

BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

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CLASS C4 – OTHER DRY WHITE

Cool Climate Varietals

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DEFINITION OF BCWA CLASS C4 - OTHER DRY WHITES

This class includes all other white wines, whether varietals or blends, that do not fit the descriptions of Classes C1 (Chardonnay), C5 (White Pinot), or C2 (Aromatic White Vinifera)—a white wine which is to be consumed with food.

Varietal vinifera wines in this class must contain 85% or more of vinifera varieties such as Auxerrois, Chasselas, Chenin Blanc, Colombard, Grüner Veltliner, Madeleine Angevine, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, or Trebbiano. The remaining 15% may be any ingredient.

Blends in this class must not fit the definitions of C1, C5, or C2. Wines that include interspecific hybrid grapes are acceptable in this class, and their ingredient percentages must be specified so their eligibility in the appropriate AWC class can be determined. Aromatic white grape varieties are acceptable in blends provided their impact is subdued.

Non-grape dry white table wines belong in either this class or J1 (Country Table).

Technical Characteristics

Alcohol:	9% - 13.5%.
Colour:	Pale bronze or bronze-pink to pale straw to light gold. No amber, brown or grey tinges.
Sugar:	0.0% - 1.5%.
Specific Gravity:	0.990 -0.998.
Acidity:	6.0/L – 7.5 g/L.
pH:	3.0 – 3.7.

COOL CLIMATE WINE GRAPES

Cool climate regions typically have all four seasons and experience lower-than-average growing-season temperatures of 13-15 °C, resulting in shorter growing periods than in warmer regions. Despite the cool conditions, cool-climate wine grapes can fully ripen. There are both white and red varietals that grow well in cool climates, however, this presentation will focus solely on dry white varietals.

White varietals in cool climates usually produce wines high in acidity, light in body, and low in alcohol. These characteristics are due to slow ripening, which maintains crisp acidity and allows aromas and flavours to develop.

Climate change, innovation, and technology have enabled regions that were previously too cold to grow grapes to cultivate hardy, adaptable varietals.

THE FLIGHT

This flight of wines was put together to compare several cool-climate white grape varietals and to demonstrate their many consistent characteristics. This consistency in their characteristics is due to slow ripening, driven by lower temperatures and less sunshine in cool climates.

Cool-climate dry white wines are typically light-bodied, delicate, structured, and elegant. They often have subtle aromas, but can also be highly aromatic, with high acidity and lower alcohol. Their flavours and aromas can include floral notes, citrus, green apple, and pear, as well as herbaceous and mineral or steely notes.

Most dry white wines made from these cool-climate varieties are fermented in stainless-steel vats to maintain their clean, crisp, and sometimes neutral characteristics. However, winemaking techniques such as lees aging, oak use, or MLF can significantly affect the flavours and textures of these wines.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

The Sauvignon Blanc grape originated in France in the 1500s and is now among the top 10 most widely planted varieties worldwide. It can be grown in various climates due to its adaptability, but it shows its best expression in a cool climate region.

Regions

The Loire Valley, Languedoc-Roussillon, and Bordeaux regions in France have over 70,000 acres of Sauvignon Blanc planted. New Zealand has approximately 50,000 acres planted. Significant plantings are also found in Chile, the USA, Australia, Italy, and South Africa, with smaller plantings in Canada, Romania, Spain, Argentina, Russia, Moldova, Austria, and Hungary.

Sauvignon Blanc's home and notable region is France's Loire Valley, known for its cool climate. New Zealand also produces top Sauvignon Blanc wines due to its ocean-adjacent vineyards, which maintain cool-to-moderate temperatures, allowing grapes to ripen while retaining high acidity.

Characteristics and Styles

Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire (Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé) is elegant, with gooseberry, green apple, citrus, stone fruit, herbal notes, flint, smoke, and minerality. Bordeaux produces blends with Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon, or other white grapes that are light- to medium-bodied and zesty, with grapefruit, lemon, gooseberry, apple, passion fruit, and herbal flavours.

Sauvignon Blanc is also used to make dessert wines in Bordeaux's Graves region, like Sauternes and Barsac. These sweet wines are affected by noble rot (*Botrytis cinerea*), which dries the grapes and concentrates the sugars. These wines are high in acidity with rich flavours of honey, butterscotch, marmalade, apricot, tropical fruit, and ginger.

New Zealand produces dry Sauvignon Blanc wines with vibrant aromas and flavours like green bell pepper, grass, asparagus, passion fruit, citrus, and herbs.

Winemaking Techniques

Sauvignon Blanc wines are appreciated for their aromatics and high acidity, often fermented cool in stainless steel. Some are richer with lees aging, malolactic, or barrel fermentation, adding notes of vanilla, cream, spice, coconut, nuts, smoke, or wood. Robert Mondavi's Fumé Blanc from Napa, aged in oak, mimics French Pouilly-Fumé wines. It is also commonly blended with Sémillon and other whites, especially in Bordeaux, to enhance flavour, body, and complexity.

Service

Sauvignon Blanc should be served chilled between 8-13°C in a white wine glass. It does not need decanting.

Aging

Unoaked Sauvignon Blanc should be enjoyed while still young and fresh, typically within 2 years of its vintage. In contrast, oaked versions can be aged up to 5 years before they begin to lose their character.

SÉMILLON

Sémillon has deep roots in Bordeaux, France, having been cultivated for centuries, and is a key component in the blending of white Bordeaux wines. It gained importance in the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in Sauternes and

Barsac, for sweet wines, is often blended with Sauvignon Blanc. Over time, Sémillon spread globally, thriving in many wine regions.

Sémillon is a highly adaptable grape variety that thrives in a range of climates; however, it performs best in cool-to-moderate climates.

Sémillon is frequently blended with Sauvignon Blanc to produce a well-balanced wine. Sémillon's body and richness are enhanced by the fresh, high-acidity, citrus, and herbaceous notes of Sauvignon Blanc. Including Sémillon in a blend also supports the wine's aging process and helps it develop greater complexity.

Regions

The main Sémillon regions are Bordeaux, France, and Hunter Valley, Australia. Bordeaux is Sémillon's historic origin, known for dry, blended wines and rich, aged sweet wines from many Châteaux.

Hunter Valley, Australia, often produces a dry style of Sémillon. Their Sémillon wines are recognized for their exceptional aging potential and can develop complex flavours of toast, nuts, and honey over time.

Characteristics and Styles

Sémillon wines have a golden hue, are full-bodied with moderate acidity and have a waxy texture. Dry Sémillon is crisp and refreshing, with flavours of lemon, lime, green apple, pear and grass. As the wine ages, it develops aromas and flavours of honey, beeswax, and nuts, with a creamy texture and a long finish.

Sémillon is often blended with Sauvignon Blanc to create a well-balanced wine. Sauvignon Blanc adds freshness, high acidity, and citrus and herbaceous notes that enhance Sémillon's body and richness. Including Sémillon in a blend also supports aging and helps to develop complexity.

Sémillon is used in sweet dessert wines. When affected by noble rot (*Botrytis cinerea*), the flavours and sugars become concentrated. Sémillon is almost always in the sweet wines of Sauternes and the lighter desserts of Barsac. These wines feature honey, apricot, and marmalade flavours and aromas.

Winemaking Techniques

Winemakers enhance Sémillon using various methods. Stainless-steel fermentation preserves freshness and citrus notes, while barrel aging adds character, depth, and complexity. In regions suitable for *Botrytis*, careful vineyard management is crucial to producing sweet dessert wines.

Service

Sémillon is best enjoyed chilled, ideally between 8–10°C (46–50°F) for dry varieties, and slightly warmer for sweeter wines. Use white wine glasses to enhance aromas and flavours. Mature, complex Sémillon may benefit from decanting.

Aging

Sémillon can be aged for 15+ years. Many are best between ages 5 and 10. Sauternes or Barsac can be aged for decades.

GRÜNER VELTLINER

Grüner Veltliner dates to the Roman era but was named in the 1930s. It has been cultivated primarily in Austria since the 1950s and is now the country's most widely planted grape. Over the past 20 years, it has become popular globally.

Regions

Grüner Veltliner is a late-ripening, cool-climate white grape primarily grown in Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and northern Italy. It does well in cool regions and can ripen into October in the Northern Hemisphere.

Characteristics and Styles

Grüner Veltliner is high in acidity and is typically produced in a light, bone-dry style; however, some wines from slightly warmer climates can be richer with medium-to-full body. Grüner generally exhibits white peppery aromas, along with citrus and herbaceous notes. Aromas include lemon, lime, grapefruit, gooseberry, yellow apple, pear, peach, herbs, green vegetables, white pepper, minerality, and flint.

Winemaking Techniques

Grüner Veltliner is often cold soaked before fermentation to enhance flavours and aromas. It is typically fermented in stainless steel to preserve its zesty flavours and acidity, though some use oak or acacia casks for added texture and complexity. Lees aging or malolactic fermentation may also be used, depending on the desired style.

Service

Grüner Veltliner is best enjoyed chilled at 8–10 °C; however, more full-bodied styles are best served at 12-15°C in a white wine glass.

Aging

Certain premium Grüner Veltliner wines can age well for 5 to 15 years if stored correctly, developing more aromatic and flavourful profiles.

ORTEGA

Ortega is a white grape developed in Germany in 1948 by Dr. Hans Breider. It is a crossing of Müller-Thurgau and Siegerrebe and was named after the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. Originally bred for early ripening and frost resistance, it is now valued for its versatility and aroma.

Regions

Although Ortega originated in Germany, it is popular in England and Canada, especially in British Columbia's Okanagan, Shuswap, and Vancouver Island, as well as in Nova Scotia. Vancouver Island regards Ortega as a signature grape due to the 1980s Duncan Project, which found it ideal for the region.

Styles and Characteristics

Ortega wines are aromatic, with notes of peach, apricot, honey, and spice. Mainly used for dry wines in Canada and England, they also produce sweet late-harvest or dessert wines. Susceptible to Botrytis, it can produce high-sugar wines that are rich and luscious, balanced by good acidity. It is typically medium-bodied with a soft, round mouthfeel.

Service

Serve dry Ortega wines at 8–10°C to highlight fruit and floral aromas; sweet styles are best at 6–8°C to enhance freshness and sweetness. Use a narrow white wine glass to concentrate the aroma.

Aging

Dry Ortega wines are best when young and fresh. Sweet Ortegas can age 3-5 years, but Ortega's aging potential is limited.

MADELEINE ANGEVINE

Madeleine Angevine was developed in the Loire Valley, France, in 1857 as a hybrid of Madeleine Royale and Malingre Précoce. Over time, it has become known for its resilience and adaptability. It has robust vines that perform well in various climates but are best suited to cool climates.

Regions

Madeleine Angevine is produced in the Loire Valley (France), Germany, Washington State (USA), Canada, the UK, and cooler Australian regions.

Characteristics and Style

Madeleine Angevine wines are pale straw-coloured with floral aromas of honeysuckle or elderflower. Flavours include lemon, green apple, pear, and melon. Warmer vintages can have tropical notes.

Generally light-bodied, this wine has crisp acidity and a clean, refreshing finish. Madeleine Angevine is available in various styles, including dry, off dry, and sparkling.

Winemaking Techniques

Winemakers use various techniques for Madeleine Angevine, such as gentle pressing and cool fermentation to preserve delicate floral and fruit aromas. Some use stainless steel for a clean profile, while others add oak for complexity and a creamy texture.

Service

Madeleine Angevine is best enjoyed chilled, ideally between 8°C and 10°C, in a white wine glass.

Aging

Madeleine Angevine is enjoyed young for its vibrant fruit flavours, but styles with oak or higher residual sugar often benefit from aging for more than five years.

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