

## COMPETITION GUIDELINES

By entering a good show you can establish if your winemaking is as good as it can be, and if not, by discussion with a Judge you can learn where further improvements could be made.

**WHICH WINES TO ENTER:** Enter all the wines you consider to be good quality, don't just look for one good one to enter.

**CHOOSING THE RIGHT CLASS:** Select your wines by tasting them some weeks or days prior to the show; note the following qualities:

**Dryness:** Because Judges assess wines by palate and not by hydrometer, competitors should do likewise.

**Alcohol:** Note if your wine has that warmth and burning taste of high alcohol.

**Body:** The feel of a wine or beer in the mouth, especially between the tongue and the roof of the mouth. Expressed as: thin or low, as in the case of water or pure alcohol, or: medium or high, as in the case of syrup or thick soup. Body is provided by some products of fermentation, e.g. glycerol and un-fermented components such as sugars and dextrin's

**Acid:** Acidity is measured as Tartaric Acid.

Having noted these points about your wines, suit them to the schedule as follows:

**APERITIFS:** Wines taken before a meal to stimulate the appetite. Aperitifs should have sufficient acid to taste fresh and leave the palate clean. Alcohol should be between 14% and 17%.

**TABLE WINE CLASSES:** These wines are meant to accompany the enjoyment of food. They can vary from light to strong flavour. Table wines are varied in style and colour and are dealt with under separate headings.

**RED TABLE WINE DRY:** Colour should be red but tints of purple or black or tawny is acceptable. The wine must be without easily recognisable sweetness. The flavour can be substantial and should remain in the aftertaste. Some astringency from tannins is expected, with mellowness and maturity desirable. The bouquet should be complex and vinous. Acidity should be between 0.45% and 0.65% and the alcohol from 10% to 14%. Examples such as Bordeaux, Burgundy, Rioja.

**WHITE TABLE WINE DRY:** Pale colour is desirable, there should be no brown or pink tones. The wine should taste dry without easily recognisable sweetness. The flavour should be pleasant with no bitter aftertaste and should give an impression of freshness leaving the mouth clean. Acidity should be between 0.5% to 0.8% and alcohol between 9% and 13%. The bouquet should be clean fragrant and vinous. Examples such as White Burgundies, Alsace and dry Loire wines.

**WHITE TABLE WINE MEDIUM DRY:** Pale colour is desirable. The wine must have easily detected sweetness but not sufficiently predominant to classify it as a sweet wine. A good balance and flavour is more important than the exact degree of sweetness. Alcohol should be between 8.5% and 13% and acidity between 0.55% and 0.90%. Examples would be German wines such as Liebfraumilch and QbA and QmP wines.

**WHITE TO GOLDEN TABLE WINE SWEET:** Colour can be deeper than for the dry or medium wines ranging up to golden but should not be dark. The flavour can be richer than the other wines with the alcohol up to 14%. The acidity should be between 0.6% and 0.9% sufficient to balance the sweetness and to prevent a cloying finish. The sweetness should not overwhelm the other characteristics. This is a wine that is best drunk with fruit or dessert at the end of a meal. An example would be Sauterne.

**ROSE TABLE WINE:** Commercial examples from the dry Tavel to the medium or medium-sweet Anjou. The wine should be pink, variations in colour intensity and slight orange or 'onion skin' tints are acceptable. The flavour must be light, fruity and fresh and the bouquet should reflect these points. There should not be excessive astringency. Acidity should be between 0.55% and 0.9% and the alcohol between 10% and 12% and the whole should be in balance with any sweetness.

**AFTER-DINNER WINE RED SWEET:** The colour should be deep. Mature wines may have tawny characteristics but should display some red colour. The flavour should be rich fruity and vinous, the whole being mellow and mature. Acidity should be between 0.45% and 0.7%. The alcohol should be as high as may be achieved by fermentation. The wine should be as sweet as the other characteristics will permit without it becoming cloying. Although this wine is often called 'Dessert' it is meant for drinking after dinner. Examples would be Mavrodaphne of Patras 15% to Port 22%.

**AFTER-DINNER WINE WHITE TO BROWN SWEET:** Here a wide range of colours is acceptable with the deeper colours usually providing the best wines but there must be no red colouring. Acidity should be

between 0.5% and 0.9%. All other characteristics are as After Dinner Wine Red Sweet. Examples are Madeira, Muscat & sweet Oloroso Sherries.

**FORTIFIED WINES - Madeira Type:** Wines in this class should emulate the Malmsey type of wine. This is a fortified, luscious, sweet 'After-Dinner' wine. The colour is deep tawny. The wine is full bodied and has a full sweet flavour with caramelised overtones on the farewell. The sweetness is balanced by a fairly high level of acidity. The final Specific Gravity should be from 1.025 to 1.050, alcohol about 18% and the acidity as tartaric acid about 0.6% to 0.7%.

**WINES BY INGREDIENT:** These wines can range from light dry table to full bodied sweet after-dinner wines. The main criteria are that the wine should be clean and sound and that it is in balance for the particular class in which it is entered. When judging named ingredient classes one can often detect other ingredients and while these may improve the wine they may blur recognition of the named ingredient. Provided that they do not predominate over the named ingredient the entry is acceptable.

**MEAD:** Mead is essentially a wine whose character is derived from the use of honey, as the major source of fermentable sugar. Variants with added fruit juice and/or herbs and spices are acceptable. A wide range of colours is acceptable, including red where red fruit juice is added.

**SPARKLING WINE:** This wine must contain carbon dioxide produced by a secondary fermentation in the bottle. Although this wine is usually white both red and rosé may be entered. Even though the wine may be specified as dry a small amount of recognisable sweetness is acceptable. Acidity may range from 0.6% to 0.9% and alcohol from 10% to 12%. The commercial example is Champagne.

**LIQUEURS:** Home-made liqueurs are strong (usually 25-40% alcohol), sweet, and highly flavoured after-dinner drinks. Many flavours and styles are encountered but they can be divided into four general groups:

Fruit base: e.g. alcohol infusions using various fruits (approx. 25-35% alcohol: 35-40% for orange liqueurs such as Cointreau and Grand Marnier).

Chocolate/Coffee base: e.g. Tia Maria, cacao types etc. (approx. 25-30% alcohol).

Herb/Spice base: e.g. peppermint, aniseed and more complex blends such as Benedictine types (approx. 30-40% alcohol, with Green Chartreuse an exception at 55%).

Cream base: e.g. Irish Cream, Welsh Cream: cream emulsions with flavourings such as coffee or whisky (approx. 17% alcohol).

## **BEER Definitions**

All beers entered should be bottle matured and should therefore have a yeast deposit. This deposit should be firm and light. The beers should be conditioned to give a fine running bead and close-knit head. Head retention should be good although beers high in alcohol may have little head retention. Acidity should not be predominant in any of these beer types.

**LIGHT LAGER:** Original gravity (O.G.) should be from 35-40. The beer should be of a light golden colour and the bouquet a delicate blend of hops, malt and DMS (dimethyl sulphide). The flavour should be dry, clean and refreshing, light in malt and hops. Alcohol normally ranges from 3.5-4.5%.

**HEAVY LAGER:** With an O.G. of 50-65, alcohol content ranges from 5-7%. Colour varies from golden to amber. The bouquet should be malty and grainy with slight DMS and a good hop balance. The beer should be full bodied with a malty flavour, a firm hop background and perceptible alcohol. Some sweetness due to dextrans may be apparent.

**LIGHT ALE:** The term 'light' refers to the flavour and not the colour so with an O.G. of 30-35 and an alcohol level of 3-3.5% the colour may vary from straw to amber. The beer should have a bouquet light in hop. The taste should be clean, dry and lightly hopped with no flavour components too prominent.

**PALE ALE or BOTTLED BITTER:** Original gravity should be from 40-45 and the colour from golden to deep copper. The aroma of hops in the bouquet should lead to those of malt and grain. The flavour should be full, malty and grainy with a hoppy bitter farewell and perhaps a little sweetness from residual dextrans. Alcohol content 4-5%.

**INDIA PALE ALE:** This full bodied premium bitter has an O.G. of 50-60 and a rich golden to deep copper colour. The bouquet should be hoppy and grainy. The flavour should be full malty and grainy with a predominant hop and clean bitter farewell. There should be a little residual sweetness to balance the hop. Alcohol 5-6.5%.

**LONDON BROWN ALE:** Original gravity of 35-40 giving an alcohol level of 3.5-4%. Colour may vary from light to dark brown. The bouquet is malty backed by caramel. The beer should be sweet on the palate giving a smooth blend of malt and caramel with a low hop flavour.

**NEWCASTLE BROWN ALE:** The O.G. of 45-50 is reflected in an alcohol level of 4.5-5.0%. The colour should be a light reddish brown and the bouquet a blend of caramel and hop. The flavour should be full-bodied blend of caramelised malt with medium bitterness and noticeable sweetness.

**DRY STOUT:** This beer has an O.G. of 45-50 and an alcohol content of 4.5 - 5.0%. The bouquet should be that of roasted grain. The flavour should be of roasted grains full and dry with a long hard bitter finish. The colour is almost black.

**SWEET STOUT:** With an O.G. of 40-45 and an alcohol content of about 3.5% this beer has a predominately malty bouquet with some dark grain. The colour varies from deep garnet to almost black. The flavour is a sweet smooth blend of caramel and malt with slight bitterness.

**STRONG ALE:** This full-bodied beer has an O.G. of 60-80 and an alcohol content of 6-8%. The colour may range from golden to garnet. The bouquet should be malty and fruity backed with a good hop aroma. The flavour should be a full blend of malt hops and alcohol with some residual sweetness.

**PORTER:** This beer has an O.G. of 60-70 and an alcohol content of 5.5 -7%; a colour of dark brown to black, with a predominance of brown and chocolate malts on the bouquet and in the flavour. The flavour should also be full, with some residual sweetness to balance the hop and roast grains.

**BARLEY WINE:** Colour ranges from golden to brown. O.G. is from 90 upwards. The bouquet should be rich fruity hoppy alcoholic and vinous. The flavour should be full and malty with a smooth and mature blend of sweetness, hop and alcohol. Alcohol content will be 9% or greater.

**DARK MILD:** A lightly hopped beer with an O.G. of 35-40. The colour may range from light to dark brown. The flavour will have a delicate blend of malt and roast grains. Alcohol content will range from 3.5 - 4.5%.

Select your wines/beers by sight and taste, and not by the name of the recipe used. Many good wines/beers fail to get prizes because they are in the wrong class.

**PRESENTATION:** Two points are awarded for presentation and everyone should get these two points by:

Using the type of bottle and cork specified in the schedule.

Leaving the required air space between wine/beer and cork.

Placing the correct label where stated in the schedule.

Ensuring the bottle is clean inside and out. Look for gum smears after fitting the label.

Checking wine is star bright and is free of deposit or floating debris.

Finally on Corks: See Rule 6.

*Wine and Beer definitions from 2000 NGWBJ Handbook with kind permission.*