

# BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

May 2022

## CLASS E6 – OTHER DRY RED

Presented by Brian McConnell and Bill Huva (Mainland Chapter)

### AFTER READING THESE NOTES YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- The Class Description and Technical characteristics of BCABA Wine Class E6
- The challenge of judging this class
- The focus of this flight:
- The characteristics of Sangiovese and its blends
- Tasting notes of major and minor components of blends in this flight

### BCABA DESCRIPTION FOR CLASS E6 - “OTHER DRY RED” CLASS:

This class contains all other red wines, either varietals or blends, that do not fit the definitions of Classes E1 (Dry Red Bordeaux), E2 (Dry Red Pinot), E3 (Non-Vinifera Red Grape), E4 (Dry Red Zinfandel), E5 Dry Red Rhone, E7 Cabernet Sauvignon). 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, Zweigelt (Rotberger), Dunkelfelder, Agria. 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: Grapes

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

**Note:** Tasting notes from 2013, 2017 (using previous Class letter Class C4), and 2019 are very useful for information regarding varietals and blends not included in this flight. The authors used parts of them for these notes but also cited Winemaker Magazine articles, Wikipedia and industry websites.

### CHALLENGES IN JUDGING THIS CLASS:

The main challenge in judging this class is the number of varietals and permitted blends of varietals from other classes. We felt there was sufficient variety and complexity from Sangiovese and its blends and from the Syrah/Bordeaux blends we found in the last several Provincial Competitions. For this reason, varietals and blends of Tempranillo, Gamay, many other Italian,

Portuguese and Spanish varietals and rarer varietals such as Zweigelt (Rotberger), Cabernet Libre, have not been invited to this party. For more in depth notes on other possible blends, especially Tempranillo and Gamay, the 2013, 2017 and 2019 notes are very useful.

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

Blends of Bordeaux varietals, Syrah, and Zinfandel are readily found commercially and in BCAWA competitions. They dominate this flight. Sangiovese based wines receive a little extra attention in these notes because of their relative rarity in competitions. You will find wines from Italy, Australia, California, and the Okanagan.

**Sangiovese.** This grape from Tuscany is the most planted varietal in Italy. It's known by many other names. Sangiovese is the main component of Chianti, Chianti Classico, Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile de Montepulciano, though the proportion varies. Today Chianti must include a minimum of 70% Sangiovese. 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 varietals (with no more than 5% of white grapes). Brunello di Montacino is produced from 100% Sangiovese grapes.

Sangiovese can also be found in the so-called "super Tuscans" though there is no requirement to include it. Some are made from any combination of Bordeaux varietals and sometimes Syrah. The first Super Tuscan from winemaker Antinori in 1971, Tignanello, is a blend of 80% Sangiovese, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc. Vintages prior to 2019 command \$160-1200 a bottle here in BC. This flight contains one Chianti Classico but no Super Tuscan.

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. Sonoma County produces 15 times more Zinfandel than Sangiovese, and in Washington, Sangiovese is a niche market.

**Syrah/Cabernet-Sauvignon blends.** First championed in Australia in the late 1800s as generic "claret", the blend of Shiraz and Cabernet was resurrected in the 1950s. By 1962, Max Schubert, the creator of Grange, had made what he himself named the best wine of his illustrious career. A blend of Coonawarra Cabernet and Barossa Shiraz, 1962 Penfolds Bin 60A is now Penfolds' most successful show wine of all time and has on countless occasions been heralded as the greatest Australian red wine ever made.

Cabernet Sauvignon provides the tannin structure and therefore the basis for longevity and the Syrah gives fleshy fruit flavor. This gives the wine drinkability while young with the potential to mature for several years. Winemaker Magazine devotes an article to this blend.

**Adding Zinfandel and others to the blend.** Zinfandel, with its often-higher alcohol content and sometimes jammy flavours is often added, usually in smaller proportions to blends where Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Pinot Noir are the main component. Some wines in the flight have up to 6 varietals.

Proportions can vary considerably. Winemaker Magazine (May-June 2002, The Joys of Blending) suggests in the Table below common red and white blends. It may be of some use as you evaluate

offerings in this flight. Tasting notes are offered for those varietals which are found in this flight in some proportion, beginning with the Major Components.

## **MAJOR COMPONENTS**

### **Cabernet Sauvignon**

This grape is known for its dark skins, small size and plentiful pips which contribute a dark color and tannic structure, but perhaps a less fruity character. Aromas and flavours may include black currant, blackberry, black cherry, plum, mint, eucalyptus, green bell pepper, asparagus; A light oak treatment gives vanilla, coconut, sweet wood; A heavy oak treatment may give: smoke, toast, tar (methoxy-pyrazine). Other aromas and flavours may include green olive, ginger, green peppercorn. Bottle Age may yield cedar, cigar box, musk, pimento, anise, mushroom, earth, and leather.

### **Sangiovese**

Given the variety of clones, different blending partners and a wide range of growing conditions, the aromas and taste of Sangiovese can vary enormously. It tends to be medium bodied, lighter in color and brighter in flavors with significant acidity and tannins. Cherry and plum notes are almost always present. Its profile may include mulberries, prunes, spice, tobacco and leather, bitter cherries and violets, perhaps a certain tomato savory note. Other aromas and flavours may include Italian herbs, bay leaf, pomegranate and cranberry, raspberry and anise.

### **Syrah**

Finding color, tannin and alcohol is rarely a problem with this grape. Syrah makes mouth-filling wine, strong on fruit — blackberry, plum, prune, black cherry — but also delivers earthy, peppery-spicy, mineral, smoky and even “meaty” overtones. Secondary flavors may include olive, pepper, clove, vanilla, mint, licorice, chocolate, allspice, rosemary, cured meat, bacon fat, tobacco, herbs and smoke

## **MINOR COMPLEMENTS**

### **Zinfandel**

Zinfandel is often praised for its ability to reflect both its terroir and its winemakers' style and skill. It is usually moderately acidic and tannic, with lots of fruit aromas and flavours and heat. Among these you may find apricot, black currant, black pepper, blackberry, blueberry, cherry, cinnamon, cranberry, fig, fruitcake, jam, licorice, plum, plum pudding, raisin, raspberry, red pepper, rhubarb, spicy, and tomato leaf. Secondary flavours: Cashew, cedar, clove, coconut, coffee, earth, gaminess, nutmeg, nut, pencil shavings, savoury, smoke, soy sauce, tar, truffle and vanilla.

### **Merlot**

Merlot wine often has a deep color and relatively soft tannin structure. Acidity, usually moderate, is variable too, depending on where the grape is grown. Merlot, when optimally ripe, has a characteristic cherry, plum, cassis, blackberry, blueberry, and boysenberry flavor profile. Vegetal characters, such as canned green beans, black olives and green bell peppers are dominant in some vintages.

### **Cabernet Franc**

Cab Franc has a generally light tannin profile, and a light red color. The fruit profile is more floral and peppery, with raspberry, cassis and tobacco. From northern climes it can be quite herbaceous, with green bell pepper aromas and flavours, and bacon or smoke in some vintages.

### **Petite Sirah (Durif)**

The grape produces a wine dark in color (blue-red hues) with great extraction and big tannins. This wine has a full body and a mouthfeel that is often described as chewy and intense. Petite Sirah offers up flavor notes rich in plums and dark-berried fruits. It also releases a heady mix of spices, dark chocolate, caramel, licorice and coffee.

### **Charbono** (*also known as Douce noir, Bonarda, Corbeau, perhaps Barbera*)

This Savoyard grape, second in acreage in Argentina, is grown in parts of California where very old vines produce a very dense, medium to full bodied wine with a deep, inky purple color and moderate acidity. The wines often have black fruit and plum aroma and flavor notes that can develop into leather and tar notes as the wine ages.

### **Marechal Foch**

This cold tolerating hybrid produces a high acid, low sugar must with a deep, inky coloured juice. Its flavor profile is a bit like a Burgundian country wine.

## **FOOD PAIRINGS**

Food pairings with this Class can be guided by those associated with the main components.