

#NCWine Bloggers Summit Notes

Ethics in Wine Writing

Fred Swan “Ethics in wine Writing”

4 stakeholders in your readers

- Your readers
- Your topic (winery, wine, regions, etc.)
- Yourself
- Your colleagues

4 elements of ethics

- Honesty: tell the truth, tell the whole truth, and be transparent.
- Accuracy: facts are facts. Check the facts, use multiple sources, and acknowledge gray areas. Trust but verify. Factual errors undermine your credibility.
- Authority: don't act, be. Learn all the time and acknowledge your limits. Leverage and credit other authorities when applicable.
- Kindness: negativity sells but it's very limiting. Think critically but act constructively. Don't hide behind your keyboard (aka troll on a message board). Wine is a lifestyle for some, but a livelihood for many. It puts food on the table, pays for healthcare, blood sweat and tears go into each bottle.

Ethics and You

- You are a brand. What your readers expect when they hear your name or see you in public.

Who is your customer – choose to be transparent

- Readers may be your customer
 - Inform
 - Entertain
 - Build status
- Wineries may be your customer
 - Monetary compensation,
 - Experiences
 - Get a job

If it's not journalism but more so advertising, be upfront with what you're doing.

Readers: They want to be entertained, want to learn, and want accurate advice. They may spend time or money based on your words.

Group discussion

Winery: We want the experience to be the best for everyone. Reinforce your group policy etc.... call ahead for reservations if it's on your website.

A question about accuracy: When you check the facts, what or who do you consider a credible source?

Group: It depends on what you're writing. If you're the authoritative source, then you're good. If you're interviewing a winemaker or owner, then generally you're fine. If you're researching something, then cite your source. If it's an opinion piece, then make sure it's known that what you're writing is your opinion.

Blogger: In some cases, not usually experiencing the winemaker or owner doing the wine tasting. Always asks for contact info. Whenever posting he will send it to them for proofing. Will ask them look at it and see if it's correct.

W: From an owner point of view, it's important your employees know the spiel, know the info, and know about the wine. Get the tasting room people to start saying "we". Helps them take ownership and be a part of the winery.

W: Comments on the branding aspect of it. Whether it's blogging or social media; what you do is your brand. Some people don't know what their brand is. Often he finds people establishing one without really realizing that they're doing it. Pause and think; when you post is it promoting your brand? If not, you may want to rethink your post.

B: Acknowledge your limits. That was an exciting part of the conversation. Reads other posts and gets people thinking about what's going on. It's a nice reminder to hear that we're getting there.

W: Another comment on the "People may spend time or money based on your words". Your friends, your customers, people who know you want to learn something or to know more about the winery. Your words are strong. You're not going to sell every case, but people do listen. You have the credibility and brand, they will go out and purchase based on what you say.

Expanding Your Wine Vocabulary

Paint a picture or tell a story. Divided into four different categories

1. Structure
2. Texture
3. Fragrance and flavor
4. je ne c'est quoi.

Structure

- This is the backbone. Consider the following:
 - Acidity level (WSET levels are helpful)
 - Imprint (mouthwatering, juicy, tart, lactic, etc....)
 - Tannins (sandpaper, silk, suede, velvet, or other)
- Focus on the quality levels of acidity and tannins.
- Flesh: This is the alcohol level. Is it integrated into the body or does it burn? Is there a glycerol "sweetness"?
- This all lends to the mouth-feel of the wine.

Texture

Body: this is mostly made up of the alcohol and tannin levels. This is also the concentration of components (lean to lush, thin to plump, flabby to flush).

Acid & minerality: this provides the "Snap, crackle, pop".

Acidity

- Jolly rancher or sweet tart
- Lifesaver or jam

Minerality

- Racy
- Intensity
- Different levels.

Salinity is tough to describe and can sometimes blend into the "other" category.

Fragrance and Flavor

Fruit earth and wood should all have some level of presence.

Fruit:

- White Fruit: lean and tangy (crisp apples) to juicy & mouthwatering (peaches, melons) to lush & exotic (full, creamy, and tropical).
- Red fruits: Sharp and acidic (pomegranate) to berries plums, to more lush and exotic (black raspberries, figs, and currants).
- Other fruit considerations
 - Ripeness of fruit
 - Variety of fruit
 - Condition of fruit (fresh, dried, cooked, or sweetened)
- The best suggestion we found: if you don't know about fruits, go to the grocery store and buy different fruits.

Earth:

- Where – barnyard, beach, dude ranch, leaf pile, garden, cellar, attic, mountain, valley, swamp, etc.
- What – dirt and stuff made from dirt, vegetation, etc.
- Condition – wet or dry, cool or warm, what else?

Wood:

- Spices – cinnamon clove, etc.
- Nuts – almonds, hazelnuts, etc.
- Aromatics – coconut, vanilla coffee, rum, toasted light dark?
- Dairy – butter crème anglaise, browned caramelized.
- Sugar – brown, burnt, caramel.

Je ne c'est Quoi

People, places, and things that this wine reminds you of: Grandma's home, Tuscan countryside, European cathedral, cheese shop, private clubs, autumn leaf pile, etc....

Blogger Led Discussion

Key points from our discussion on what we would like from wineries.

Share our content. When we create content, we take time out of our schedules. Wineries can do that for us, re-share the content, it's the easiest thing. Email the winery and have them proof the content. Making sure wineries have the correct contact information available.

Notify us of events, special events, food pairings, and library tastings. Anything that's outside of the normal business activity is something special for you. If we can participate we will, but at the very least we can re-share events and let our followers and fellow bloggers know.

Keep your websites up to date. Website hours and contact information are not always updated. Keep in mind, a lot of people may not call; Millennials definitely won't call. If you have alternative methods of contact, be sure they are listed as prominently as your phone number. People are looking for opening hours and if you're closed for a special event.

Put your hours in a place where you can easily find them without having to click through different pages. They should link up with hours that are posted elsewhere, too (Google, Facebook, Yelp, etc.).

Help us discover your story. Every winery has some story to tell. People want to hear the backstory and the experience. It's a sense of adventure and we have an audience to tell your story to.

Keep us in mind for volunteer opportunities. Most of us like to help with whatever it is you're doing. Plus it's a good way for us to see your side of things and get a new perspective on things.

Now is the time to embrace social media. If you really want some tips, get with us and we'll help you. No blogger in this room would say we don't want to help you. We want to help get your message out to the masses.

Insist to your wine associations that they invite bloggers to their events

Winery Led Discussion

Key points of what wineries would like from bloggers

How can wineries, vineyards, and the Grape Council send us ideas for content? What's the best way for them to reach us? There are a lot of ideas for content and posts that would be great for the industry.

On a related note, Whit has a lot of photographs from wineries across the state in all times of the year. If you're interested, please send him an email.

What can we as bloggers do to help get more restaurants or wine shops interested in NC Wine? Fine wines society does have a card to put on the table to put on the table asking for NC Wine, but how can bloggers help? A suggestion from a blogger: get a wine group together (on an association level), invite restaurant owners and wine writers, and pour the wines for the writers.

Another suggestion is to recognize the restaurants and wine shops that carry NC Wine. A positive write up from a blogger could do great things for everyone involved.

As an industry, they want to develop the pride of wine here in NC. We're getting there but will take more time. Got to Be NC is one way to do this. Bloggers can help drive more awareness of that.

Praise and be positive to the wineries. Bloggers should celebrate and recognize the wineries so that people will want to branch out and discover the industry. A negative review can bring down the whole credibility. Remember, wine tourism is just tourism with wine stuff at the beginning of it.

List of Wines Present

Davesté Vineyards

2015 Rkatsiteli
2015 Cab France

Addison Farms Vineyard

2015 Structure – Cab Franc
2014 Preservation – Chambourcin
Five Twenty-Nine – Barbera

Cypress Bend Vineyards

Christina's Magnolia – Estate
A Sweetheart Stream
Autumn

Hanover Park Vineyard

2014 Mourvèdre
2012 3-2-1 Cab Sauvignon

Lake James Cellars

Syrah
2017 Viognier – Brown Mountain

Morgan Ridge Vineyards

Seyval Blanc
Duet – 2012 Syrah and Sangiovese

Parker-Binns Vineyard

2017 Chardonnay – Justin's first white
2015 Merlot – Merlot, Cab Franc and Petit Verdot

Surry Cellars

Lot 152 – 2013 Petit Manseng – Sparkling – 85% Petit Manseng, 10% Chardonnay

Sweet Home Carolina Vineyard

Brigadoon – Noiret
Baby Girl – Diamond – White Hybrid – Estate – Off Dry
Bird's the Word – Blackberry with Isabella – Off Dry