

BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES
October 2022
CLASS I – SOCIAL WINES
Presented by Jan Nilsson (Nanaimo Chapter)

FOCUS:

- Mosel and Pfalz Region in Germany;
- Okanagan Golden Mile in BC Canada;
- Barossa Valley in Australia; and
- Swartsland in South Africa.

AFTER COMPLETING THIS SESSION YOU SHOULD KNOW:

1. The history of viticulture in Germany and Riesling and Gewurtztraminer wines from the Mosel and Pfalz region.
2. The history of viticulture in Canada and Ehrenfelser wines from the golden mile bench region South of Oliver in the BC Okanagan.
3. The history of viticulture in Australia and Moscato wine from the Barossa valley
4. The History of viticulture in South Africa and the Chenin Blanc wine from Swartsland.
5. The BCAWA Class description of Social wines

DESCRIPTION: CLASS I – SOCIAL WINES

A Social Wine should be enjoyable without the accompaniment of food. Colour can fall into a wide range but it should be inviting. The wine should have an inviting fruity aroma. The wine should be neither dry nor excessively sweet. It should not be too high in alcohol. In many types of wine a peak or peaks appear in the flavour spectrum – for example a White Table wine might have an acid peak; in the Aperitif class, a bitter peak is not out of place. There should be no such peaks in a Social wine. Good balance between sugar and acid is essential. A touch of “spritz” is permissible. This is a patio wine not a table wine and may be served alone or with light style foods (snacks).

Technical Characteristics:

Ingredients: No restrictions.

Alcohol: 8% – 11%

Colour: Appealing

Sugar: 10 – 25 g/L

Specific Gravity: 0.996 – 1.000

Acid: 6 g/l – 10 g/l

pH: 3.1-3.4

DEFINING A SEMI DRY WINE

Wine grapes have varying degrees of natural sugars depending on the varietal, how late in the season the grape was harvested, and the level of concentration of the juices. During the fermentation process, yeast converts sugars from grape juice into alcohol. When a majority of the sugar is converted and residual sugar is less than two to four percent of the wine's volume (ten to twenty-five grams of sugar per Liter), the wine is considered semi-dry.

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THE HISTORY

Germany: We can trace Germany's viticulture to around 370 AD. Wine growing was concentrated west of the Rhine: from Alcase down river into the Palatinate (the modern Germany wine regions of Pfalz and Rheinhessen), and thence downstream along the middle Rhine as far as Koblenz. Wine-growing extended up three left bank tributaries: the Nahe valley down to Bingen, where wine growing is securely documented from 750 AD; the Mosel (with its tributaries, the Saar and Ruwer), where the tradition of Roman viticulture, where vigorously maintained, by monastic foundations.

Riesling is first documented at Russelheim on the river Main just East of modern Rheingan in 1435. The German wines have historically been predominantly white, Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of German wines is the high level of acidity, caused both by the lesser ripeness in a northerly climate and by the selection of grapes such as Riesling, which retain acidity even at high ripeness levels.

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer the official name of Germany's best-known wine region which appends to the name of the river known in Germany as **Mosel** and in France as **Moselle** the names of two of its viticulturally important tributaries. The wines produced are typically white, low in alcohol, and some of the most refreshing and underrated in the world. Theirs is a wine style which no other wines region can emulate.

Pfalz, until 1992 known as Rheinpfalz , is an important wine region in southern Germany in terms of quantity and quality. In some of the villages of the district in the southern half, the Bereich Sudliche Weinstrasse, vines occupy nearly all the available land. The Pfalz region has become one of the most exciting regions for wine lovers to visit.

On the best estates Riesling plays an important part, sometimes the only vine. Traminer was regarded as specialty of the Pfalz in the early 19th century and although the annual production of Forster Traminer scarcely exceeded 2,200 dozen bottles the wine appeared on practically all wine lists. Nowadays there are some 862 acres of Traminer but the wine's strong aroma seems to have limited its appeal.

Canada: has a thriving wine industry with almost as much acreage under vine as New Zealand. The growing areas are concentrated in four provinces, Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

In 1811 a retired German Corporal, Johann Schiller, domesticated the Labrusca vines he found growing along the Credit River west of Toronto.

Until the late 1970s, the majority of Canadian wines were winter-hardy North American Labrusca (produces wine described as Foxy) varieties such as Concord and Niagra. Next to follow were early ripening, winter resistant French hybrids such as Vidal Blanc, Seyval Blanc, Baco Noir, and Marechal Foch, often called simply Foch in Canada

Note: Foxy usually deeply pejorative tasting term for the peculiar flavour of many wines, particularly red wines, made from American Hybrids. Ex. The Concord grape is one of the most heavily scented, reeking of something closer to animal fir than fruit, flower or any other aroma associated with fine wines.

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Since the late 1980s however, growers have put greater emphasis on *Vinifera* vine varieties, whose wines have enjoyed increasing success both at home and abroad.

While there are many small Canadian wineries, the domestic wine market has long been dominated by two companies, Arterra Wines Canada (formerly Vincor International) and Andrew Peller Limited (formerly Andres Wines). In 2006, Vincor International, which had grown aggressively in previous years by acquiring wineries in California, Australia and New Zealand, was itself acquired by Constellation Brands, a U.S.-based company and one of the primary consolidators of the global wine business. In 2016, the Canadian branch of Constellation Brands was acquired by the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, and renamed Arterra Wines Canada. **British Columbia** holds 240 wineries. The wine growing industry is centered on the arid Okanagan Valley where the deep Okanagan Lake warms the vineyards in the winter. Varieties grown include, Ehrenfelser, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Auxerrois, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and the usual range of French red varieties.

The **Okanagan Golden Mile Bench** Canada is located on the western slope of the valley south of Oliver and across from the Black Sage Bench. The Golden Mile Bench's southerly aspect provides a warm climate. Its location on the west side of the valley it gets morning, rather than afternoon sunshine, making it a cooler region than its eastern neighbour. The history of the Golden Mile is well documented by Robert A. Bells link [The Okanagan's Golden Mile \(winesofcanada.com\)](http://winesofcanada.com)

South Africa: Here wine has a history dating back to 1659. with the first bottle being produced in Cape Town by its founder and gouverner Jan van Riebeeck. There are about 60 appellations within the Wine of Origin (WO) system, which was implemented in 1973 with a hierarchy of designated production regions, districts and wards. WO wines must only contain grapes from the specific area of origin. "Single vineyard" wines must come from a defined area of less than 6 hectares. An "Estate Wine" can come from adjacent farms if they are farmed together and wine is produced on site. A ward is an area with a distinctive soil type or climate and is roughly equivalent to a European appellation.

For much of the 20th century, the South African wine industry received minimal international attention. Its isolation was exacerbated by the boycotts of South African products in protest against the country's system of Apartheid. It was not until the 1990s when Apartheid was ended, and the world's export market opened up, that South African wines began to experience a renaissance.

Swartland, Viticulture here is still comparatively young but a growing number of focused producers have moved here, resulting in the region rising in popularity in the last decade to become one of the most fashionable wine areas in South Africa. Viticulture is commonly practiced under dry land conditions, with minimal irrigation, which is also made possible by the large number of hectares of old vines that grow here and require less maintenance.

Australia: Australian winemakers have opted to preserve as much as possible of the flavour of the grape, yet to do so with a delicacy of touch, producing intensely fruity white wines and soft, mouth filling red wines which appeal to the heart as much as to the mind. In so doing they have (willingly) sacrificed structural complexity at the altar of simple fruit flavour.

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The country has no native grapes, and *Vitis vinifera* (common grape) varieties were introduced from Europe and South Africa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Some varieties have been bred by Australian viticulturists, for example Cienna and Tarrango.

Barossa Valley South Australia derives its name from the Barossa Range which was named by Colonel William Light in 1837. Light chose the name in memory of the British victory over the French in the Battle of Barroza, in which he fought in 1811. The name "Barossa" was registered in error, due to a clerical error in transcribing the name "Barroza". The area is approximately 13 by 14 kilometres. As there are no native grapevines to Australia so European emigrants played a huge role in introducing grape vines the country. Siselians (emigrants from Prussia) in the in the mid-1850s were important in establishing Barossa valley as a winemaking region. and Italians in the Riverlands.

By 1930 South Australia produced 75% of wine produced in Australia and the Barossa Valley had become the center of production processing not only their own but much of those grown in the Riverlands Then and now the engine room of Australia's bulk wine production in the same way as California Central Valley.

THE WINES

RIESLING – One of the world's greatest white wine grapes, the Riesling vine's hardy wood makes it extremely resistant to frost. The variety excels in cooler climates, where its tendency to ripen slowly makes it an excellent source for sweet wines made from grapes attacked by the noble rot *Botrytis cinerea*, which withers the grapes' skin and concentrates their natural sugar levels.

The wines from Germany's Mosel region are perhaps the purest expression of the grape, offering lime, piecrust, apple, slate and honeysuckle characteristics on a light-bodied and racy frame. Germany's Rheinhessen, Rheingau, and Pfalz regions produces wines of similar characteristics, but with increasing body and spice.

In other regions, Riesling struggles to maintain its share of vineyard plantings, but it can be found (often under synonyms such as White Riesling, Rhine Riesling or Johannisberg Riesling) in California, Oregon, Washington, New York's Finger Lakes region, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, South America and Canada.

Mosel Riesling ranges from bone-dry to sweet but the primary aromas and taste profile are distinct and easy to identify. Mosel Riesling is a great wine to try blind tasting.

- **Colour:** Wines start out with a pale straw colour and become deep yellow as they age.
- **Aroma:** Young wines have medium-intensity aromas of lime and honeydew, sometimes with slightly reductive smell of plastic or mineral notes. As wines age, they reveal high intensity aromas of honey, apricot, Meyer lemon and gasoline(petroleum). The smell of petrol might be off-putting to some, but to others it's a classic indicator of German Riesling.
- **Taste:** The structure of this wine is what makes it so intriguing. It has intensely high acidity, usually balanced with some level of sweetness. Wines that taste bone-dry will usually have around 6 - 10g/l of residual sugar and wines that taste barely off-dry may have as much as 30–40 g/L of RS. The acidity lingers on the palate and tingles.

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Generally speaking, Mosel wines have low to medium low alcohol ranging from 7.5–11.5% ABV.

Gewürztraminer – offers complex aromas, ranging from rose to apricot kernel and tropical fruits, together with pepper and sweet spices. Dried fruits and honey also appear when there's noble rot. Simple Gewurz wines with no specific origin beyond AC Alsace are usually medium bodied and either off-dry or semi-sweet. While these wines are simple they should still show typicity, with spicy fruit and a slightly bitter finish.

Like Riesling, Gewurztraminer is transparent to its terroir, and reflects the nature of its soil or origin. Several Alsatian grand crus give Gewurztraminer a chance to express these distinctive characters. Marly limestone terroirs such as grands crus Hengst, Florimont, Mambourg or Marckrain produce deep, rich and spicy wines with a good acid backbone. Granite or sandstone terroirs such as grands crus Brand and Kessler, or quartz soils like Fronholz in Epfig can produce aromatic and elegant wines with lots of fruit.

NOTE:

- **Fruit Flavours** (Berries, fruit, citrus) Lychee, Grapefruit, Pineapple, Peach, Apricot, Orange, and Cantaloupe.
- **Other aromas** (herb, spice, flower, mineral, earth, other) Rose, Honey, Ginger, Incense, Allspice, Cinnamon, Smoke
- **Acidity** Medium Low
- **Serving** temperature Fridge cold +6 C

Chenin Blanc – This native of the Loire valley has two personalities: at home it's the basis of such famous, long-lived whites as Vouvray and Anjou, Quarts de Chaume and Saumer, but on other soils it becomes just a very good blending grape. It is South Africa's most-planted grape, though there is called Steen, and both there and in California it is currently used primarily as a blending grape for generic table wines. The vine was almost certainly one of the original collections imported in 1655 by Jan van Riebeeck. Chenin Blanc can yield a pleasant enough wine, with subtle melon, peach, spice and citrus notes. The great Loire whites vary from dry and fresh to sweet, depending on the vintage and the producer.

NOTE: Typical Aromas of a Chenin Blanc wine:

- **Fruity:** Apricot, Melon, Green Apple, Green Plum, Pear, Quince, Lemon, Lime, Grapefruit, Greengage (a light green plum popular in France and England)
- **Floral/Herbal:** Orange Blossom, Wildflowers, Perfume, Honey, Honeysuckle, Acacia, Grass, Hay, Angelica (an herb that smells somewhat like celery, is often candied, and is used to flavor Chartreuse)
- **Nutty:** Almond, Marzipan
- **Mineral:** Flint, Smoke, "Steely", Chalk

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Ehrenfelser is a white wine grape variety of German origin. It was created by Dr. Heinrich Birk (1898-1973) at the Geisenheim Grape Breeding Institute in 1929, by crossing Riesling with what was thought at the time to be Silvaner, but DNA markers have since indicated it was the Alsace variety Knipperle. Ehrenfelser derives its name from the Burg Ehrenfels ruins located on the Rhine near Rudesheim. It is also known under the synonym Geisenheim 9-93.

Ehrenfelser was first grown primarily in the Palatinate and Rheinhessen regions in Germany. Outside Germany, Ehrenfelser has found some success mainly in Canada, in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. Wineries including Cedar Creek, Lake Breeze, Gray Monk, Gehringer Brothers, Mount Boucherie, Quails' Gate and Summerhill make both still and ice wine styles. There have also been smaller plantings in Washington state and Canterbury, New Zealand. The grape tends to ripen earlier and produce higher yields than Riesling.

NOTES;

- Always fresh and precise, a fruity wine
- Bright aromatic grape; honey, mango, orange peel and grape fruit.
- Spiced with ginger, and a hint of bitterness

Muscat –Muscato Not one grape but a family of cultivars, Muscat is often encountered as either the small but classy Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains or the productive but often uninspiring Muscat of Alexandria. But there are many more; from the gardener's favorite, Muscat of Hamburg, to the central European staple, Muscat Ottonel.

The (predominantly) white wines produced from these varieties are primarily known for their pronounced aromatic quality with descriptors ranging from perfumed, rosey, blossomy and floral to musky and grapey.

These aromas – a hallmark of the Muscat group – are due to the higher-than-average presence of monoterpenes (aroma compounds) in the berry. These include linalool, geraniol and nerol and are credited with giving the variety its distinctive perfume which often gives descriptors that run into floral, blossomy, rose, citrus, spicy and, even, grape-like notes.

Variations of the Muscat family – which includes variations in style, from dry white wines to fortified examples, sparkling Muscats and sweet wines – can be found all over the world. There is no one "true" Muscat, but rather a great many incarnations, each with its own regional nuance and character

NOTES

- Floral and tropical aromas with hints of blossom.
- Tropical, sherbert and citrus flavours with a light and delicate finish.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Janis Robinson the Oxford Companion to Wine
- WineFolly.com,
- Wikipedia.org,
- Winemag.com
- and others.