**

A cross of Folle Blanche (vitis vinifera - one of the grapes used to make Cognac) and an unknown variety of vitis riparia. Created by Francois Baco. Once grown in Burgundy and the Loire until the EU placed restrictions on the commercial use of hybrids. Introduced to North America in the 1950's. Think of it as you would a rustic Italian red.

### The Grape

Highly pigmented. Good acidity, low tannin

### The Wine

Medium body, deeply tinted (teeth stainer). Rich red fruit tones, especially blueberry, blackberry and plum, can be smoky. Some can be aged for five to ten years (higher acid wines) Rustic aromas

### Regions

Canada: ntario

USA: New York, Michigan, Mississippi, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Oregon

### Food pairings

- Turkey scallopine
- Pheasant
- Grilled hamburger or ribs
- Lamb kebabs
- Tomato based pastas
- Pepperoni pizza
- Spicy chicken wings

Here is an example of a review for a BC Baco Noir:

**Summerhill 2007 Baco Noir**

**88 points**

The aromas in this single vineyard, organic red are dense - dark chocolate, cherry and black raspberry. It has some dried fruit layers and pleasing floral notes too. It is quite brawny on the palate - spiced and roasted flavours, dark fruit and cocoa. You can expect plenty of acidity and dry tannins on the finish.

**Léon Millot**

Created in 1911 in the Oberlin Institute in Alsace. Bred by Eugene Kuhlmann. Named after a winemaker and tree nursery owner Léon Millot. Introduced to North America in the 1950's. Related to Maréchal Foch

The Grape

Ripens early, blue skinned, fair vigor, high resistance to fungal diseases, small berries (prone to birds), small clusters. High in malic acid (benefits from MLF). Low in tannin

The Wine

Can be made in a style similar to a ripe syrah or in a lighter pinot noir style. Good body, berry flavours. Earthy, barnyard, red and blackberries, chocolate

Regions

Switzerland

Alsace

Canada – Ontario

USA – New York, Minnesota, Oregon

Europe – vin de pays wines

Food Pairings

Pork terrine

Empanadas

**Maréchal Foch**

Named after WW 1 French Marshall Ferdinand Foch (1851-1929). Developed by Eugene Kuhlmann (1858-1932). Ripens early. Cold hardy. Disease resistant. Related to Léon Millot. Some believe it is distantly related to Gamay.

The Grape

High in acid, Does well with carbonic maceration/ Small berry, purple skin. Deep, inky purple coloured juice

The Wine

From Light reds, similar to Beaujolais to bigger, more intense wines to fortified port-styled wines. Black cherry aromas, plums, mocha, coffee, chocolate, spice, earthy, vanilla, some smokiness Good aging potential. Often aged in American oak

Regions

Formerly common in the Loire region of France.

Canada – BC, Ontario

US – Minnesota, Oregon

## Food Pairings

Tuna nicoise

Sausage and shrimp jambalaya

Bratwurst

BBQ Ribs

Hamburgers

Its deep colour makes it a good candidate for adding to lighter coloured reds. As these wines are high in acid, they are very food friendly and the low tannin levels make them easy to enjoy when they are young, though the acid level can give them some aging potential.

Jeff Martin, an Australian who trained at McWilliams winery, and now with La Frenz worked at Quail's Gate in 1994 decided to try and make the old vines Foch in the style of an intense Shiraz. The first thing he did was to crop and greatly reduce the tons per acre previously attained. (Schreiner 2003)

In 1975, at a blind tasting, six judges preferred a Inniskillin Maréchal Foch to a noted French Beaujolais. The judges were shocked that a Canadian wine won over a French wine.

“Before the 1988 removal of hybrid grape varieties from the Okanagan, Maréchal Foch grapes comprised about a quarter of the entire grape harvest.

After the pull-out, Foch was only two per cent of the harvest. The variety might have vanished entirely, like Chelois, Rougeon or De Chaunac, but for the work of Quails' Gate Estate Winery.

It can be argued that Quails' Gate virtually saved the variety in British Columbia, even starting a modest comeback, when the winery crafted its first Old Vines Foch wine in the 1994 vintage.”

Schreiner blog spot

Here are two reviews of BC Maréchal Foch:

**Old Vines Foch 2007** (\$24.99). This robust red is made from 26-year-old vines grown in an Osoyoos vineyard that Quails' Gate bought a few years ago. With an alcohol content of 14.9%, this is the “lighter” of the two red table wines. Grant Stanley, the current winemaker at Quails' Gate, speculates that the extreme heat in the south Okanagan slightly retards the variety, which generally gets riper in the cooler West Kelowna site. The soils are different, too, and that may account for the fact that this wine seems a little more tannic. It has appealing aromas and flavours of plum and spice. Some 2,784 cases have been released. The ideal food match would be venison. 87

**Old Vines Foch Reserve 2007** (\$39.99). Only 550 cases of this tour-de-force are available. This is a muscular wine of mouth-filling richness, with much finer tannins. The aromas show spice, plum and licorice. On the palate, there are delicious flavours of spice, berries, chocolate and licorice. The 15.5% alcohol is entirely appropriate for a fully ripe Foch. “Situation excellent” indeed. 90-92.

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