

Portland
Winemakers
Club



Portland Winemakers Club

October 2018

President's Monthly Rant



Scheduled Meetings

January 12th, 2019

Annual Gala – At Dennis & Marlene Grants new tasting room at Parrett Mountain Cellars

January 16, 2019 Crush

Talk / Planning

February 20, 2019

Bordeaux Tasting

March 20, 2019

Speaker:

April 17, 2019

Barrel / Carboy Sample Tasting

May 15, 2019

Speaker:

June, 19, 2019

Best practices; member demonstrations of tips & tricks

July 13 2019

Annual Picnic

July 27 2019

Tour

August 21, 2019

All Whites Tasting

August 25, 2019

Tour

September 18, 2019

Other Reds Tasting

October 16, 2019

Pinot Noir Tasting

November 2019

No Meeting

December 5, 2018

Planning, Tours, Speakers, Events, Elections

Following up on last month's rant, in which I discussed the cancellation of the purchase of 2000 tons of southern Oregon Pinot Noir from some 20 vineyards by a California company, Copper Cane, that makes wines in California but uses some Oregon fruit for their Pinot's. The cancellation came just days before harvest, giving growers no time to find alternate buyers, and with the dubious reason that there was smoke taint present, which appears to have been fabricated. It is thought that Copper Cane has too much inventory from past years still on hand and that was likely the motivation. King Estate and Willamette Valley Vineyards have teamed up with a few others to purchase a portion of the fruit at full price and are together making a Pinot Noir, Rosé of Pinot and Chardonnay to be marketed under the label "Solidarity," proceeds from which will go to the growers and small farms who were involved in the cancellation. This will save a good number of them, but some of the smaller ones may not survive. But it says something about Oregonians and the Oregon wine industry as well that they would pitch in to help others who have been wronged. Obviously this could be spun into a bash on California in general, but that would be unfair as there are many honest and reputable folks in the wine industry down there and a fair number do business here.

But if you see a bottle of Solidarity on the shelf in your favorite store, you might keep the back story in mind. It will be priced at \$18-\$20/bottle, and most everyone can afford that. Your fellow Oregonians with the same passion that you have will appreciate it.

Drink Responsibly.
Drive Responsibly.

Misc. Information

• **New Jersey:** Why don't we see any signs for wineries in New Jersey? The way the current law is written, you have to be open five days a week and be a certain distance from a roadway exit to be able to have road signs. Many of the wineries are only open on the weekends, so they don't qualify.

• **"If you're going to claim that you can reject it for smoke taint ... you can't be the one to determine that any more than I can, the grower."**

–Michael Moore, Quail Run Vineyards

• 2017 Oregon vineyard and winery report released

The Oregon Wine Board released its vineyard and winery report in October. The annual study, conducted by the University of Oregon Institute for Policy Research and Engagement determined the number of vineyards in the state increased from 1,052 to 1,114. Wine sales increased to \$550 million in 2017. Total wine sales in 2017 increased nearly 4% over the prior year's \$529 million in sales. Total value of the production of wine grapes increased 14% from \$167 million to \$192 million in 2017. The north Willamette Valley continues to lead the state with 73% of total tons crushed.

• Parramon: 25 million corks sold, no TCA

Since launching its Protocol Zero program two years ago, Catalonian cork producer Parramon claims to have sold more than 25 million corks without any returns due to TCA.

Note: There is NO meeting in November. The next regular meeting will be Wednesday, December 5th at 7:00 PM at Oak Knoll Winery. Note that this is the first Wednesday and it will be our last meeting at Oak Knoll.

December Agenda: Elections; future tours; future speakers; events etc. Come with a bottle of wine to share and your ideas for what we should be doing in 2019. 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.

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/>

October Meeting Minutes

(25 present)

- Welcome new member Nathan Wallway to the club.
- Reminder: our next regular meeting is December 5th at Oak Knoll Winery.
- The annual Gala will be held at Parrett Mountain Winery in January, date to be determined.
- Phil said that Steinbarts Supply is available for club meetings probably a no fee.
- Phil also said Robinwood Station near Marylhurst is also available, a person with an OLCC card must be present. Probably \$20 per hour.
- Marilyn Brown said she would check out the Scholls Grange hall. Expected cost, \$50 per meeting.
- We still may be interested in the Forest Village HOA club house in Beaverton. May rent for one meeting.

Other Reds Tasting Sept. 19

Wine #	Name	Varietal	Gold	Silver	Bronze	None	Total Score	Medal Score	Medal	Rank
1	Hoffard/Hoosen/Savage	2016 Cote du Rote		15	10	1	40	1.54	Silver	7
2	Bard/Bonham	2015 Syrah	1	18	7		46	1.77	Silver	5
3	Wayne Moore	2016 Syrah	2	17	7		47	1.81	Silver	3
4	Paul Sowray	2016 Syrah		2	8	16	12	0.46	None	9
5	Hoffard/Hoosen/Savage	2015 Petite Syrah	6	9	11		47	1.81	Silver	3
6	Stinger	2014 Sangiovese/Syrah	12	9	5		59	2.27	Silver	2
7	Ourada/Rogers	2015 Tempranillo	1	12	11	2	38	1.46	Bronze	8
8	Deines	2017 Marechal Foch	3	11	11	1	42	1.62	Silver	6
9	Hatt	2013/Mourvedre/Grenache	16	6	4		64	2.46	Silver	1

Pinot Noir tasting Oct. 17

Wine #	Name	Varietal	Gold	Silver	Bronze	None	Total Score	Medal Score	Medal	Rank
1	Paul Rogers	Pinot Noir 2017	2	14	8	1	42	1.68	Silver	5
2	Ken K & B Stinger	Pinot Noir 2017			12	13	12	0.48	None	10
3	Aaron Price	Pinot Noir 2017		19	6		44	1.76	Silver	4
4	Bob Juth	Pinot Noir 2017		1	13	11	15	0.60	Bronze	9
5	Paul Boyechko	Pinot Noir 2016		3	11	11	17	0.68	Bronze	8
6	Bill Brown	Pinot Noir 2016	2	16	7		45	1.80	Silver	3
7	Hoosen/Hoffard	Pinot Noir 2016	9	7	7	2	48	1.92	Silver	2
8	Bard/Bonham	Pinot Noir 2016	2	12	11		41	1.64	Silver	6
9	Jon Kahrs	Pinot Noir 2015	13	9	3		60	2.40	Silver	1
10	Hoosen/Hoffard	Pinot Noir 2015	1	13	9	2	38	1.52	Silver	7

It takes a lot of beer to make good wine



Stinger/Warren Old Farts Vineyard, Yakima



Bob & Jon getting ready to press



Phil, Alice & Paul crushing grapes
Get all those jacks Alice!



Alice pours must into a bladder press, lots of free run



Bill pressing freshly fermented Pinot



Marilyn hydrating some yeast

Five Myths of Winemaking

Despite thousands of years of winemaking history, we're still refining our understanding of the myriad factors leading any given wine to taste and feel as it does. Arguably, no other consumer product has such variety or involves so many minute, often inscrutable, factors. A wine's personality is influenced by geology, microbiology, chemistry, plant and human physiology, agronomy, entomology, geography, weather, and more.

Winemakers do their best to guide wines per their intent, based on their studies, their experiences, and expert advice. Yet there are gaps in our knowledge and many areas where effect cannot be neatly and fully tied to cause. With so many complex variables, fully controlled experimentation is not possible. Because of these complexities, rule of thumb often comes into play, and simplification is a must when communicating with consumers or even sommeliers. Unfortunately, overly broad conclusions can result. This article looks at five common assumptions about viticulture and winemaking and considers their accuracy.

Myth #1: A Big Diurnal Shift Is Always Important

Diurnal shift is the variation between the highest and lowest temperatures on any given day. Wineries in warm regions with large diurnal shifts tend to emphasize that factor in their marketing, as the shift can result in fresher wines than might otherwise be expected. The frequent mentions have led many people to assume a big diurnal shift is generally important. That's not entirely true.

Why Diurnal Shift Helps Maintain Acidity

Grape vines are active (attempting to grow and to ripen grapes) at temperatures between the low 50s and low 90s degrees Fahrenheit, though of course the exact range for any given vine varies depending on multiple factors. The primary fuel for this growth and ripening is sugar created by photosynthesis—which doesn't occur at night as it requires sunlight.

If nighttime temperatures are warm enough for growth and ripening to continue, the vines need an alternate fuel. That fuel is malic acid. So, in general, less ripening at night means more malic acid will remain in the grapes at harvest, thus the attraction of diurnal shift.

The other benefit of cold nights in hot areas is that warming in the vineyard occurs later in the day, so vines spend less time in the heat. This can retard sugar ripeness, allowing phenolic ripeness to better keep pace.

Diurnal Shift in Moderate & Cool Climates

Big diurnal shift is, by definition, a matter of extremes. If daytime highs aren't very high, there won't be a big diurnal shift unless the lows are very low indeed. There's no benefit for wine from very cold nights in cool and moderate regions, and if both day and night temperatures are moderate, malic acid consumption will be moderate as well.

In cold regions, growers are concerned with getting sufficient ripeness and harvesting before cold weather hits. Maintaining acidity is rarely an issue, and an excess of acidity isn't uncommon. In this case, a minimal diurnal shift is best, because that means the area will warm up to suitable ripening temperature earlier in the day.

Additional Factors in Warm Regions

The rate of malic acid consumption at night depends on temperature, but that consumption is substantially reduced well above the temperature at which the vine ceases all activity. In other words, if the mercury drops to the low 60s, grapes aren't losing too much more acid during that period than they would in the low 50s.

Since gentle ripening can take place at night in the low 60s, such temperatures can allow growers to harvest earlier than if the vines shut down completely most nights. Because malic acid consumption can be quite high during the day in warm regions, moderate nights and early harvest can mean more freshness in the wine than cold nights and a later harvest.

Other Temperature Influencers

The temperature that really matters to a grape vine for ripening, and thus malic acid use, is the temperature of the vine and berries. Air temperature affects that, but so do wind, humidity, fog, water retention in the soil, vine height, and the degree to which the topsoil absorbs heat during the day and releases it at night.

Takeaways on Diurnal Shift

A significant diurnal shift can be important to retaining freshness in warm-to-hot growing regions. It is less important, and may be counterproductive, in moderate-to-cool regions. Many other factors affect the nighttime behavior of vines, too. Don't assume that greater diurnal shift produces a fresher—let alone better—wine. Look more carefully at the characteristics of the specific site.

Myth #2: Wild Yeast Fermentation Is Better than Inoculated

Yeast selection is a key winemaking decision. Producers who inoculate with cultured yeast have a multitude of options from which to choose. Some wineries always use "wild yeast," but this, too, is a decision.

A range of yeasts can bring about vinous fermentation. It's rare for a single strain, or even species, to take the process from start to finish. Often, fermentation starts with a variety of yeasts, and then the strongest takes over to finish. In other cases, the starting yeasts die, and a completely different yeast completes the fermentation.

Defining Wild Yeast

Wild yeast, also referred to as native yeast or, perhaps more correctly, ambient yeast, does not necessarily come from the vineyard. Yeast is everywhere. It occurs naturally on grape skins and is plentiful in the vineyard. There is also yeast in the air between the vineyard and winery and at the winery itself. While using ambient yeast is certainly in line with "low-intervention" winemaking, it doesn't necessarily express the character of a vineyard.

The primary yeast associated with vinification is *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Other species occurring in vineyards and production facilities include *Candida stellata*, *Kloeckera appiculata*, *Lachancea thermotolerans*, *Metschnikowia pulcherrima*, and *Zygosaccharomyces bailii*, with the first two the most common. The yeasts referred to as wild are those other than *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, as they are less ubiquitous and, in their variety, can create complexity and a unique personality in wine. Wild yeasts, however, are very sensitive to SO₂ and rarely survive once alcohol levels above 5% are achieved. Thus, a "wild yeast fermentation" may begin with a unique mélange but will finish with ambient *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*.

The Challenges of Wild Yeast

Using ambient yeast doesn't always yield satisfactory results. If there is not enough *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* available, the fermentation may be slow or stall entirely. That's especially true when the juice has a very high potential alcohol. At best, this can lead to wines with residual sugar. At worst, slow or stuck fermentations can result in off-flavors and aromas and/or bacterial contamination.

There is also a risk, at least the first few times a vineyard or production facility is used, that the resident yeasts aren't good for winemaking. If this proves to be an issue, or if pre-harvest analysis of the grapes shows contaminants or inappropriate yeast, the winemaker may neutralize everything with SO₂ and then inoculate.

Pros & Cons of Cultured Yeast

Cultured yeasts reduce risk. The behaviors of available yeasts are known—relative to potential alcohol, fermentation temperature, nutrient mix, pH, speed of fermentation, sensitivity to SO₂, and more. So, too, are the flavors and aromas each tends to produce. Aside from the question of expressing place, the principle concern with cultured yeast is that it can lead to wines that "all taste the same." That's an overstatement, but it is true that inoculated yeast fermentation can limit complexity.

To capture complexity and terroir, while limiting risks of contamination, off-flavors, or unwanted residual sugar, some winemakers allow fermentation to begin with ambient yeast. Then, when alcohol levels reach a certain point or the fermentation begins to slow, the winemaker inoculates with cultured yeast. Some producers collect wild yeasts from their vineyards and have those cultured for inoculation.

Takeaways on Yeast

Wild yeasts can yield complex wines of beauty or unattractive wines with residual sugar and off-aromas. Inoculated fermentations can make magnificent wines, clean but simple wines, or wines that taste like they are from somewhere else. It doesn't make sense to pre-judge a wine based on fermentation choices—this is just a data point. The true measure of a wine is how it smells, tastes, and feels out of the glass.

Myth #3: Malolactic Fermentation Leads to Buttery Wines

Malolactic fermentation (MLF) is a secondary fermentation that converts tart malic acid, and then citric acid, into softer, rounder lactic acid. MLF takes place, whether naturally or induced, in most red wines and in some whites.

MLF also generates diacetyl, a natural by-product of many fermentations, including those used to make sour cream, buttermilk, cultured butter, and beer. Diacetyl has a pronounced buttery aroma and flavor that it contributes to "buttery" Chardonnay—and butter itself. It's also used by food companies to flavor margarine, microwave popcorn, and more. Diacetyl usually exists in wine even before MLF takes place, as some is created during primary fermentation. The actual amount of diacetyl in a finished wine can be anywhere from zero to seven milligrams per liter. That said, typical levels are less than two milligrams per liter for whites and three milligrams per liter for reds.

The recognition threshold for diacetyl is much lower for white wines than for reds. A mere 0.2 milligrams per liter can be noticeable in whites, while five to ten times that much is necessary in a red. (The more intensely flavored a red wine, the higher the threshold.)

Other Factors in Diacetyl Production

The specific amount of diacetyl produced during MLF depends on various factors. Environment has a significant impact. Because the malolactic bacteria that do the conversion struggle at low temperatures, MLF and diacetyl generation may be limited or completely inhibited by temperature. Another key factor is pH. Ironically, the bacteria responsible for processing

malic acid have a difficult time with very low pH (high acid) environments, but thrive when pH is above 3.6. This is one reason why relatively low-acid California Chardonnay may present loads of butter, while Burgundian examples—even after full malolactic fermentation—typically don't.

The amount of malic and citric acid available for conversion make an impact, too. Greater citric acid concentration, especially, tends to result in more diacetyl production. Different yeasts produce different amounts of *diacetyl* and *Lactobacillus* and *Pediococcus damnosus* bacteria, if present, will also create diacetyl.

If oxidation occurs, diacetyl production will increase. On the other hand, factors such as sulfur dioxide, lack of nutrients, fumaric acid, and fatty acids inhibit malolactic fermentation.

Ways to Minimize Buttery Flavors

Winemakers have many tools for avoiding excessive buttery flavors when employing malolactic fermentation. Most simply, they can stop the process at any time by reducing temperature or adding SO₂. MLF can also be limited (without being stopped) through cool temperature or the addition of fumaric acid. Another straightforward solution is to blend a wine that underwent MLF with one that did not.

Qualities in the initial wine matter, too. A wine that has low pH (whether due to grape variety, terroir, viticultural choices, or a combination of these) and does not contain any undesirable bacteria will not taste very buttery. The bacteria used for malolactic fermentation makes a difference as well; some lead to subtler buttery flavors.

Adding, or not adding, certain products can minimize these flavors, too. Winemakers can adjust nutrients or avoid acidulating with citric acid. After malolactic fermentation is complete, the addition of sulfur will make any buttery flavor less noticeable, as SO₂ bonds with diacetyl. But the timing of sulfur additions matters—flavors will be subtler if the winemaker adds sulfur later, once the diacetyl has been entirely degraded by bacteria and yeast, which would be neutralized by an earlier addition.

Takeaways on Buttery Flavors

There are many variables that affect the amount of diacetyl and buttery flavor in wine. Today, winemakers both understand and have significant control over many of those factors. Overly buttery wine is far from a given with malolactic fermentation.

Myth #4: Whole-Cluster Wines Taste Stemmy Unless Stems Lignify

Apart from Beaujolais and a few other exceptions, whole-cluster fermentation is polarizing. There are philosophical arguments, technical arguments, and aesthetic preferences on the topic.

Some people oppose whole cluster because they believe stem-derived aromas and flavors mask, rather than reveal, terroir. Others feel prominent flavors derived from anything but grapes should be avoided. Counterarguments are that the character of stems does speak to both vintage and vineyard and that these notes add beauty and complexity to wine.

The qualitative judgements are all about those aromas and flavors. Some people enjoy them, some hate them. Some like them in moderation, or only when used with certain varieties, such as Syrah. But there are many factors that affect how stemmy and green a wine will taste. And there are some wines that exhibit aromas suggesting whole-cluster fermentation when none was used.

One frequent response to those who argue against stems is that stems that are “fully lignified” or “ripe” do not create excessively stemmy wines. Unfortunately, that too is an oversimplification.

Stems Don't Fully Lignify

Lignification is the technical name for a stem becoming woody—brown, dry, and hard as opposed to green, sappy, and pliable. There are different parts to the stem, and they lignify at different rates. A peduncle is the stem that connects the entire bunch to the cane. Within the bunch are the rachis (the continuation of the peduncle that serves as the central stem within a bunch), lateral branches coming off the rachis within the bunch, and pedicels that connect individual grapes to the lateral branches.

Tyler Thomas, the managing director and director of winemaking for Santa Barbara's Dierberg Vineyard and Star Lane Vineyard, has degrees in botany and plant molecular biology. He explains, “The peduncle will lignify. It usually happens pretty early in ripening. There's a point after that when you get some lignification in the rachis, but I've never seen one fully brown, and your fruit is going to be very ripe if you wait for that.”

While “lignified stems” is an over-simplification, the degree to which lignification does occur *can* make a difference. Thomas continues, “The idea that we can't use stems until they are fully lignified doesn't make sense. But we may want to be below the radar on aromatics while still getting the tannins that we want.”

Many winemakers create wines that are not 100% whole cluster by blending different batches, using some made with stems and some without. A combined fermentation keeps the stems in juice much longer, and a wine made that way may be greener than one with the same proportions but made with separate fermentations.

Other Factors Matter

It's logical that grapes with great intensity can stand up to more stem inclusion. Syrah is more powerful than Pinot Noir. Young vines are more intensely fruity but less nuanced than old vines. So, young Syrah might be harmonious with a larger proportion of stems, which will add complexity and structure without becoming overwhelming. Old-vine Pinot Noir might have the intensity to stand up to stems but, in some instances, there are so many nuances from fruit alone that stems can be a distraction.

Vintage and climate can make a difference, too. In warm years or regions, the ripeness of the fruit might want stems for added structure yet have enough intensity to not be dominated by those flavors. Clone, climate change, vigor, and viticultural techniques also impact intensity and phenolic ripeness, affecting the impact stems can have. Some vineyards never seem to make stemmy wines, even with substantial whole cluster. According to Thomas, the Syrah from Walker Vine Hill Vineyard in Russian River Valley is a prime example.

Takeaways on Stemmy Flavors

It is true that some wines featuring whole clusters smell and taste less stemmy than others. However, it's not correct to say this is due to fully lignified stems, as that rarely, if ever, occurs. The degree to which stems have lignified does have an impact, but so do site, vintage, fruit character, winemaking, and viticultural techniques.

Myth #5: Punch down Is Better than Pump over

There are many assumptions about punch down and pump over that ought to be reexamined. Generally, keeping the cap (grape skins and other solids) moist and somewhat immersed in the juice during fermentation enhances extraction of color, tannins, and some flavors. There are two primary ways to achieve this in large fermentation vessels: punch down and pump over.

Punch down (*pigeage* in French) is pushing the cap down into the liquid. This can be done manually with various types of poles and paddles, or mechanically using a motorized or hydraulic pressing system.

Instead of moving the cap, pump over (*remontage* in French) moves the juice. Liquid is removed from the bottom of the tank and poured over the top of the cap, either manually or with a pump. Pump over may or may not involve aeration. That depends on the winemaker's choice of fermentation vessels, open versus closed top, and the specific technique employed.

The Nuances of Punch down & Pump over

The effect of either technique on the cap depends on the shape of the fermentation vessel, the grape variety, ripeness at harvest, stem inclusion, how long fermentation has been going on, and the specific method used.

If the fermentation tank tapers toward the top, punch down is less violent than if the tank has straight sides. The taper yields a cap of smaller diameter than the lower portions of the tank. That means the juice is more easily displaced as the cap is submerged. Less force is necessary, and the grape solids aren't mangled as much.

Likewise, pump over can be gentle or violent; it's a choice for winemakers. The juice can be delicately sprinkled on top, slowly wetting the cap. It can also be shot out at high pressure, as if from a firehose. In that case, the goal is to break up the cap and redistribute the solids within it. But gentle pump over is also possible, using low-pressure pumps or avoiding pumps entirely.

There are also systems that employ a closed tank and thus don't expose the juice to much, if any, oxygen. That could be appropriate for easily oxidized grapes, such as Pinot Noir. Of course, some grape varieties, like Cabernet Sauvignon, thrive on a bit of aeration. Since yeast needs oxygen, aeration can also optimize fermentation.

Early in the fermentation process, the grape solids and cap are firmer, with more structural integrity, than they are later in the process. This can increase the force needed for punch down but might also mean the solids are less susceptible to damage from that force.

Thin-skinned grapes, such as Pinot Noir and Grenache, are more susceptible to being torn up and having their seeds exposed by either pump over or punch down than tough, thick-skinned grapes such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Ripeness is also a factor. The riper the grapes at harvest, the softer and more fragile their skins.

Stem inclusion can make grape solids less vulnerable to damage from cap submersion. On the other hand, they make both punch down and pump over more difficult. Early on in a fermentation, manipulating a cap with 100% whole cluster may require walking around on it to break up the berries, because the cap just won't move. It could be two weeks before the cap can be moved.

Considering Frequency

It is worth looking at assumptions around the frequency of pump over and punch down as well. Conventional wisdom is that high frequency—two to three times per day—is good because it yields significantly more color and tannin. But considerable tannin extraction may not be desirable. For example, Petite Sirah is a very pigmented and tannic grape. Deep color can be achieved with less frequent cap submersion and that, in turn, can limit the quantity and harshness of the tannins.

Some winemakers believe frequent cap submersion is also important for temperature control. Fermentation generates a lot of heat. That heat rises, and the solid cap is less impacted by a tank's cooling jacket than is the liquid. Other winemakers are less concerned about that heat, though—and again, different grapes and wine styles call for different temperatures.

Many winemakers believe higher temperatures substantially increase extraction. But studies have shown the effect of temperature on extraction is different for skins, for which extraction occurs early in fermentation, than for seeds, which give up their tannins later. Research has also indicated that must temperature is more important to extraction than cap temperature.

Similarly, the effect of frequent submersion on tannins, flavor, and color will vary depending on grape variety, ripeness, and how long fermentation has been going on. If the juice has captured most of the available extract from skins and pulp during the first part of fermentation, there will be diminishing returns for continuing frequent punch downs or pump overs. If tannin extraction in that final phase is mostly from seeds, then a winemaker will want to modulate that extraction depending on the style of wine and how brown and crunchy the seeds are.

Takeaways on Pump over & Punch down

The "correct" method depends on the goal and the specific situation. Today, winemakers often use both techniques, and each in a variety of ways and frequencies, during a single fermentation. There are times to be gentle, times to be rough, times to keep cool, and times for heat. General comments about technique and frequency don't tell us enough to make qualitative judgements.

Final Takeaways

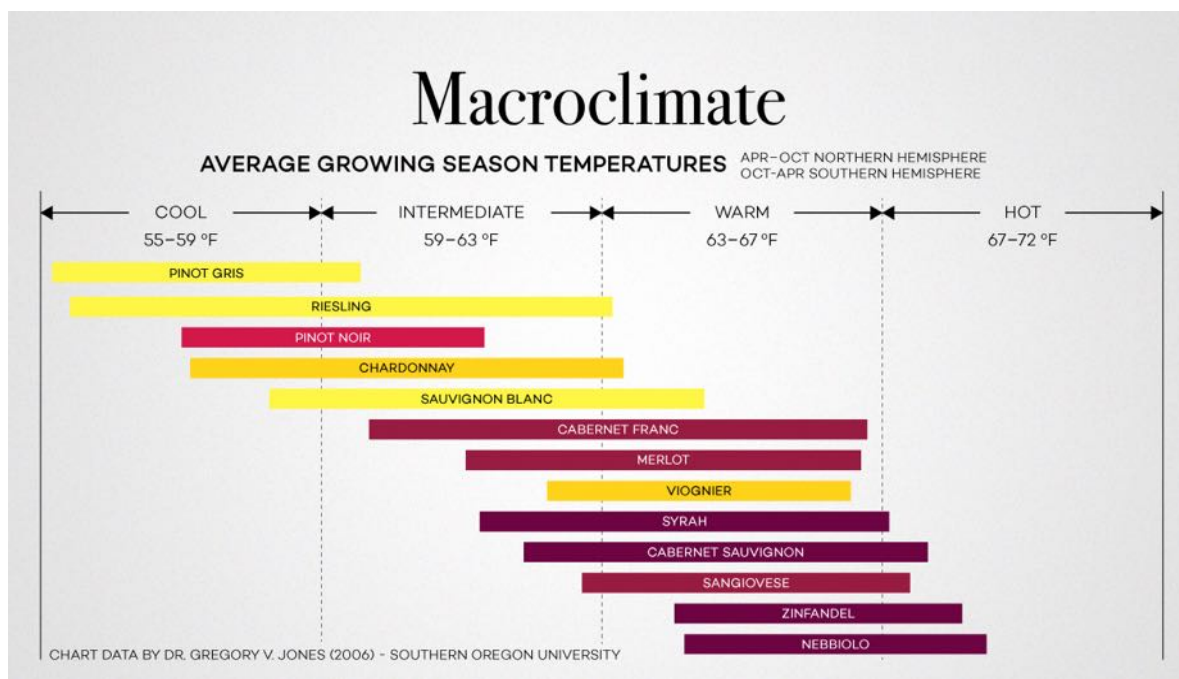
The seemingly infinite complexity of wine almost necessitates simplification, especially when talking to consumers. However, we need to be careful not to become dogmatic about how we speak of certain techniques and concepts. The key to understanding a wine, and enjoying it, comes from reveling in its specific details and nuances—and, of course, tasting it.



5 Reasons Why Great Wine Starts with Geography

Date February 13, 2017

Wine geography goes a lot farther than mapping your way to the nearest wine shop and navigating to the next bottle. You've probably heard that great wine begins in the vineyard; but if you step back and get a wider perspective, you'll realize there are a lot of geographic influences on what makes a plot of land particularly special for making wine. When it comes to how geography influences wine, there's no one rule that guarantees great wine; it's more of a matter of connecting the dots – *5 dots to be exact: temperature, climate, elevation, soil type, and geopolitics.*



Seasonal Growing Temperature

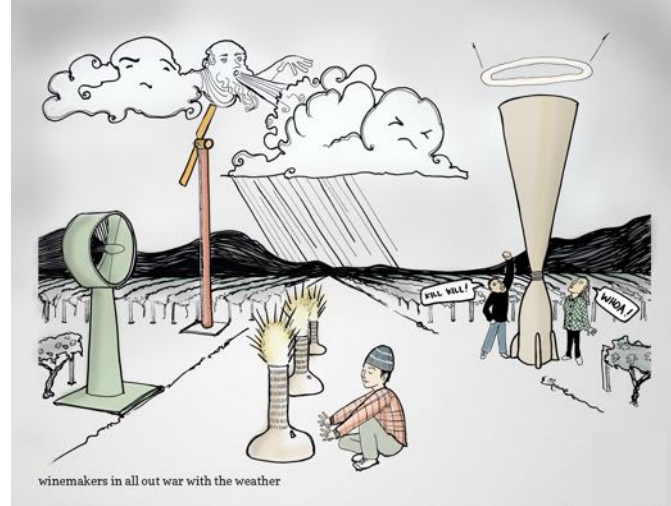
From the moment the fruit blossoms burst, to the day of the harvest, the grapes are in a race to ripen, and average temperature is one factor that determines when – *and if* – they'll cross the finish line. Grapes ripen at different speeds, which means that average temperature is a huge component in terms of determining which varieties should be planted in each region. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are some of the first grapes to be harvested and grow best with an average temperature of between approximately 57 and 63°F. Zinfandel, on the other hand, is a grape that needs more heat (closer to 64-69°F).

In general, warmer climates allow grapes to fully ripen and mature, developing deep pigments, bold fruit flavors, greater sweetness, and higher alcohol content. On the flip side, cooler climates show a softer side, accentuating white wines' minerality, maintaining juicy acidity, and ensuring a delicate dance of flavors across the palate. During blind tastings these characteristics help quickly classify a wine as a warm or cool climate wine, and help identify exactly where a particular wine came from and how it grew up on the vine.

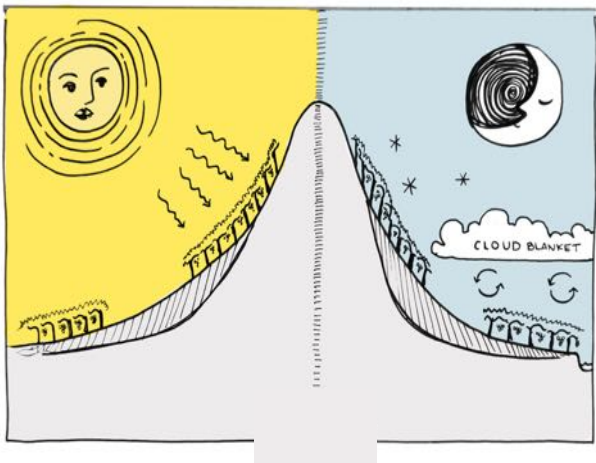
Climate

Beyond average temperature, climate takes into account the weather patterns and atmospheric conditions that can develop – *or destroy wine grapes*. These factors include things like rainfall, humidity, wind, frost, hail, and quality of sunlight, which will impact everything from a grape's skin thickness (tannins!) to the effectiveness of anti-fungal chemical sprays designed to fight off vine mold.

Depending on what scientist you talk to (and how many glasses of wine they've had on that particular day), there are dozens of ways to classify climate: by average temperature (warm vs. cool climate), by scale (macroclimate, mesoclimate, microclimate), or by general climate groups (Mediterranean, Maritime, or Continental, for example). The best vintages usually result from stable climates that allow for slow, steady ripening, without heavy rainfall or extreme temperatures.



How does a wine change in two different climates? Malbec is an excellent case study for climate crossover: in Argentina, it produces fruit-forward, robust red wines, while in Cahors, France, its expression is inky-dark, tart, and full of blackberry.



Elevation

From terraced sloping hills to deep down in the valley, elevation affects how grapes grow. High altitude does two things that benefit certain wines:

- cooler temperatures at night
- a longer growing seasons

Chilly nights at high altitudes mean greater diurnal temperatures (the range between daytime and nighttime temperatures), which help grapes conserve their acidity and lead to more elegant, age-worthy wines. Moral of the story? Chilly nights on the vine, wine lives a long time.

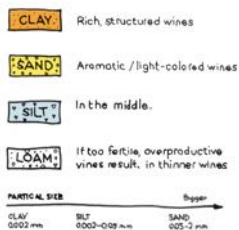
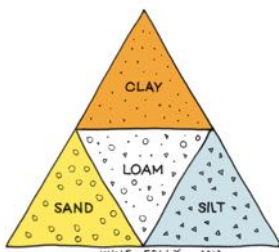
Mountain and hillside vineyards also tend to receive more direct and concentrated sunlight (which leads to greater color concentration and stronger tannins).

Soil Type

As usual, dirt doesn't get the credit it deserves. Soil type – *including sand, clay, dirt, pebbles, rocks, and dozens of combinations in between* – plays a big role in how grapes grow up and to the kinds of wine that they become. Soil type determines the availability of nutrients, water drainage, water retention, and can even moderate temperature in a vine's immediate microclimate.

Far from the nutrient-rich potting soil you use for house plants, grape vines actually perform better when nutrients are scarce and roots aren't swampy. These conditions cause the vine to focus more energy on survival and less energy on growing grapes,

Soils



which means that the vine gives off fewer clusters – *and each grape has more character, concentration, and quality*. As a result, sandy soil vineyards tend to produce more elegant wines than clay-based soils; and clay-based soils tend to produce bolder, more structured wines.

Geopolitics

In the world of wine, crossing borders is quite literally a game changer. While there exists universal consensus that wine is great, we don't all agree on how it should be made or what should be printed on the label. As far as wine is concerned, the laws of the land are usually designed to do one of two things: (1) fight against wine fraud (by standardizing wine labels, protecting designations of origin, and systems of wine classification), or (2) protect the consumer (by regulating additives and production procedures). It seems relatively straight forward, but the way it plays out in the real world is ... somewhat maddening.

For example, in the US, in order for a wine to be labeled as a Pinot Noir varietal, it only needs to contain a minimum of 75% Pinot Noir. In Australia that benchmark is 85%, and in France, most bottles labeled "Bourgogne Rouge" are produced solely from Pinot Noir. Confused yet? Fill up your glass – *it gets worse*.

Not only does every country have its own rulebook (on the national, regional, and local level), but each country makes up their own regulatory systems for quality.

Drink better wine. If you're looking for good wine, learning the different appellation rules is a good place to start.



Portland Winemakers Club Leadership Team – 2018

President: **Phil Bard** phil@philbard.com

- Set agenda for the year
- 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: **Barb Stinger** kbstinger@frontier.com

- Arrange speakers for our meetings

Chair for Tastings: **Bill Brown & Barb Stinger** bbgoldieguy@gmail.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 & Alice Bonham** brown.marilynjean@gmail.com •

Gala / Picnic / parties

alice@alicedesigns.org

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