

# BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

January 2024

## CLASS E7 – DRY RED CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Presented by Dave Ewen (Mainland Chapter)

### INTENDED OUTCOMES:

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

- The description and technical characteristics of this class
- The areas of the world which produce this type of wine;
- The characteristics and potential of this varietal of wine with some aging on it;
- History and origin of this grape
- Manner or style in which this wine is made
- Tips about judging this class

### BCAWA CLASS DESCRIPTION: CLASS E7 - DRY RED CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Wines in this class must contain at least 85% Cabernet Sauvignon.

#### Wine Characteristics:

Black currant, cassis, plum, black cherry and spice. It can also be marked by herb, olive, mint, tobacco, cedar and anise, and ripe, jammy notes. Generally accepted that oak improves it by softening tannins and imparting, woody, toasty, cedar, vanilla characters.

#### Technical Characteristics:

Ingredients: Grapes

Alcohol: 11% - 16%

Colour: Medium red to garnet

Sugar: 0.0% - 1%

Specific Gravity: 0.990 – 0.994

Acidity: 5.0g/L – 7.0g/L

pH: 3.4 – 4.0

Tannin: May be somewhat astringent.

### STYLES OF CABERNET SAUVIGNON WINE FROM CALIFORNIA

Cabernet Sauvignon wines from California come in a variety of styles. For instance, the Rolling Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, named after the undulating hills of Sonoma County, is known for its elegant and smooth character with vibrant, dark fruit flavors (Wall Street Journal Wine).

Another style is the bold and rich Cabernet Sauvignon grown in Paso Robles, which displays wonderful aromas of black cherry, boysenberry, and tobacco (Fine Wine).

In addition to these, there are also Californian Knights Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Reds and Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignons, which are known for their distinct characteristics (Vivino).

The characteristics of Cabernet Sauvignon include black cherry, black currant, blackberry, black pepper, tobacco, licorice, vanilla, and violet (Wine Folly).

It's important to note that the style and characteristics of a Cabernet Sauvignon can vary based on the region it's grown in, the specific winery, vintage, and other factors.

# **THE HISTORY OF MAKING CABERNET SAUVIGNON IN CALIFORNIA**

## **Introduction**

The history of wine making Cabernet Sauvignon in California is a fascinating subject that showcases the evolution and success of this iconic grape variety in the region. California's wine industry has experienced significant growth and recognition over the years, and Cabernet Sauvignon has played a crucial role in shaping its reputation. With its rich flavors, bold structure, and aging potential, Cabernet Sauvignon has gained a prominent place in California's winemaking scene. This essay aims to explore the history of Cabernet Sauvignon in California, including its origins, key figures in its development, and its contribution to the state's viticultural heritage. Through the examination of primary and secondary sources, a comprehensive understanding of the growth and significance of Cabernet Sauvignon in California will be achieved.. (Charles L. Sullivan)

## **Early History of Wine Making in California**

California has a rich and storied history when it comes to wine making. The origins of wine making in the state can be traced back to the early days of Spanish colonization in the late 18th century. The Spanish missionaries established missions throughout California, including areas such as Sonoma and Santa Clara, where they planted vineyards and began producing wine for religious and sacramental purposes. These early vineyards laid the foundation for the future wine industry in California. In the mid-19th century, the California Gold Rush brought an influx of settlers to the region, many of whom were European immigrants with a background in wine making. These new arrivals recognized the potential for growing grapes and producing wine in the fertile valleys of California. They brought with them their knowledge and expertise, contributing to the growth and development of the wine industry in the state. With the establishment of commercial wineries and the introduction of new grape varieties, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, California quickly became a prominent player in the world of wine. Today, California is renowned for its high-quality wines and is considered one of the premier wine regions in the world.

## **Introduction of Cabernet Sauvignon in California**

The introduction of Cabernet Sauvignon in California marked a significant turning point in the state's wine industry. Prior to the 1960s, California winemakers primarily focused on producing fortified wines, such as Zinfandel and Petite Sirah, due to the challenges of growing classic European grape varieties in the region. However, the potential of Cabernet Sauvignon in California began to be realized with the pioneering efforts of winemakers like Nathan Fay and Warren Winiarski. Fay, planting Cabernet vines in the Napa Valley in the late 1960s, and Winiarski, who went on to win the Judgment of Paris in 1976 with his Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet, demonstrated the wine's suitability to California's climate and soil. These early successes paved the way for the subsequent growth and recognition of the Cabernet Sauvignon varietal in California .. (Charles L. Sullivan)

## **Development and Expansion of Cabernet Sauvignon in California**

Cabernet Sauvignon gained significant popularity in California during the 1960s and 1970s, leading to its widespread development and expansion in the region. Several factors contributed to the success and growth of this varietal. Firstly, the favorable climatic conditions in California proved to be ideal for growing Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, with warm summers, ample sunshine, and well-drained soils providing optimal conditions for cultivation. Additionally, pioneering winemakers recognized the potential of Cabernet Sauvignon and invested in its production, experimenting with different winemaking techniques and vineyard practices to improve the quality of the wines produced. This dedication to excellence led to the establishment of world-class Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards and wineries in California, further enhancing its reputation as a premier wine-growing region. As a result, Cabernet Sauvignon became one of the leading varietals in the state and continues to be highly regarded both domestically and internationally (CaliforniaWines.org).

## **Impact of Cabernet Sauvignon on California's Wine Industry**

Cabernet Sauvignon has had a significant impact on California's wine industry. With its rich flavors and ability to age well, Cabernet Sauvignon quickly became one of the most sought-after varieties in the region. Its success can be attributed to various factors, including favorable climate conditions, the skill of California winemakers, and the demand for high-quality red wines. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Cabernet Sauvignon gained international recognition when California wines, particularly those made from this grape, performed well in blind tastings against esteemed French wines. This success helped establish California as a prominent player in the global wine market and solidified Cabernet Sauvignon as a flagship grape variety for the state. As a result, many wineries in California began prioritizing the production of Cabernet Sauvignon, leading to the expansion and growth of the industry. (Charles L. Sullivan)

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the history of Cabernet Sauvignon winemaking in California is a testament to the significant role this grape variety has played in the state's viticultural industry. From its early introduction by wine pioneers such as Charles Krug and Gustave Niebaum, to its establishment as a premier wine in the global market, Cabernet Sauvignon has become synonymous with California winemaking excellence. The unique terroir of the Napa Valley and the expertise of winemakers have contributed to the success of this variety, resulting in wines of exceptional quality and international recognition. Furthermore, the constant pursuit of innovation and experimentation has ensured the continued growth and evolution of Cabernet Sauvignon production in California. As consumer demand for this variety continues to rise, it is clear that Cabernet Sauvignon will remain a cornerstone of the state's wine industry for years to come. (Charles L. Sullivan)

## **JUDGING:**

### **Tips:**

Among the usual techniques in our judging pay attention to the tactile mouthfeel sensations on the palate. Note the best wines are felt all around the palate not just in the sides, front or back. Initially take in the aroma without swirling the glass then again after swirling for more depth of olfactory.

### **The Flight:**

In this flight we will experience judging Gold medal wines that have everything this variety has going for it. These wines represent what to expect with Cabernet Sauvignon new world style that has aged to its peak.

Some of these wines will have been judged perhaps long ago, and it will be interesting to see how they have held up. Can we trust commercial point scores listed for these products? Is it marketing or are they really that good? Let's find out!

## **REFERENCES**

- Pinney, Thomas, A History of Wine in America: From Prohibition to the Present, book, University of California Press, 2005
- Development of Cabernet Sauvignon in California, website, CaliforniaWines.org
- Charles L. Sullivan, A Companion to California Wine, book, Univ of California Press, 1998-10
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