

Making Good Wines Great Through Blending 2010 Post Fermentation Workshop

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Blending

- Blending or Assemblage can be a powerful tool that can pull together strengths and weaknesses from each variety or lot with the ultimate goal of increasing wine quality in the final blend
 - Make great wines even better
 - Make good wines great
 - Make mediocre or slightly flawed wines acceptable to the consumer
 - To create a wine which will fit your market, image or define your style

Blending

- Can also identify a “Reserve” wine/program
- Keep in mind that consumers want consistency from year to year on varietals **and blends**
- Once a fine wine blend as been assembled it may be wise to continue providing this on the wine list

Reasons to Blend

- Create a premium wine blend
 - Bordeaux and Meritage-type blends
 - Champagne cuvées
 - Rhone-type blends
 - Tuscan blends
 - Proprietary blend
 - Eastern Blends

Bordeaux and Meritage Blends

- Bordeaux red varieties are mainly composed of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon
- Cabernet Sauvignon is known to provide the body with Cabernet Franc adding to the midpalate and Merlot rounding out the wine in providing softness
- May also be composed with Malbec, Petite Verdot and Carmenerere

Bordeaux and Meritage Blends

- White Bordeaux varieties consist mainly of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc
- The Meritage Association promotes the idea that a blend of Bordeaux varieties makes a premium wine, in spite of the “table wine” labeling requirements.
- *May be a viable option for Ohio to increase wine quality awareness in taking our industry seriously to wine aficionados among other important wine regions of the world

Champagne Cuvées

- Champagne Cuvées are mainly produced from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier
- However, Sparkling wines can be made with many varieties or fruits containing sufficient enough acid levels to balance the wine and provide crispness to match the carbon dioxide
- Varieties like Catawba, Niagara and Cayuga can all make excellent sparkling wines

Rhone – Style Blends

- Predominate grapes in red Rhone blends include Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre
- Predominate grapes in white Rhone blends consist of Viognier, Rousanne and Grenache Blanc

Tuscan Blends

- The main variety in red Tuscan blends consist of Sangiovese
- Since Sangiovese can be light with higher acidities, blending can be an excellent tool to help increase color and mouthfeel.
- However, some Super-Tuscan blends contain other varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon in providing backbone

Proprietary Blends

- A proprietary blend can be developed from the varieties that you grow and/or vinify well in developing a wine of excellent quality for the consumer recognizing your winery and style
- May also include Blush and Rosé wines

Eastern Blends

- American varieties can make excellent blends with increased residual sugar that help pay the bills for many wineries in the eastern section of the United States
 - Concord, Niagara, Delaware and Catawba
 - White and red hybrids
 - May also include Blush and Rosé wines

Other Reasons to Blend

- The wine is not complete
 - Lacks aroma
 - Lacks fruit structure
 - Wine is out of balance
 - Lacks body (palate weight)
 - Lacks finish
 - Increase or decrease color
 - Change pH and %TA to more desirable levels

Other Reasons to Blend

- Correct for excess negative attributes in wine aroma or taste
 - Herbaceous characters, diacetyl, harsh tannin and bitter phenols
- In certain cases, wines containing lower levels of flaws can become commercially acceptable through blending
 - Volatile acidity, oxidation, reduction and excess sulfur dioxide and “Brett”?

Important Aspects of Blending

- Establish goals that identify the final target blend relative to production logistics, wine style and quality
- Identify potential blending lots in constructing a preliminary blend potential based on aroma and flavor profiles from each source
- Have must and wine chemical data present to help determine purpose of blend and possible volumes required

Important Aspects of Blending

- Evaluate each variety, lot or tank in a sincere, concentrated focus on proper sensory evaluation
 - Designate a sensory evaluation area that is free from distractions and smells with good lighting
 - Take your time and write lots of detailed sensory notes/descriptors on a tasting sheet
 - Label tanks and barrels correctly on sample beakers and tasting sheet

Important Aspects of Blending

- Tasting notes should include:
 - Clarity, Appearance, Aroma, Taste, Aftertaste and Overall impression
- Tastings should all be performed blind
- Integrate other trusted (professional) palates into blending notes in helping to develop an action plan
- May also include a target benchmark variety or blend for comparison

Important Aspects of Blending

- Take a representative (homogenous) sample from each tank or barrel involved
- In the case of trying to improve a slight wine flaw, it is best to perform any fining trials required on the wine prior to performing any blending trials involving good wine

Blending Tools

- A number of good wine glasses
- Wine “tuits”
- Graduated cylinder (100ml)
- Graduated Pipette (10ml)
- Several Beakers (100ml)
- Pencil, tasting notes and sheet
- Laboratory scales (0.1g) – for sugar additions
- Laboratory markers

Blending – Cellar Application

- Once an optimum blend has been determined, recalculate blend percentages and calculate correct cellar volumes involved in tank or barrel
- Check and adjust sulfur dioxide levels (based on wine pH) of new blend in the cellar after wine has been moved
- Keep wine topped off with no headspace present

Blending – Cellar Application

- Heat and cold stabilization trials should be performed after blending is accomplished
- Continue sensory evaluation of blend in tank or barrel prior to bottling
- After bottling, enjoy the hard work and sacrifice involved with creating that perfect blend with a nice paired entree



THANK YOU!

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