

# BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

September 2017

## CLASS C4 – OTHER DRY RED

Presented by Sheridan Scott (Victoria Chapter)

### AFTER READING THESE NOTES YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- the different names for Tempranillo in Spain and Portugal
- features of the Spanish classification system for all wines, including Tempranillo
- the most famous Italian wines made with Sangiovese
- the proportion of different grapes that can be included in these Sangiovese-based wines
- the difference between Gamay Noir à Jus Blanc, Gamay Beaujolais and Napa Gamay
- the five categories of Beaujolais and the names of the 10 Cru Beaujolais vineyards

### BCAWA WINE CLASS and TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

#### C4. Other Dry Red

This class contains all other red wines, either varietals or blends, that do not fit the definitions of Classes C1 (Dry Red Bordeaux), C2 (Dry Red Pinot), C3 (Dry Red Zinfandel), C5 Cabernet Sauvignon), C6, (Rhone Style Red) or C7 (Non-Vinifera Red Grape). So, dry red wines that contain less than 85% Bordeaux varieties, less than 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, less than 85% Pinot, less than 85% Zinfandel, less than 85% Rhone Style reds or less than 85% dry red non-vinifera grape belong in this Other Dry Red Class. Varietal vinifera wines in this class must contain 85% or more of vinifera varieties such as Lemberger, Barbera, Dornfelder, Nebbiolo, Petite Sirah, Ruby Cabernet, Sangiovese, Touriga Nacional, Tempranillo (Valdepeñas), Rougeon, Rotberger, Dunkelfelder, Agria, or Zweigelt. The remaining 15% may be any other ingredient. Wines that include interspecific hybrid grapes are eligible for this class provided they are from less than 95% hybrid. Non-grape dry red table wines belong in either this class or J1 (Country Table).

**Technical Characteristics:** Ingredients: Alcohol:11% - 16%. Colour: Light red to medium red to garnet. Sugar:0.0% - 1%. Specific Gravity:0.990 - 0.995. Acidity:5.0g/L - 6.7g/L pH:3.4 – 4.0

#### CHALLENGES IN JUDGING THIS CLASS:

The main challenge in judging this class is the range of varietals that may be represented. For this reason, it is important to clean the palate between tastings and to focus less on a direct comparison with the other wines in the flight.

#### WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THIS FLIGHT OF WINES:

This flight of wines will introduce three of the varietals that are included in the Other Red category, all of which are grown in BC or neighbouring jurisdictions in the US.

Three of the wines chosen are based on the Tempranillo grape.

Tempranillo is best known as the dominant grape of Rioja, Spain's most recognized wine and is also the main feature of all of Spain's quality wines. It goes by a variety of names, depending on the region, such as Tinto Fino or Tinto del País in Ribero del Duero, Tinta de Toro in Toro and Cencibel in Valdepeñas. The Portuguese refer to Tempranillo as Tinta Roriz and use it in the production of port. Tempranillo thrives in a climate with sufficiently warm temperatures to produce high sugar levels offset by cooler temperatures to retain acidity. For example, the cult wine Vega Sicilia is produced in the extreme climate of Ribera del Duero, the high plateau south-west of Rioja, and is known to age for decades.

It was not until the 1980's or 90's that winemakers outside of Spain began to pay attention to Tempranillo though

even now Spain still represents more than 80% of the worldwide production. Other countries producing Tempranillo include Portugal, Argentina, Australia, the United States (Oregon and California) and Canada. In the US, the Abacela winery has been a pioneer in the production of Tempranillo in Oregon and in California it has been produced under the name of Valdepeñas, though in both cases the output is a tiny portion of the overall production of wine in the state. In British Columbia, Tempranillo represents just .3% of red wine grape varieties, based on value.

Originally Tempranillo was not recognized as a grape that clearly reflected its terroir and its aromas and flavours were instead seen to result from the extensive use of American oak in winemaking as well as the particular climate where the grapes were grown. For this reason, it was traditionally blended with other grapes, such as Grenache to soften the tannins, Mazuelo (Carignan) to add fruitiness and Graciano (Morrastel) to boost acidity. More recently, winemakers have begun to use cool fermentation techniques and to age Tempranillo in French oak for shorter periods of time or in stainless steel. This has led to a shift in the flavour profile of the wines. According to the well-known British wine writer, Jancis Robinson, the general profile of tempranillo includes aromas and flavours of berries, plum, tobacco, vanilla, leather and herbs, though others have commented that Tempranillos exhibit blackberries, black cherries, mulberries and raspberries notes when young, moving towards tobacco plums, prunes and cocoa with age. Typically, these wines are medium to full bodied, with medium high tannins and medium low acids, though both tannins and acids are easily affected by the specific growing climate.

In Spain, the classification system provides some guidance on what to expect. Wines labelled Joven are rarely aged in oak and are produced for immediate consumption; a Crianza designation requires 2 years aging of which 6 months are in oak; a Reserva wine is aged 3 years, including a minimum of 1 year in oak and a Gran Reserva is used only for above average vintages and requires 5 years of aging and 18 months or longer in oak.

The second varietal represented by one of the wines in this flight is Sangiovese. This grape originated in Tuscany and is the most planted varietal in Italy. Sangiovese is the main component of Chianti, Chianti Classico, Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile de Montepulciano, though the proportion varies. Sangiovese can also be found in the so-called "super Tuscans" though there is no requirement to include it. These wines are sometimes made solely from Merlot, from a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah or from some other combination, usually of Bordeaux varieties.

The formula for Chianti has changed considerably since the mid 1800's, when the inclusion of the white Trebbiano grape was a requirement; today Chianti must include a minimum of 70% Sangiovese with other red grapes of the region comprising the remainder of the blend, though cabernet sauvignon or cabernet franc may not exceed a maximum of 15%. A small portion of the white grapes Trebbiano or Malvasia may be included, though their addition is no longer mandatory.

Meanwhile, Sangiovese comprises a minimum of 80% and a maximum of 100% of the Chianti Classico designation while Vino Nobile di Montepulciano must have a minimum of 70% Sangiovese and a maximum of 30% of other Tuscan varieties (with no more than 5% of white grapes). Brunello di Montacino is produced from 100% Sangiovese grapes.

Sangiovese was originally divided into two subvarieties: Sangiovese Grosso from Tuscany which is used in Brunello and Sangiovese Piccolo which is cultivated in Emilia-Romagna. More recently there has been a focus on the specific clones of Sangiovese, of which there are some 70, since the type of clone has a significant impact on the quality and characteristics of the wine; moreover, like Pinot Noir, this varietal has large sensitivity to place and it requires much attention in the vineyard, demanding more cluster thinning, more selection, more careful canopy management than Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot of the same quality.

Sangiovese does best in a hot dry climate and winemakers in other countries have found it challenging to produce quality wines. It has had some success in Argentina and Australia and is also grown in the United States (California and Washington), Chile and Canada, though not in large quantities.

Given the variety of clones, different blending partners and a wide range of growing conditions, the aromas and taste of Sangiovese can vary enormously, though cherry and plum notes are almost always present. Jancis

Robinson suggests a profile that includes mulberries, prunes, spice, tobacco and leather while Oz Clarke identifies the traditional flavours as bitter cherries and violets with a certain tomato savory note and a blend of herbs. Sangiovese is generally medium bodied, with significant acidity and tannins and a finish that can tend towards bitterness.

The final two wines in the flight provide examples of the Gamay grape. Like Tempranillo and Sangiovese, Gamay has a strong and unique association with a specific wine growing area, namely the region of Beaujolais. In Beaujolais, 99% of the plantings are Gamay, though it is also grown in other parts of France, mainly Southern Burgundy and the Loire Valley. This grape finds its origins in Burgundy, where its full name is Gamay Noir à Jus Blanc; it should not be confused with Gamay Beaujolais grown in California, which is a Pinot Noir clone, nor the Napa Gamay, which is the Valdiguié grape.

Gamay is also found in Oregon, South Africa, Eastern Europe, Switzerland, Australia and Canada, both in Ontario and British Columbia.

For many years, Gamay was associated with the French invention of Beaujolais Nouveau, a fresh, light wine of not particularly good quality that was produced for rapid consumption, using the technique of carbonic maceration (whole berry fermentation). This method for marketing Gamay has lost much of its luster and greater attention is now being paid to the more serious production of Beaujolais and in particular the Crus Beaujolais, which are generally vinified using the traditional techniques of the Burgundy area.

There are five categories of Beaujolais; namely Beaujolais Nouveau, Beaujolais, Beaujolais Supérieur (requiring higher alcohol than Beaujolais), Beaujolais Village (from 38 specified villages) and Cru Beaujolais (from 10 vineyards in the north of the appellation). The fullest Cru wines come from the vineyards of Chénas, Juliéna, Morgon and Moulin-à-Vent with somewhat lighter wines produced in Fleurie, Brouilly and Cotes de Brouilly, St. Amour, Chiroubles and Regnié.

Gamay is generally light to medium bodied and is low in tannins and high in acidity, making it an excellent wine for food pairing. Its aromas are more striking than its taste, with both red fruit and floral notes such as cherry, raspberry, plum, violets, iris and peonies; there is often an earthy note as well, similar to Pinot Noir.

### **WHY I CHOOSE THESE WINES:**

The three Tempranillos represent different areas and use different blending partners, demonstrating how significantly the wine can be affected by these variables.

The Sangiovese wine is intended to provide an example of a basic Chianti wine.

The two Gamays vary considerably in quality and illustrate the potential for this grape to compare favourably to the more highly respected Pinot Noir.