Making Good Wines Great Through Blending
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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” wineprogram
- 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 Carmenere.
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 Mourvédre
- 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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