

BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES
2005
CLASS J1 - COUNTRY TABLE WINES
Presented by George Beck (Nanaimo Chapter)

BLACKBERRY WINE PRESENTATION

AFTER COMPLETION OF THIS TRAINING SESSION, YOU SHOULD KNOW THE:

- generic wine category that Blackberry falls under
- main styles of Blackberry wines
- permissible blending percentage(s)
- some back sweetening & flavouring options
- primary acid, aging potential
- some varieties
- serving guidelines for temperature & food.

Any wine not made from grapes is relegated to “Country Wine” making an enormously diversified category ranging from the unpalatable parsnip to the toxic tasting elderberry. Most of the recipes for curiosity wines, such as dandelion, prescribe a huge whack of raisins so that, in effect, they are nothing more than flavoured grape wines. Blackberry requires no such boost. However, even good blackberry makers can’t resist a wine enhanced concoction in much the same way as wine makers take a helping hand from some of their best Cab Sav to elevate other varietals. Up to 15% additions is permissible.

Jack Ziebart pointed out that fruit wines in the country wine category should be drunk by the next harvest. They do not age. Blackberry is the one exception. It can be cellared for up to three years. Basically, acid, tannin and alcohol are what keep wine from deteriorating. For aging, these elements would have to be addressed.

Picking blackberry in the coastal regions of southern BC is probably the most rewarding in the world. We have the finest BB sites. In fact, our fruit ranks superior to even Washington State because of our longer sun hours at the height of ripening. Within limits intense sun is undesirable and our ocean-moderated climate keeps the leaves open and working. Also, our substantial winter rains leave well-soaked bogs. Blackberry needs lots of water to achieve swollen fruit. (Pick on the edges of ditches and swamps).

Do not pull the berries off. They must drop into your hand. If they change colour to orange in the freezer, throw them out. They will spoil your wine. You do not even want red berries. The berries must freeze black. That’s why they are called *blackberries*.

There are many domesticated varieties all of which probably spring from the wild Himalayan blackberry. Loch Ness is thorn less and the best known. (Brian Van Humbeck is cultivating DOYLE another thornless variety and has been experimenting with vacuuming off only the loose ripe berries).

Styles of blackberry wine vary. Nanaimo Winemakers was the first amateur winemaking club to provide a competition category for blackberry as distinct from other country wine. Club elders concocted 3 classes according to BCAWA guidelines: dry, social and dessert. The dry wine is invariably harsh and doesn’t allow for fresh back flavouring. The social is often too sweet for an adult palate. Lastly all dessert wines are obnoxiously cloying and best avoided except for the sweet-toothed sugar addicts. Even they should only be dosed by the thimble full. It should be noted that

blackberry is also used with some success for Port and as a base for Aperitifs. However, there should be a place for a wine that has a little sugar provided by back flavouring. It should be comparable, in sweetness to some of the 'off dry' or 'semi-sweet' German whites and should be a good drinking man's wine.

Back flavouring is a highly successful practice. It takes place after the primary and secondary ferments are complete. Sugar (including honey), partially fermented must, fresh clarified juice, dried or fresh fruit, and/or any concentrate or cordial may be used. If the addition includes any sugar, obviously potassium sorbate must be dosed to safeguard against refermenting and subsequent bottle popping. Never sorbate before the MLF is fully complete or a geranium taste will develop. (Never sorbate without dosing with SO₂ at the same time – check your Underhill).

The fruits that can make wine, and that's just about all of them, blackberry comes the closest in quality to competing with.

According to our competition rules for varietals only up to 15% of non- blackberry product may be added to the wine. This is done with the same caution as grape wine blending. Indeed, grape wine can be successfully used and helps make up, along with tartaric, for the MLF elimination of malic. Ken Marsen has had good results using a commercial blueberry cordial.

Malic acid derives its name from the Latin word for apple, whence the acid was first isolated. It is the perennial bête noir of blackberry winemakers. The reason is not that it is irremovable but that it is so much a characteristic of blackberry that its removal can obscure the fruit identity, but to leave it all in results in a wine that is too harsh. There does not seem to be any safe way to partially remove the malic. (Don Graves reminded us not to use Lysozyme as it strips the colour and Leo Poirier has been conducting some experiments using Acidex then replacing the malic with tartaric). The best strategy is to be sure the fruit is ripe.

Malolactic Fermentation (MLF) of blackberry has probably been taking place inadvertently and often unnoticed. MLF is a standard practice for grape wine but has only recently come into favour with Nanaimo Winemakers. The reason is that malic is highly concentrated in blackberry especially if the fruit isn't perfectly ripe. Malic is a harsh, double-faced acid having an extra free radical which accounts for the intense bite. By infecting the wine with ML bacteria (Viniflora from Denmark), it is converted to lactic. This is a very mild acid suitable for keeping milk fresh and not harming the suckling infant. The MLF can only take place in warmth (70F). It can take months to complete and should be tested using paper chromatography when the fairy ring of bubbles vanishes. Naturally wines warmed in the spring and the tiny MLF bubbles would rise. The poetic explanation of the French was that the wine was calling out to the vines to produce a good harvest. *Note: An experiment using ML01 did not work for me in 2008. I have also been unsuccessful in inducing MLF after ferment because of the high acid and alcohol.*

Without using a MLF, high acid can be reduced by adding water, adding wine or saving it to blend the next year when, hopefully, the berries will be picked riper. A successful blackberry maker on Hornby Island cut back on his water addition until he was using unadulterated fruit at which point he stopped winning medals. Norm Lemmen made blackberry wine for a number of years for Bill Peligren using pure blackberries until he realized that Bill was more interested in volume than purity. (Bill is a volume man – in 2004 he, single handedly, picked a half ton of berries). Norm commented that whenever he goes down to his cellar for a bottle of wine he never comes up with blackberry. He now adds water and his 2004, using D47 followed by ML and back sweetened with blackberry, tastes like a silver medal to me. So, there is a case for water, (chlorine-free of course). The ratio varies

tremendously from one vintner to the next (50% is a rough guide). Don Graves uses less berries and his blackberry is frequently silver.

Other misc. notes: Known as the “cabernet” of berries, blackberries feature an earthy, wine-like flavour.

SPECIES: There are at least 122 species of blackberries in the United States alone — one-authority claims 200 for North America. All are of the genus *Rubus*, which also includes Boysenberries, dewberries, Loganberries, raspberries, tayberries, thimbleberries, wineberries, and Youngberries, and are related to the rose (genus *rosa*). They are found in every state of the United States, every province of Canada, and in most of Mexico. The blackberry is a caning shrub, often growing into thickets or brambles, usually armed with thorns, spines or stiff hairs, with 3-7 leaved leaflets but most often 5. It will grow almost anywhere, but particularly does well at wooded borders, along fences, in fallow clearings, and along roadsides, rivers and railroads. The berries form from white, showy, 5-petal flowers that grow in clusters in the early to late spring. The berries are rounded or thimble-shaped clusters sharing a common attachment to the stem. These in turn also grow in clusters that turn from light green to rose, then red, then deep purple to black, ripening in mid- to late summer. When ripe, the berries are very popular among birds and other wildlife. Blackberry wine is best when made vintage — from fresh blackberries, without blending with other fruit or wines — but a few blackberry blends are worth making and drinking. Some of the more popular blackberry varieties and hybrids are:

- 1826 — very large, firm fruit ripening in mid-July.
- Andean Blackberry (Mora de Castilla) — rich, tart flavour.
- Bear’s Blackberry — large, encroaching plants with large, delicious fruit.
- Black Satin (Black Satin Thornless; *Rubus lanciniatus*) Blackberry — large (1 1/2 – 2 in.), sweet, glossy black fruit whose glossiness fades during ripening; winter-hardy to -15° F.
- Boysenberry (Nectarberry) — hybridized in 1923 from the loganberry, various blackberries and raspberries; extremely larger (2 – 2 1/2 in.), practically seedless, non-shiny, dark maroon fruit with rich, tangy flavor and delightful aroma; hardy to -14 degrees F.; developed by Rudolph Boysen.
- Boysenberry, Thornless — less vigorous with lower yields than thorny parent, but sweet, juicy, full-bodied flavor makes it more desirable for wine; easily transplanted, grows to 5 feet tall, self-pollinating, produces fruit first year after planting; ripens May to June.
- Brazos Blackberry (*Rubus lanciniatus*) — big clusters of firm, sweet, juicy fruit that ripens in mid-May; disease resistant, commercial favorite; developed by Texas A&M;
- Cascade Blackberry (Cascade Trailing, *Rubus ursinus*) — medium-sized but prolific fruit selected from the wild; blooms and ripens early; Pacific coast native from northern California to Alaska.
- Cherokee Blackberry — cross between Brazos and Darrow; medium-sized fruit, but vigorous, productive and adapted to mechanical harvesting; ripens in June; developed by U of Arkansas.
- Chester Blackberry (Chester Thornless) — large, flavorful, very sweet, high-quality fruit; hardy, productive, disease resistant, well suited to Midwest through Deep South; ripens in July.
- Cheyenne Blackberry — large, very sweet, firm fruit ripening midseason; upright, moderately thorny canes adaptable to mechanical harvesting; developed by U. of Arkansas.
- Choctaw Blackberry — Cross between Arkansas 526 and Roseborough by U. of Arkansas; medium sized fruit, mild flavor, smaller seeds than usual, good yields; ripens very early.
- Comanche Blackberry — large, high quality, soft fruit; developed by U. of Arkansas.

- Darrow Blackberry — Firm, high quality, long, conic, glossy black berries; low acid, wild blackberry taste, rich, fruity aroma; early ripening, strong upright 4-5-foot-high canes that produce young and yield exceptionally large crops; self-fertile, exceptionally winter-hardy; great choice for Northeast through Midwest.
- Dirksen (Dirksen Thornless) Blackberry — big, thick clusters of large, sweet, glossy black berries; exceptionally vigorous, highly productive, thornless plants with erect, self-pollinating canes; not particularly winter-hardy;
- Ebony King Blackberry — large, long, purplish-black berries with delicious, sweet blackberry flavor; bears early before hot weather sets in; hardy to -20 degrees F.;
- Eldorado Blackberry — large, black, glossy fruit with sweet, tangy flavor;
- Evergreen (Evergreen Thornless, Oregon Evergreen Thornless) Blackberry — large, firm berries with large seeds, high sugar content, somewhat bland flavor; ripens in August, thornless canes, not recommended for Deep South;
- Flordagrind (Florida Grand) Blackberry — large, tasty berries; well adapted to dry soils and Deep South; developed by U. of Florida;
- Himalaya Blackberry (*Rubus discolor*) — rampant grower native to the Himalayas;
- Hull (Hull Thornless, *Rubus lanciniatus*) Blackberry — similar to Black Satin; large to very large, firm, flavorful, sweet fruit; highly vigorous, semi erect, thornless canes whose fruit hold up well on hot days; yields about twice as much as most thorned varieties; ripens in July; not suited for Deep South or Far North;
- Illini Hardy Blackberry — Shiny fruit with a delicious, slightly acidic, wild blackberry flavor; more vigorous than Darrow, ripens in early August, does well in northern areas; developed by U. of Illinois;
- Jumbo, Stark (Shawnee Cultivar) Blackberry — very large, tasty fruit up to 1 1/2 inches long; longer production season than most; not recommended for Deep South or Far North;
- Kotata Blackberry — large, firm, tasty fruit that protrude from canes and are easily picked; West Coast variety ripening in July;
- Lawton Blackberry — medium to large, firm, very sweet fruit with true blackberry flavor; strong, erect, dependable, winter-hardy canes;
- Lochness Blackberry — thornless, fairly new variety;
- Loganberry (Logan, Thornless Logan, Thornless Loganberry) — thought to be a cross between a wild blackberry and red raspberry; large, light red berries that do not darken when ripe; unique, tart flavor preferred by many over all other berries and very good for wine; thornless canes, average yields;
- Marionberry — medium to large, medium firm, bright, shiny, reddish-black berries; higher yields over a longer picking season than Boysenberries; developed for western Washington and Oregon;
- Navaho (Navajo) Blackberry — very small berries with possibly the best flavor of any blackberry; thornless canes do well in Deep South; developed by U. of Arkansas;
- Ollallie (Ollalieberry, *Rubus argutus*) Blackberry — large, shiny, firm black berries that ripen in July; sweeter and less tart than others, with some wild blackberry flavor; vigorous, productive, thorny trailing canes; developed in Oregon but does extremely well in California;
- Perron (Perron Thornless) Blackberry — vigorous, extremely productive, thornless variety developed in Canada for cold-hardiness;
- Roseborough Blackberry — extra large, sweet, shiny, black berries similar to Brazos but with improved flavor and firmness; tolerates extreme heat and dryness and is well suited to the South; heavy crops on upright canes that are easily harvested; developed by Texas A&M;
- Santiam Blackberry — wild type fruit that ripens in July;

- Shawnee Blackberry — large, high quality, sweet, juicy, flavorful, shiny, black fruit; fast-growing, erect canes with consistently high yields and long fruiting season; probably the largest fruit and most productive of all thorny varieties; developed by U. of Arkansas;
- Smooth Stem Blackberry — large, firm, luscious, jet-black berries; heavy producer, 35-40 berries on each stem; thornless, erect, extremely vigorous and disease-free canes; hardy in Midwest and South; early August; developed by USDA;
- Snyder Blackberry — plump, sweet, juicy berries; high yields, reliable, self-pollinating, winter hardy;
- Sylvan Blackberry — cross between Boysenberry and Marionberry; large, very sweet, shiny, black fruit; vigorous, highly productive, thorny, trailing vines;
- Tayberry — cross between Loganberry and black raspberry; juicy, cone-shaped, deep purple, slightly tart fruit; huge yields up to 12 tons per acre; vigorous even in difficult weather and bad soil; ripens late; named for Tay River, Scotland, where developed;
- Thornfree Blackberry — medium-to-large, blunt, firm, glossy, black fruit; good, tangy-tart flavor; strong, vigorous, semi-upright, disease free canes; ripens late July to early August; hardy in Plains to Deep South; developed by USDA;
- Thornless Blackberry — giant berries; ripens over long period; hardy to sub-zero temperatures;
- Trailing Blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) — choice native blackberry;
- Tree Blackberry — large, delicious berries; huge bush, thorny, requires practically no care; adapts to wide variety of soils;
- Tropical Blackberry — large berries up to 2 inches on extremely vigorous canes; bears in June and July;
- Waldo (Waldo Thornless) Blackberry — high yields, highly flavored, easy to pick; introduced 1945 by Oregon State U.;
- Womack Blackberry — average size, some disease resistance;
- Youngberry (Thornless Youngberry) — purplish-black, large (1.5 x 1.25 in), firm, shiny fruit; excellent flavor, less acid; canes immune to disease; very hardy, capable of surviving adverse weather; similar to Boysenberry, but ripens 10 days earlier with 20% less yield.

HEALTH BENEFITS: Blackberry Wine is valued and appreciated for its healing properties. Its healing and medical properties have been confirmed by high percentage of vitamin C, high quantity of minerals, above all, its ferrous content (highest in all foods) Therefore, it is highly recommended to patients suffering from anemia, as well as to pregnant women, breast-feeding mothers, blood-donors and others. Healing and medicinal purposes are one of the main reasons why more and more people are taking aromatic blackberry wines. Gourmet and wine connoisseurs know that blackberry wine must perfectly match with served dishes. The wine itself must be chilled at 16 °Celsius, in order to have its best taste. It is best served as aperitif before a meal is served, with cheese and cheese dishes, game and dark meat, as with sweets. We especially recommended blackberry wine to go along with piquant cheese. Love, people say, comes it through food. But wine goes one step beyond that. Some say it` even an aphrodisiac. This you have to discover yourself. Wherefore blackberry wine has healing properties? Blackberry wine (i.e. blackberry) is plentiful natural source of absorbed ferrous. Ferrous is constituent of hemoglobin, which is “responsible” for transport oxygen thru vein till cell. Shortage of ferrous slow oxygen transport, cell do not attain it sufficiently, therefore organism points traces of weakness (rotation, dizziness, prevailing weakness). Since ferrous cannot be synthesized in organism is necessarily to import it in organism to standardize delivery of oxygen. Recommend to assumption 2 times per day.

ABOUT BLACKBERRY WINE

Traditional medicine has acknowledged the healing properties of blackberry wine made from ripe blackberries through their fermentation. Blackberry wine is recognized by modern medicine while pharmacology considers it therapeutic. It is well known as a source of various vitamins and minerals and organic and inorganic ingredients, which make it very valuable for its nutritional and therapeutic values. Blackberry wine is especially rich in group B vitamins, iron, phosphorus, magnesium, calcium, sugar, vitamin C, pectin and some provitamin A. The wine's acids are very much alike to those that are a part of our digestion process, so the wine is very beneficial for digestion, especially of proteins. The therapeutic blackberry wine is recommended for help in treating anemia, fatigue, under nutrition, digestion, regulating blood pressure, blood circulation. It can be a part of a daily diet, especially for the immunosuppressed. It increases appetite, helps bile flow, urine excretion, and quicker and healthier exchange of substances in the body. Some even consider it beneficial for treating certain skin illnesses (various eczema and rashes). It is known that iron deficiency has negative side effects for health (anemia, fatigue, dizziness), therefore iron intake is necessary for normal body development and good health, and blackberry wine is recommended for this, at a RDA of 1 dl (0.33 dl before each meal). Therapeutic properties of blackberry wine are illustrated by the following quote: "Wine and Spirits", an English wine magazine, in its issue dated July 29th reports on an interesting discovery of an ingredient found in red wines, and certainly blackberry wine as well. The mentioned ingredient is a substance named Qercentin, and it is one of the most powerful cancer-preventing substances discovered up to date.

SOME EXAMPLES OF INTERESTING BLACKBERRY WINES ADVERTISING NOTES:

Nuyaka Creek Winery, the state's largest maker of non-traditional wines, are inviting the public to hurry out to the winery and taste two great new wines for the upcoming seasons. Sparkling Blackberry Table Wine for the holiday season and Elderberry for the Cold and Flu season. Sparkling Blackberry – This sweet, fun little sparkling wine is produced by the traditional 'French Method' usually labeled 'Methode Champenoise'. To my knowledge, it is the only Oklahoma wine being produced in this w Black Beauty: A popular dessert wine meant to be served after a meal as the perfect finish. Made from 100% Marion Blackberries, Tomasello Blackberry Wine is a full-bodied blackberry wine with dominant cassis and brambleberry character. It is moderately sweet and can be served both as a dessert wine, or in a dessert like English Truffle with Tomasello Blackberry Wine. In classical French cooking, Tomasello Blackberry Wine can be made into a sauce reduction. Blackberry wines are a Celtic specialty, as the berry was sacred to the Goddess Brigid.