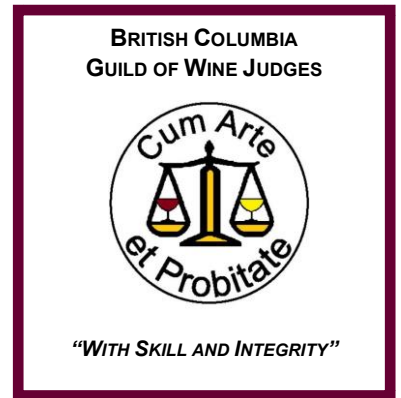


British Columbia Guild of Wine Judges
Monthly Training Program



Points vs Holistic scoring Methods - Rev 2

We are going to talk about another concept of judging a wine which is the Holistic Method.

One of the hardest things for a judge or trainee to do is to accurately assign points for the various categories in the Wine Evaluation sheet. Even just a half a point variation from the correct number will greatly skew your final score. It is not uncommon to hear, during a tasting session, someone say that they came up with a score of X points and to then exclaim that they actually thought that the wine either deserved a higher or lower score but that is what their points added up to.

When trying to assign a Holistic score, first look at the bottom of the Wine Evaluation form. Here you will find that a Bronze medal is defined as a Good Wine, a Silver is Very Good, and a Gold is Excellent or Outstanding. Now close your eyes and smell and taste the wine. Then ask yourself "*how would I describe this wine to a friend*"? By asking yourself the question in this way helps you to consider the quality of the wine in a different way. If your answer is that I would tell my friend that this is a Very Good wine, then you are tasting a Silver medal wine.

The Holistic Method adds an extra level of evaluation and is a very important tool to use to validate your Point score. Most everyone has the ability to discern wine quality. If I put 4 glasses of wine in front of everyone here and asked you to select the Gold, Silver, Bronze, and No Medal wine out of the 4 by simply smelling and tasting the wine, most everyone would be able to do that. If I further asked you to taste the Silver wine and then rate it as either a Low Silver, Medium Silver or High Silver wine, you would also be able to do that. (High= S+, Low = S-). This is Holistic Judging. By breaking it down to High (S+), Medium (S), and Low (S-), you are narrowing your point score to about ½ a point. Low = 16 to 16.5, Medium = 16.75 to 17.25, and High = 17.5 to 17.99.

Experienced judges are already subconsciously doing this based on their years of experience. As soon as they smell and taste a wine, they have a Medal in their heads and work to adjust their points accordingly.

Your Holistic score must be a letter value and NOT a point value to make this method work. There are 2 very important reasons for this.

- 1) The first reason is that if you put a number value down you will see this number on your Wine Evaluation sheet and then consciously make your points exactly match your holistic number. This invalidates the whole purpose of using your Holistic Letter rating to validate your points score after you score the wine.
- 2) The second reason is that if you are asked to judge in a competition that uses a different scoring system like a 100 point system and you use a number based on our 20 point system it will be completely meaningless. Instead, if you can use your knowledge of what a Silver + wine tastes like and then compare that to where a High Silver score would be in a 100 point system, you would be able to judge the wine, write comments, and come up with an appropriate final score without having any experience with filling in the points for the various categories. These can just be left blank.

I strongly encourage all trainees and judges to use this Holistic method BEFORE putting any points on your score sheet. Smell and Taste a wine and beside the Total Points column, put your Holistic score. I.e; B+ for a high bronze. Your initial impressions of a wine are usually the most accurate. Once you have assigned a Holistic score to a wine, then go about doing your points. Your points should add up to be similar to your Holistic letter score and if they don't then you need to go back and have a very close look at your points.

We have been teaching this concept during the Judge training courses and have noticed a huge improvement in the consistency of score from the trainees practicing this technique. Even the feedback from the trainees has been positive with many saying that they are noticing improvements in both their scores and their overall confidence in their judging abilities.

It is important even for experienced judges to do the holistic method to support the trainees in their development during the monthly tasting/training sessions. When giving your score, give your holistic score first and then your point score. If your holistic and points differ then you should be prepared to explain why.

Remember that the monthly sessions are not just for getting qualified in more classes, but should also include some component of training. The qualified judges should be helping to mentor and train the trainees.