



ASVO WINE SHOW PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION I **JUDGE IMPARTIALITY**

INTRODUCTION

The ASVO Wine Show Committee (WSC) has identified “Judge Impartiality” to be an issue for wine show management and judging which is currently under scrutiny by the wider industry and therefore needs to be addressed.

Judge Impartiality refers to a wine show judge or associate judge remaining neutral and objective throughout the judging process (including Trophy judging) by ensuring judges are not unduly influenced by external pressures to favour a particular wine entry. Judges should be unbiased and adopt an objective judging style as directed by the Chairman of Judges and not be influenced by personal preference or favour.

CURRENT PRACTICE / PROBLEMS

- Judges may be aware of exhibit numbers and consequently be prejudiced if the judges are exhibitors themselves
- Judges may be aware of an entry’s identity from viewing the label on an exhibited bottle, from seeing an unusual item of packaging (such as a bottle finish or screwcap) or being aware of entry number.
- Wines are poured in front of judges (in particular during trophy judging).
- In trophy judging, class and exhibit number are known to judges.
- Selective or biased judging can occur when a judge deliberately awards a wine a lower ranking because it may differ from personal preference for the wine style within that particular class of show; also when an unusual blend of grapes or a particular (aged) vintage is recognised. This is particularly prevalent in trophy judging.
- Conflict of interest – where judges may have the potential to positively identify a wine in a trophy line-up which is produced by their own company or organisation.
- Discussion on attributes of wines occurs between judges when tasting wines, particularly when judging trophies, so that the potential to influence a judge’s final decision exists.

- Variety of entries is sometimes not known or obvious to judges when judging non-varietal specific classes.

Some varieties may be disadvantaged, when entered in classes for *Other Varieties*, if the variety is not revealed to the judges. Examples include pinot gris and nebbiolo.

OBJECTIVES

The WSC supports the neutrality or impartiality of judges via:-

- Ensuring judges are unaware of the identity of exhibitor or entry number allocated by wine show
- Ensuring judges are unaware of an exhibitor's placing within a class and that all wines are tasted "blind"
- Ensuring judges are not permitted to glimpse sample bottles or labels
- Ensuring that, when judging wines for a trophy, that the class and entry number and the identity of the wine is unknown to judges
- Ensuring each wine is judged on individual merit and not on a group consensus
- Ensuring all varieties of wines in non-varietal specific classes are judged on individual merit
- Ensuring judges are aware of their responsibilities to judge fairly and without bias.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The WSC recommends that, in order to achieve judge impartiality, Australian national and regional wine shows consider for adoption the following recommendations:-

1. Randomise entries for the day of judging. An entry is allocated a standard exhibit number but, at time of judging, entries are scrambled and given a separate "judging number". This system could be assisted by using available randomising computer software or manually by moving a group of wines within a class. This need not occur in all classes, provided judges know that it has happened in some. Accurate recording and confidentiality is critical.

That randomisation of company entries occurs. This will avoid entries appearing in all classes in the same sequence of exhibitors.

2. Ensure that no more than one (1) judge from the same company or organisation is on the same judging panel at any one particular wine show.
3. Only the Chief Steward is aware of exhibitor numbers or judging numbers.

4. In order to ensure that no wine is comprised, the variety should be known to judges at time of tasting. (Relevant for non-varietal specific classes).
5. The identity of wines (other than variety and vintage) is not advised to judges during trophy judging and wines are not poured in view of judges
6. Rigorous checking by wine show committees to ensure that class identification is adhered to by exhibitors and that all wines presented for judging at trophy level are legitimate and entered and awarded in accordance with class descriptor. This should be followed through with a strategic audit procedure.
7. The Chairman to formally remind judges of their role and obligation as judges to remain objective. Impartiality is vital and personal preference or bias should be discouraged and any conflict of interest declared. Chairman should affirm that wines are to be judged on style (as per class description), quality and wine show guidelines (if any).
8. Chairman to enforce a code of silence when judges are tasting wines, particularly during trophy tastings. Talking and discussions between judges should only occur at the completion of the tasting.
9. Non-varietal specific (eg. Open, Consumer) classes should be sorted into groups by variety and vintage, ensuring a judge can do justice to those varieties and styles which might otherwise suffer in mixed company.