

Making Award-Winning Wines

Lisa Nordmann and Greg Stricker



How to make Award Winning Wines

Chardonel

- Enter contests for fun and prizes
 - Can't win if you don't enter!
- Write it down!
- Write dates on everything
- Don't screw it up!
 - Read directions multiple times
 - Watch the videos
 - Keep really good notes
 - Pay attention!

How to make Award Winning Wines

- Cleaning and sanitation, end-to-end
- Minimize oxygen contact for whites
 - Reductive style
 - Watch for mercaptans
 - Volatile sulfur compounds
- Adapt to problems as they occur / timely manner
 - Browning (PVPP)
 - H₂S (Reduless)
 - Over-sulfiting (hydrogen peroxide)

How Greg Makes White Wines

My 2021 white wines:

Viognier

Seyval

Chardonee (3)

Vignoles

Traminette

Serendipity (2022)

How Greg Makes White Wines

- All of my white wines follow very similar procedures
- What grapes are available?
 - Locally produced vs. shipped in (\$105-113)
 - <https://steampunkbrewworks.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Chilean-Juice-n-Grapes.2023.pdf>
 - Experiment! Yeasts, blends, sweetness, new grapes
 - Prices (\$54/18 lb)
 - Logistics
 - Batch size (pounds/gallons)
 - How many wines going at same time

How Greg Makes White Wines

Vignoles

- Use good fruit/juice
 - Sound white grapes
 - Try to keep temperature down
 - Improvement from using St. James juice
- Cold storage
 - Keep cold as possible (35F)
 - Don't over-sulfite
 - Minimize oxygen contact
 - Carboy vs. pail
 - Layer of CO₂

How Greg Makes White Wines

- Pre-finishing
 - Helps clearing
 - Decreases browning
 - Especially if using fresh grapes
 - Makes use of storage time
 - Bentolact S, PVPP, Polycacel (PVPP + casein)
 - PolyVinylPolyPyrrolidone, a synthetic polymer

How Greg Makes White Wines

- Match yeast to varietal
 - Study yeast characteristics
 - Enhance/ support what the juice brings: “enhance varietal character”
 - Add yeast-based flavors, e.g. toastiness
 - “jam, rose petals, and cherry liquor”
 - What do others use?
 - Ask commercial winemakers
 - Chardonal: D47, QA23
 - Seyval: DV10, BA11
 - Traminette: K1-V1116 (Oliver Winery, Indiana)
 - Vignoles: D47
 - Viognier: K1-V1116
- Consider acid-reducing yeasts, e.g. 71B

How Greg Makes White Wines

- Additives
 - Fermentation & Aging tannins
 - FT Blanc Soft
 - FT Citrus
 - Yeast-based additives
 - Booster Blanc
 - Opti-White
 - Enzymes
 - C-Max
 - All added to juice prior to yeast add
 - Often added at the winery
 - Taste the juice – what does it need?

How Greg Makes White Wines

Serendipity

- “Cold” fermentation
 - Warm wine to start fermentation
 - Fridge with external thermostat 51-53F
 - Wines processed in pairs
 - Plastic carboys in Brew Hauler
 - Importance of YAN, FermAid K or O
 - Count the bubbles (8-12 bubbles in 10 sec.)
 - Adjust temp as needed to speed up/slow down bubbling
 - Typical is 10 – 11 days (up to 15)
 - Finish up at room temperature

How Greg Makes White Wines

- I do not stir the lees
 - Shooting for clarity, settling, fruitiness
 - Style decision (reductive)
- Rack after lees settle
 - Compaction & clearing
 - May take several weeks
 - Guard against oxygen
- Add SO₂, Lysozyme
 - Protect with SO₂
 - Lysozyme prevents spontaneous MLF

How Greg Makes White Wines

- Make adjustments to acid/pH
 - Add needed Tartaric before cold stabilization
 - Measure pH, TA, SO₂ & adjust
 - <https://winemakermag.com/resource/1301-sulfite-calculator>
- Cold Stabilization
 - Eliminates “wine diamonds”
 - Helps settle the wine
 - Re-test at end
- Evaluate clarity
 - Additional fining? Super-Kleer
 - Filtering needed?

How Greg Makes White Wines

- Blending
 - Limited to the wines you make
 - What are your blending objectives?
 - Chemistry
 - Taste/smell (sensory evaluation)
 - Make varietal vs. broader blend (75% rule)
 - Match to size of available carboys
 - No smaller than 1 gal. blends
 - Plan ahead to match/complement flavors, chemistries
 - Online calculator to judge chemistry impacts
<https://www.winebusiness.com/calculator/winemaking/section/8/>
 - Taste, of course

How Greg Makes White Wines

- Back sweeten to taste
 - May help to mask mercaptans (volatile sulfur compounds)
 - Measure equal portions of wine (100ml) in similar glasses
 - Add incrementally larger amounts of sugar (.52g)
 - Affects mouthfeel as well as sweetness, balance
 - Balance is the main objective (acidity, astringency)
 - Potassium sorbate
 - Split a batch between sweetnesses, blends

How Greg Makes White Wines

Traminette

- Last minute adjustments
- Filter if needed/desired
 - Last step before bottling
 - Optimum to wait 1 week before bottling
- Bottling
 - Sanitize bottles well
 - Minimize oxygen uptake
 - Have enough SO₂?
 - Record final results on label

How Greg Makes White Wines

- Entering contests
 - Goal: Win gold and/or get opinions
 - Consider contest's categories
 - Single category for white French Hybrids
 - Timing of winemaking vs. contests
 - Costs & shipping
 - Plan ahead! Allow for bottle shock

- What did you think of the wines you tasted?

Questions

- Any special characteristics for award winning wines (acid, pH, sweetness, alcohol)?
 - Acidity Ranges
 - .55% to .65% - Fruit Wines
 - .60% to .70% - Red Wines
 - .65% to .75% - White Wines
 - 27-32ppm SO₂ at bottling (pH dependent)
 - 25ppm min. SO₂
 - The typical target range for white wine pH is 3.2–3.5, and TA is 6.0–9.0 g/L
 - People typically prefer a bit of sweetness

Questions

- Are there specific varieties which provide a better chance of winning an award?
- Are pure varietals or blends better suited for winning awards?
- Any special techniques/equipment used to make award winning wines (temperature control, filtering, fining)?
 - Vinmetrica SC-300 & SC-55
- Can the winemaker predict which wines will win awards and which ones will not?

Competition results, 2021 Vintage

- Wine Maker Magazine pending
- Viognier: Double Gold, AWS; Gold LACM; 5 silver; 1 bronze; 2 NM
- Chardone SG 0.999: Gold, NJSF; 4 silver (AWS)
- Chardone SG 1.001: Best Dry White, TVOS; Gold, LACM & CAVE; 1 silver
- Vignoles: Best of Category, WASF; Best of Class WISF; Gold ILSF, NJSF; 2 silver; 2 bronze; 2 NM (AWS)

Competition results, 2021 Vintage (cont'd)

- Seyval: Gold, LACM; 5 silver; 3 bronze (AWS); 1 NM
 - 2020 Seyval (DV10): 2022 Favorite White Wine, MWS; Gold, NJSF & AWS & LACM; 1 silver; 1 NM
- Traminette: Voted Best Picnic Wine at 2022 MWS Picnic; Double Gold, Best White Wine & Best of Show, NJSF; Best of Class, WISF; Gold, ILSF & CAVE, 2 silver, 2 bronze (AWS), 1 NM

