

**Portland
Winemakers
Club**



Portland Winemakers Club

July 2019

“Bill’s Meanderings”

Scheduled Meetings

January 15, 2020 Crush
Talk / Planning

January 18, 2020
Annual Gala – At Parrett
Mountain Cellars

February 19, 2020
Bordeaux Tasting

March 18, 2020
Speaker: John Davidson,
Walnut City

April 15, 2020
Barrel / Carboy Sample
Tasting.

May 20, 2020
Speaker: ?

June, 17, 2020
Best practices; member
demonstrations of tips &
tricks

July 2020
Annual Picnic

August 18, 2019
Tour, Anderson Family
Vineyards

August 21, 2019
All Whites Blind Tasting

September 18, 2019
Other Reds Blind Tasting

October 16, 2019
Pinot Noir Blind Tasting

November 2019
Crush Talk

December 4, 2019
Planning, Tours, Speakers,
Events, Elections



Véraison. The fruit is starting to ripen and a generalization is harvest is 60 days out. This is a good time for winemakers to awaken to the needs of what is ahead, The crush is coming. Preparedness. What will I need to make the fruit into the wine I hope it to be. Yeast, chemicals and additives, vessels and equipment, testing equipment for maintenance. Now is the time to take stock and procure all of your needs. Better to be prepared than to have to scramble at the last minute like I end up sometimes doing.

Bill

**Drink Responsibly.
Drive Responsibly.**

Note: The next regular meeting will be Wednesday, August 21st at 7:00 PM at Aloha Grange Hall.

August agenda: "All Whites Tasting". This will be blind tasting of member produced white varietals including rose, sparkling, fruit wines, mead, cider anything remotely resembling a white wine.

If you haven't already, be sure to renew your club membership and sign a new waiver.

The regular meeting will be a potluck, bring a small snack to share. Also bring 2 wine glasses for tasting.

The club meeting will begin at 7 pm and end by 9 pm. If you can, get there a little early to help set up. Please help put away chairs and tables at the end of the meeting.

Website: <http://portlandwinemakersclub.com/>

Meeting Minutes

(There was no meeting in July)

The Greatest Wine Scandal

Rudy Kurniawan, remember that name. In the early 2000's, he committed one of the greatest wine frauds of our lifetime.

No one was sure of his origin, but he seemed to suddenly appear with some of Las Angeles most noted wine collectors, buyers, and sellers. Known for his swept back hair and hearty laugh, Rudy seemed to come from no where, but quickly became a prolific buyer and seller of collector and expensive wines in LA's wine auction scene.

He seemed to have a deep knowledge and love for expensive wine. He quickly moved from Pinot Noirs to Burgundy's. According to The Guardian, he took such a fancy to Domaine de la Romanée-Conti that he acquired the nickname "Dr. Conti".

"In one auction at Acker Merrall & Condit in 2006, Kurniawan sold \$24.7m of wine, beating the previous record by \$10m. These were the days of the first dotcom boom, when Silicon Valley had more money than sense, a combination which has always been drawn to fine wines"-The Guardian.

Seems like a real go-getter, huh? One of the lessons he missed is if you are going to do a great com, do your homework ahead of time. Unfortunately, Rudy was a little lazy. This would cause discrepancies to start appearing in the wine market.

For example, Laurent Ponsot, head of Domaine Ponsot, was surprised to find vintages of his Clos St Denis appear on the market with vintages ranging from 1945 to 1971, as this wine didn't go into production until 1982.

Brad Goldstein, a private detective hired by Bill Koch to investigate several fake bottles of wine that started appearing in his collection, found that Kurniawan had sold a magnum of Petrus from 1921. Unfortunately for Rudy, magnums were not made during that time period.

Ponsot and Koch, would be key players to the downfall of Rudy.

In 2012, the FBI raided Kurniawan's home. They found a fully equipped counterfeiting workshop. He bought cheaper wine and rebottled and had equipment to make forged labels appear aged. He would be the first in the USA to be convicted of wine forgery.

Who was Rudy? Zhen Wang Haung. He's believed to be from Indonesia and comes from a long line of con artists, some of whom are still at large after committing major bank fraud. He just took the family's profession on the road.

Wine Club Members,

Please join us for a winery/vineyard tour on Sunday,
August 18th.

PLACE: Anderson Family Vineyards

**LOCATION: 20120 NE Herring Lane
Newberg, OR 97132**

DATE: Sunday, August 18th TIME: 2 pm

Please RSVP to me at: dlopez5011@yahoo.com

Let me know how many will be in your party.

Email me with any questions. Hope to see you all out
there! Cheers! Damon Lopez





Randall Graham On the Road to Popelouchum

A saga in which the Rhone Ranger dismounts from his trusty steed and sets out on a pilgrimage into the hills of San Juan Bautista.

by Roger Morris

Thanks to “Wine Journal, American Wine Society”

Even the Rhone Ranger, it seems, can have a midlife crisis.

There must be more to winemaking, he mused, than riding off into the sunset shadowed by his famous sidekicks – Cardinal Zin, Big House Red

and Le Cigare Volant. Though recognized as one of the world’s most-innovative winemakers, the Rhone Ranger nevertheless felt he was hearing the call of a new challenge, a new quest.

It’s easy for us wine lovers to get caught up in the Legend of Randall Graham, the original Rhone Ranger, who is being awarded the American Wine Society’s 2019 Award of Merit. More than anyone else, Graham proved that great California wines could be more than just Cabernet and Chardonnay, introducing us 30 years ago to lively blends of grapes such as Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre, all classically grown in France’s Rhone Valley. And he encouraged us to laugh a little along the way at his inventive labels and Cervantes-like newsletter.

Now, the 66-year-old Graham is scouting new terroir, again becoming a grower of grapes rather than a buyer of grapes. Recently, I asked him if his new quest could be summed up by saying that he is morphing from being the Magician of the Cellar to becoming the Master of the Vineyard. “That’s what I’m trying to do,” Graham replied, “but I’ve not arrived there yet. It’s coming more slowly than I hoped.”

Perhaps that’s because Graham again wants to plow new ground by moving beyond the cliché about “the wine is made in the vineyard.” Instead, he is asking, “What should a vineyard be in the first place?” Is there something after centuries of growing grapes and making wine that we have been missing? And it’s not just that he is searching for answers, he’s still searching for the right questions to ask. As always, it’s not easy to bottle what is growing in Graham’s fertile mind and then slap a label on it.

AFTER BONNY DOON—POPELOUCHUM

While Graham is not abandoning his famous Bonny Doon winery anytime soon, the new object of Graham’s affection is a 400-acre vineyard estate he owns in San Juan Bautista in San Benito County south of Gilroy and west of Hollister where his stated goal is to grow hundreds of different grape varieties to see what fits best – “if I can figure out what ‘best’ is.” The vineyard is called Popelouchum, which Graham explains is pronounced “POPE-uh (slight pause) luh-CHOOM.”



But let’s pause here to briefly review, for those who have only recently become aware of the Legend of Randall Graham, how he got to where he is today. Born in 1953 in Los Angeles, he attended the University of California at Santa Cruz as, as he puts it, “a permanent Liberal Arts major” concentrating in philosophy. Soon after, Graham found employment at one of the better wine stores in Beverly Hills, where he discovered fine wine with a capital “W.” It was love at first sip.

This led him to a degree in plant sciences at the hallowed University of California at Davis, where he again fell in love, this time with Pinot Noir. By now, Graham was beginning to cultivate his image as an erudite soul who

was quite passionate and discursive about whatever he believed in at the moment, although he did so in a very likeable manner. An enfant terrible at times, but an endearing one. He also looked the part – tall and angular with long black hair swept back from a face that featured a Roman nose and eyes accentuated by rimless granny glasses.

After university, Graham in 1979 coaxed his family into helping finance his purchase of a property on the west side of the Santa Cruz Mountains in a hamlet of about 2,500 people. It was called Bonny Doon, and Graham was soon to make it world-famous by naming his winery after it. But even though there were great Pinot Noirs being made in Santa Cruz, Graham quickly determined that his wasn't among them.

However, making wine from Rhone grape varieties, then largely unknown in the U.S., was another matter, so Graham introduced American drinkers in 1984 to a red Rhone blend called "Le Cigare Volant." Every great wine, it is said, needs a back story, and this one had a beaut: The most famous appellation in the southern Rhone is Chateauneuf-du-Pape, and during some existential moment its town fathers had legislated that no flying saucer, or flying cigars (le cigare volant), could legally land there. Graham found that amusing enough to warrant a label.

The wine was an immediate hit, and so was Graham, whose colorful names for his wines, their sometimes cartoonish labels that stood out in a somber crowd, and his heavily footnoted and quite puny newsletters all insured his wines wouldn't be overlooked. For wine shops whose owners loved hand-selling new brands to customers, Le Cigare Volant, Big House Red and Cardinal Zin were pure gold. In 1989, five years after Cigar's launch, Graham found himself perched on the cover of the Wine Spectator standing beside a white steed and wearing a mask and a blue polyester suit – the birth of the Rhone Ranger.

Through the 1990's and into the first decade of the new century, Bonny Doon's portfolio expanded as did the recognition of its founder – a James Beard award, a book (Been Doon So Long), inclusion in Cook's magazine Who's Who of Cooking in America, an asteroid named "4934 Rhone ranger" in honor of him by a wine-loving astronomer, a place in the Vintner's Hall of Fame – everything, it seems, but a trip to the White House and the cover of The Rolling Stone.

Then, Graham's world began to change. In 2003, as he was turning 50, Graham had a daughter, Amélie. "The next year, I had a serious medical problem," Graham told me in a 2011 interview, "and suddenly I got a whiff of mortality." After a career of doing magic in the cellar (for example, he was an early adaptor of micro-oxygenation), often using other people's grapes, he became fascinated by terroir, organic growing, even biodynamic agriculture. "Most of life as a winemaker, I was a craftsman," he says, "a manipulator, if you will. I'm at a different place right now. It has been a subordination of my ego."



“Without the publicity that Graham garnered, the official Rhone Ranger organization today would not have more than 100 California wineries within its membership, each producing its share of “Rhone” varietals and blended wines.”

He sold his Big House Red brand – “a big shift in gears” – then Cardinal Zin, as well as his vineyard in Soledad, and, two months before our 2011 conversation, his Oregon-based Pacific Rim venture. But by 2010, he had already begun rebuilding as he was tearing down, purchasing the 400-acre vineyard he christened Popelouchum, which, he says, means “paradise” in a local Native American dialect. He announced to the wine world his ambition to breed 10,000 grape varieties, some from seeds, and produce a true vin de terroir in the New World.

THE PRESENT

Graham still owns Bonny Doon, although no grapes come from the Santa Cruz Mountains these days. Le Cigare Volant is still being produced – although the format is changing after 34 years to a ready-to-drink formula. He still makes Clos de Gilroy, varietal Syrah's, and a newer, sparkling wine in a can called “Le Bulle- Moose Rouse,” which typically has a pun as well as a rhyme in it.

AND POPELOUCHUM?

In a May 2018 New Yorker profile of Graham, the former philosophy major in a burst of simplicity explained his newest quest to writer Adam Gropnik. “Wine is a mystery that holds the promise of an explanation,” Graham said. Simply put,

Popelouchum is allowing Grahm to explore these mysteries of wine at a time when Bonny Doon – for all the success and praise it garnered him – had ceased to challenge him. At Popelouchum, Grahm is doing the broadest of broad-brush research in the vineyard, trying to see what revelations will catch his eye and to discover where they will take him. Bonny Doon, however, continues to provide a flow of cash, though not as much as Grahm would like, allowing him to develop the San Benito estate.

As a result, Grahm has done something that perhaps no other winegrower has purposely done, and that is to incorporate his venture as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, although sadly recognizing that many commercial winemakers are also non-profit, if not by choice. This allowed him to make a highly publicized crowd-funding appeal to his loyal following to join in his newest adventure. At last count, Grahm had raised a modest \$174,820 from 1,180 backers.

The new estate wine is also coming along well, if slowly. “Last harvest, we were able to make a couple of barrels of Grenache Noir and Grenache Blanc and a little Furmint,” he reports. I ask him whether he plans to eventually combine the businesses of Bonny Doon and Popelouchum into a single new entity. “I use the analogy of Toyota,” Grahm says. “When they wanted to make a luxury car, they decided they needed another brand beyond Toyota – Lexus.” So, we have not heard the last from Bonny Doon.

Of course, the legacy of Grahm goes far beyond his own winegrowing. Without the publicity that Grahm garnered, the official Rhone Ranger organization today would not have more than 100 California wineries within its membership, each producing its share of “Rhone” varietals and blended wines. Nor, without Grahm’s ceaseless promotion of metal closures over cork, would so many winemakers have had the commercial courage to switch to the turning of the screw cap ages ago.

Grahm has also made himself accessible to small winegrowers who are on their own quests. For example, Grahm heard about the field blends that Va La Vineyards’ Anthony Vietri was producing on his small farm in Avondale, PA, and got in contact with him to compare notes, which they continue to do today. “Randall is an incredibly giving person who quietly goes out of his way to personally offer assistance to tiny, anonymous wineries growing grapes in the middle of nowhere,” Vietri says. “I have been fortunate enough to be one of those farmers, and so the topic of his name and his influence is very personal to me. I can think of no other person who has single-handedly done more to draw positive attention to the American wine industry, getting folks excited about the possibilities that lie outside the mainstream and beyond the industrial.” Similarly, PR executive Dan Fredman, who has worked in the wine trade for years, paints a picture of a very accessible Graham. “Sometimes it’s difficult to decide whether Randall Grahm impresses me more as an iconoclastic winemaker or as a mad scientist marketer,” Fredman says. “He’s a man okay with letting his curiosity



flag fly and using it as a rudder to steer him in myriad directions, occasionally simultaneously. We met in the early 1980s when I was first diving into the wine cosmos, and no matter how ridiculous my questions, Randall was never condescending. He invariably led me to enological and intellectual rabbit holes I never knew existed (but for which I’m ever thankful for diving into).”

Now Grahm is exploring another rabbit warren. “I love Bonny Doon,” Grahm says, “but it has its own baggage.” Part of that baggage is constantly being tied to his past, both intellectually and practically, when he desperately wants to concentrate on the visiting Bonny Doon accounts to keep the sales flowing, “and not

being in the vineyard.” “I’m not looking for a silver bullet at Popelouchum,” Grahm continues, momentarily lapsing into Rhone Ranger jargon. “I just want to explore the possibilities of thinking about grapes and terroir and wine in different ways. We are looking for the outliers.”

And thus, Randall Grahm has set himself free, or almost so, to search for terroir enlightenment that can’t be found in a business plan, prior experience, an Excel spread sheet or academic texts. He will know it when he sees it – then tell the rest of us about it.



Chitin, chitinase, chitosan ...

by Karien O'Kennedy | 1 Mar, 2019.

In the past 10 years various studies were published that highlighted these three entities and their roles in winemaking. It is therefore worthwhile to take a closer look at what they are, what they do and why winemakers should be excited.

What they are

Chitin is the second most abundant polysaccharide in nature after cellulose.¹ It is a structural polysaccharide and is the main component of the exoskeletons of crustaceans (shrimps, prawns, crabs and lobsters) and insects.² It is also found in the cell walls of fungi and yeasts.

Chitinases are enzymes found in grapes and the resulting wine.^{3,4,5} It forms part of the family of pathogenesis-related proteins. Their role in grapes is to protect grapes against fungal infection by binding to and breaking down the chitin in the fungal mycelial cell walls. Even though chitinases only comprise a small percentage of the total protein content in grape juice and wine, it is the biggest culprit in terms of protein instability. The reason for that is because chitinase denatures at a fairly low temperature compared to the other grape proteins. It is therefore really only necessary to remove chitinases from wine to render the wine fairly protein stable and not all the proteins in wine. It should be mentioned that another group of pathogenesis-related proteins (thaumatin-like proteins) can also contribute to protein instability, however, to a lesser extent than chitinases.⁵

Chitosan is produced commercially by partial deacetylation of chitin.² However, chitosan also occurs naturally in the cell walls of certain fungi. Most chitosan in the world is produced from crab, shrimp and prawn wastes. The production of chitosan from seafood is much more cost-effective than production from fungal sources. Chitosan, being a “natural” product, has various applications in the food, pharmaceutical and agricultural industries.⁶ It can bind certain metals, is anti-microbial and an antioxidant, to name a few relevant specific to winemaking. Chitosan (and chitin) can also bind to chitinases in juice and wine, thereby rendering wines more protein stable.⁴

What the laws permit

Commission Regulation (EU) No. 53/2011 (January 2011) permits the use of chitosan and chitin-glucan of fungal (*Aspergillus niger*) origin in winemaking for the purposes of the: “reduction in the heavy metal content, particularly iron, lead, cadmium and copper – 100 g/hL; prevention of ferric casse and copper casse – 100 g/hL; reduction of possible contaminants, especially ochratoxin A – 500 g/hL; and reduction in the populations of undesirable microorganisms, in particular *Brettanomyces*, solely by means of treatment with chitosan – 10 g/hL”.

South Africa has adopted the exact same resolution in our wine laws.

Chitosan as anti-microbial agent

Chitosan is effective against various wine microorganisms, such as acetic acid bacteria, some lactic acid bacteria and *Brettanomyces*.⁷ In the case of Brett, its mode of action is to disrupt cell walls and membranes, causing leakage of cell constituents. It also causes Brett cells to aggregate to the bottom of a tank/barrel. It is important to know that chitosan is mainly fungistatic and not fungicidal, meaning that the Brett population can increase again after a certain amount of time, if the wine is not racked off the chitosan-Brett lees.

Interestingly chitosan is also used as an anti-microbial agent in natural textiles, such as sportswear, as well as in the medical field in wound dressing.⁸

Chitosan and protein stabilization

Currently EU legislation does not stipulate the use of chitosan for protein stabilization. However, a recent study demonstrated the possibility thereof.⁴ The study was conducted on model wines, as well as Moscato commercial wines. 1 g/L Chitosan was added to the model wine and real wine samples and unfined controls were kept. Chitosan reduced both tartaric acid and malic acid in the model wines. The highest reduction for tartaric acid was 0.65 g/L and 0.46 g/L for malic acid. The total protein content of wines fined with chitosan was on average 14% lower than the control. Chitosan-fined wines were almost completely deprived of chitinases, but there was no significant effect on the TL-



proteins. After a 60°C heat test, the control NTU was 11.07 and the chitosan-treated wine 1.95. After a 62°C heat test, the control NTU was 8.96 and the chitosan-treated wine 2.10. Chitosan treatment also reduced the calcium, potassium, iron and sodium content of the wines. A possible negative effect is that it did reduce some of the free terpenols, such as nerol, geraniol and linalool, which are important aroma compounds for a wine such as Moscato. The glycosylated precursors were mostly unaffected. No other classes of aromatic compounds were affected by chitosan treatment.

Due to the reduction in protein haze, chitosan is a potential alternative to bentonite treatment. Unfortunately compared to bentonite addition of the same dosage, chitosan addition is not at all economically viable at this stage since only, more expensive to produce, fungal-derived chitosan (*Aspergillus niger*) is approved for use in winemaking. In addition to rendering wines protein stable, the removal of potassium and calcium ions can also have a positive effect on the tartrate stability of wines. The removal of iron can reduce a wine's oxidative capacity. No sensory analysis was done in this study and chitosan's effect on free terpenols should be further investigated.

Chitin, yeast and protein stabilization

A study conducted by Dr. Thuli Ndlovu at the Institute for Wine Biotechnology, Stellenbosch University, under the leadership of Prof. Florian Bauer, revealed that fermenting Chardonnay and Sauvignon blanc musts with *Saccharomyces paradoxus* rendered wines more protein stable than wines fermented with normal *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* wine yeasts.³ This can be attributed to the higher cell wall chitin content of the former compared to the latter. It was also found that inactivated versions of the *S. paradoxus* yeasts can remove chitinases, but to a lesser extent than the live cells. The significance of the study is quite profound since it finally presents a viable possibility of being bentonite-free one day. The solution might not lie with the chitin content of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cell walls, but other species of wine yeasts might be able to provide us with a no more bentonite future. Investigations are ongoing.

Currently no commercial *Saccharomyces paradoxus* exists, but a *Saccharomyces cerevisiae/paradoxus* hybrid is commercially produced and sold by Anchor Yeast. In the mentioned study, it was not as effective as the native *S. paradoxus* strains in improving protein stability, but performed slightly better than the *S. cerevisiae* strains. The use of yeast strains to reduce protein haze in white wines has been patented by Stellenbosch University. The research was funded by Winetech.

Conclusions

There are various commercial products available to winemakers that contain chitosan, chitosan in combination with other products and chitin-glucan. Most of the applications are for microbiological control. Winemakers are advised to contact suppliers directly to determine which products will best suit their needs. Examples of products commercially available are: OenoBrett, BactiControl and MicroControl (Laffort); Stab Micro and Stab Micro M (Enartis); and No Brett Inside and Bactiless (Lallemand). With the exception of Bactiless, all products are chitosan-based. Bactiless contains chitin-glucan and chitosan. Chitosan and chitin-glucan are bio-degradable, non-allergenic and of plant origin.

References

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Winemaking Solutions for Challenging Vintage Years

by Denise M. Gardner

While producing quality wine from any wine region is a challenge, creating wines from grapes grown in regions with annual weather variability can exacerbate common winemaking obstacles. Insect and pest pressure, heavy precipitation or humidity during the growing season, frosts, and severe winter temperatures can all lead to a decrease in grape yield and quality. While these extremes are rarely covered in enological textbooks, winemakers can still learn to craft gold during difficult vintages.

The Best Winemakers Take Good Notes

Winemakers forced to make wine under unpredictable conditions tend to get pretty good at making quality wines. When faced with vintage-to-vintage variation, it is vital to take good production records to ensure lessons learned are not forgotten.

For instance, if you're using a new fining agent to treat a specific problem or have altered production steps in some way, capturing the outcome through notes and documentation will help clarify what procedures did and didn't work for future vintage years. While this may be a mundane step, winemakers rarely regret taking detailed notes. If you're new to the world of production records, try capturing information like dosage rates, ingredient names, mixing times, etc. Writing down any anecdotal observations while working with the wine can also be extremely useful.

What Should You Do When Wines Are Mediocre?

Maintain Analytical Records

During any vintage year, it's best to compare production notes with chemical and sensory assessments. At minimum, I recommend winemakers keep a list of pH, titratable acidity (TA), volatile acidity (VA), alcohol concentration, and free and total sulfur dioxide concentration on record following primary fermentation. If the wine goes through malolactic fermentation (MLF), analyze the malic acid concentration and repeat the above analytical parameters to compare to values recorded after primary fermentation.

Each analytical value provides clues to the winemaker. For example, a wine with a pH less than 3.50 can more easily retain free sulfur dioxide and minimize further spoilage, especially if a wine is kept cool and with good oxygen management. A wine with pH above 3.50 is a good indicator to the winemaker that he/she needs to keep a steady eye on potential spoilage.

The TA can provide an analytical assessment of sourness. Wines that fall below 6.0 g/L of tartaric acid may seem flat or flabby, but they may be good blending options for higher TA wines. Furthermore, the VA indicates if spoilage is progressing. By the time MLF is complete, I usually want most wines to fall under 0.55 g/L acetic acid concentration. Larger VA values usually indicate a spoilage problem early in that wine's production.

Match Analytical Data with a Tasting Evaluation

Sensory assessment is also important. If a winemaker knows something is wrong with the wine, but cannot identify the problem, it's best to have the wine evaluated by an expert or third party. Some analytical labs or consultants offer these services for a fee. Although a fee is required, these evaluations can usually fix the problem more efficiently and minimize additional spoilage.

If the winemaker identifies a technical wine flaw, then it should be addressed before it is blended with other wines. For microbial flaw incidences (e.g., acetic acid or VA development, *Brettanomyces* off flavors, and potentially oxidation), first fix the source of the flaw. This means effectively remove yeast or bacteria from the wine. Otherwise, the wine can continue to spoil. Confirm that the source of a flaw is eliminated from the wine with sound microbial testing (e.g., culture plating, PCR/Scorpions).

After removing the source of the flaw, address the aromatic or taste impact. This may take some time tinkering with fining agents and enological additives such as tannins, gums, or polysaccharides. Always make sure to test a product and its influence on the wine's aroma or taste in bench trials first. Once products are added to a tank/barrel of wine, there is no turning back from its addition.

Sometimes, oddball vintage years can leave a wine tasting, well, odd. The type of flaws the wine has may be unidentifiable. With these wines, try cleaning up the base wine to prepare it for blending. The use of fining agents can often help minimize the intensity of the wine's weirdness and reduce the impact the wine will have in a future blend.

Blending is a Multifaceted Tool for Winemakers

Finally, winemakers should turn to blending to improve the quality of wines for a given vintage. While it's easy to maintain production of a varietal wine from year-to-year, ignoring the quality of incoming fruit, talented winemakers will use blending to their advantage. With all blending suggestions below, pay attention to federal labeling regulations as well as any additional state or AVA rules regarding blending practices and label allowances.

Depending on the challenges faced in that year, the winery may end up with wines from outside regions (e.g., Washington state) or higher volumes of lesser known varieties (e.g., hybrid varieties).

For red wines, reserved past vintages may be blended into the current vintage. Usually, up to 15% of a past vintage can be added to a wine and labeled as the majority vintage year unless the wine has an AVA designation (refer to 27 CFR 4.23 for more details). Using past vintages can improve red wine consistency, quality, and quantity in those years with dramatic losses in yield.

Hybrids also offer creative wine options. Hybrids blended with estate grown *Vitis vinifera* varieties or varieties from outside of the state generate unique blends. While hybrids provide their own type of wine chemistry, they do benefit from a softer mouthfeel. This is often attributed to a reduced concentration of tannins retained in the wine. Luckily, the American consumer tends to enjoy soft wines. With good acid manipulation, hybrid varieties and blends can be attractive introductory table wines enjoyed by many consumers.

Many hybrid varieties benefit from some degree of blending in general. Having worked with hybrids for many years, even if a wine is labeled by the hybrid's wine grape variety, I've found that the best hybrid wines are typically blends. While exceptions exist, taking the time to blend different varieties together can often prove beneficial for winemakers in good and challenging vintage years.



Editor: Member Jon Kahrs participated this year at the Oregon State Fair as a wine judge for the Amateur wine competition. Jon wrote the following piece about his experiences in that roll.

My experiences Judging the State Fair Amateur Wine Competition

By Jon Kahrs

Background and Introduction to the wine judging:

Judging at the 2019 State Fair Amateur wine contest was a wonderful experience. Next year they are thinking of calling it the “non-commercial” wine contest. Go figure. This is the first year in a while that the State Fair has not used Chemeketa’s wine program to help in the organizing and judging. The new State Fair organizer of the wine contest is Caleb Forcier, who did a great job with the help of his two assistants and Patrick McElligott. There were 8 judges in all, with a variety of judges including commercial wine makers, wine bloggers and Sommeliers. The judges were then split into two panels. Next year I will suggest to Patrick that he use 2 amateur judges so that each group has one. We were then placed in separate rooms with each of having a plate of typical wine food and a spit bucket. We also had judging sheets. Flights of wine were then brought out to us. Each group was given different flights except at the end when everyone was doing the “grand judging”.

There were about 90 entries in all. They are hoping to grow the entries somewhat. Beer has over 250 entries. **I should say, that regardless of your score, you should be proud of your efforts. Overall, the experienced judges were impressed with the quality and variety of efforts. I understand how hard it is, but for some reason if you were given a “no medal”, don’t be insulted or take it personally. I have received “no medal” before in wine judging and know how difficult that is. The important thing is to look at the comments and ask yourself if this was similar to your own evaluation when you sent in the wine. Also, how could I improve?**

Judging:

When judging, the first thing we did was smell the wine. We were looking for flaws and overall aromatics. The next thing we did was look at color. This gave us an idea of technique and helped us evaluate oxidation. Then we would take a sip, evaluating overall taste. We were looking for an absence of flaws, varietal characteristics and good complexity. In my group we had four very different wine judges. It was interesting that despite varied backgrounds overall we were in good agreement on our evaluations and scores. After tasting we would write comments and give the wines a score. We would then talk about the wine and give it a gold, a silver, a bronze or no medal. We also could score with a “+” or a “-“. Not so different from our wine group. Occasionally as we talked, I might change my scores a little, but overall, I tried to remain true to my evaluation unless I was given more information that informed a concern I had. This was especially true as time went on and a felt more comfortable judging. We rotated who would start talking about the wine. After talking about the wine, one of the judges would add and average the scores. If there was a doubt about which category to put it in, the “averaging” judge might suggest bumping it up. Our judging panel included:

Trudy Kramer: From Kramer Winery. She used to be an amateur winemaker and has judged for ages. She provided the experience in our group.

Michael Alberty: Michael is a wine writer and blogger who, among other things, has written for The Oregon Wine Press, Willamette Week and the Oregonian.

Cindy Gierok: Cindy has sommelier licenses and works at Fred Meyers in the much tragically reduced wine section (Thanks Kroger).

Jon Kahrs: And myself of course. I have made wines for about 12 years and was President of the Portland Winemakers Club for 3 years.

Caleb would come in and explain the flights. He would give us the varietal, the year, and any important notes including the area or AVA and what the winemakers noted. The other judges would take the alcohol content seriously. I tried to steer them away from that and only use that as a general idea of the brix level at harvest. With winemakers’ notes, we tried to evaluate what the winemaker wanted to do to help base our evaluations on that. We had many rather unusual wines where we had to throw our usual standards out the window. We only had one corked wine, which leads me to ask if using two bottles is a good use of wine. If it is corked, we can ask that the wine be resubmitted next year. Something to talk about at a meeting.

Below are some of the flights we did, and notes about overall flights:

The first flight for us was Viognier: Overall very nice. Few bad notes. Wish aromatics could be better but that is typical of Eastern Washington. One comment from Trudy was that perhaps the winemakers should evaluate carefully which yeast they are using.

Other whites: We had a Sauvignon Blanc, which had a few issues, and three Albariño, one which I submitted. Because I had a wine in the mix, I remained as muted as possible until the very end. I tried to judge all the wines objectively. They were all pretty similar although two of the wines had reduced noses. One wine (which may have been mine) had a touch of residual sugar. But we found this added aromatics and smoothed out the rough edges- but it was residual sugar. My scores ended up mirroring the other judges.

We also judged a Riesling, which was made very well, but later I detected a whiff of sulfur.
We then went through the reds:

We started out with Pinots, which were rather interesting if not always well balanced. One consistent issue was the overuse of oak so that the fruit was overwhelmed. The other group also judged a flight of pinot. The one we liked the best in our group was a lighter pinot done without oak. It was very varietal. More of a German than French style, but for what it was, it made us smile.

One flight had Malbec's and Tempranillo. We found again that winemakers seemed to have a hard time balancing the oak with the fruit. They are both mild grapes and show oak easily. We kept wanting more fruit.

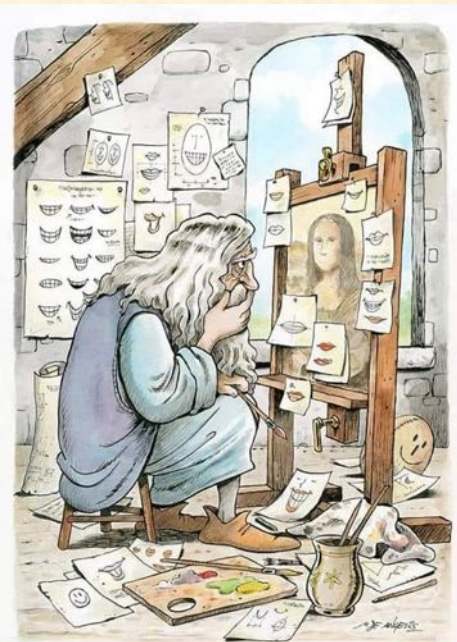
Bordeaux: The Bordeaux mixes overall were rather nice. I figure that if someone is going through the trouble of making the multiple grapes, they are probably fairly good winemakers. The oak seemed to better balanced and there were fewer flaws.

Concord: Surprisingly, we had a flight of concord grapes. The first glass we had was a dry concord that was a stunner with beautiful aromatics and flawless nature. The other concords were sweet which helped smooth the natural bitterness of the grape, but the winemaking on these glasses was somewhat varied.

Fruit wines: This group of wines was a shock and rather amazing. There were three dessert wines: Banana, Mango and Pineapple. The Banana and Mango wines were both amazing but did lack acid. But chilling the wines and having it with some vanilla ice cream would be awesome. Of those two, the Mango was truly astonishing.

Final wines and thoughts:

We then all came together and judged the final wines. Since we had eight judges, we would end up splitting votes sometimes. Then we had 2nd and 3rd choices to fall back on. These votes were more contentious, but I was happy that the red wines I had chosen for gold, silver and bronze won. At that the judging concluded. Not sure when we will all receive the notes and medals, but I will contact Patrick and hopefully they will expediate the process. All in all, a great experience and one I would recommend for anyone who gets a chance.



I read that, by law, you have to turn on your headlights when it's raining in Sweden. How the hell am I supposed to know if it's raining in Sweden?



Portland Winemakers Club

Leadership Team – 2019

President: **Bill Brown** bbgoldieguy@gmail.com

- Establish leadership team
- Assure that objectives for the year are met
- Set up agenda and run meetings

Treasurer: **Barb Thomson** bt.grapevine@frontier.com

- Collect dues and fees, update membership list with secretary
- Pay bills

Secretary: **Ken Stinger** kbstinger@frontier.com

- Communicate regularly about club activities and issues
- Monthly newsletter
- Keep updated list of members, name tags and other data

Chair of Education/Speakers: **Barb Stinger** kbstinger@frontier.com

- Arrange for speakers & educational content for our meetings

Chair for Tastings: **Paul Sowray & Barb Stinger** davids1898@aol.com

- Conduct club tastings kbstinger@frontier.com
- Review and improve club tasting procedures

Chair of Winery/Vineyard Tours: **Damon Lopez**. dlopez5011@yahoo.com

- Select wineries, vineyards etc. to visit
- Arrange tours
- Cover logistics (food and money)

Chair of Group Purchases: **Bob Hatt** bobhatt2000@yahoo.com

- Makes the arrangements to purchase, collect, and distribute
- Grape purchases
- Supplies – These should be passed to the President for distribution

Chair of Competitions: **Paul Boyechko** labmanpaul@hotmail.com

- Encourage club participation in all amateur competitions available. Make information known through Newsletter, e-mail and Facebook.

Chairs for Social Events : **Marilyn Brown & Mindy Bush** brown.marilynjean@gmail.com

* Gala / Picnic / parties mindybush@hotmail.com

Web Design Editor: **Alice Bonham** alice@alicedesigns.org