

Merlot Forum SA : "Green" wine tasting at YonderHill, 14.7.2009

Introduction

Despite a sevenfold increase in SA Merlot production –and notabene sales – since 1990, we observe an increasingly unenthusiastic tenor in the wine press about SA Merlot wines. More specifically, there is this notion of a notorious “green taste” that springs up time and again, recently culminating in the report of the Merlot panel at the Trophy Wine Show 2009, baldly saying “...We were disappointed in the Merlots, as we were told we might be before the event, very hard and green ...” *.

We wanted to find out what makes judges come to this conclusion, and we tasted ourselves through wines that have been labelled “green”, with the aim to pinpoint the “green determinants”.

In a preliminary step, we started a survey amongst our members about how they define “green” in wine. The answers were collected and used for the compilation of a tasting scorecard specifically designed for the individual assessment of so-called “green” flavours and taste. A more precise description of this step and the resulting tasting scorecard is given in a little treatise “What does ‘Green’ mean in the Wine Language” available on www.merlotforum.co.za/

The panel consisted of 24 professional members of the wine-producing industry. The tasting was conducted in an open round, which admittedly couldn't prevent some hushed discussions as well as stolen looks at neighbouring score sheets. However, the procedure is still miles away from the consensus mode, as is customary at today's wine competitions, which might explain to some extent the disparities of the results.

The wines were a selection of wines that have been labelled “excessively green” at the occasion of the Trophy Wine Show 2009 and WineMagazine tastings. As reference, we secretly included one wine that received a silver medal at the Trophy Wine Show 2009, the highest score awarded at this competition (wine 5). Naturally, the tasting was conducted blind, and the identities of the wines have never been revealed.

Results

The outcome of the tasting was translated into numerical values from 1 to 10 for each single parameter. The results are presented in the tables below with the median and the standard deviation together with a graph, where the bars represent the range of ± 1 standard deviations around the median of the score of each parameter and wine respectively. I am aware that the combination of the median with the standard deviation in a graph is unusual practice, but I found that it actually reflects best the outcome of the tasting.

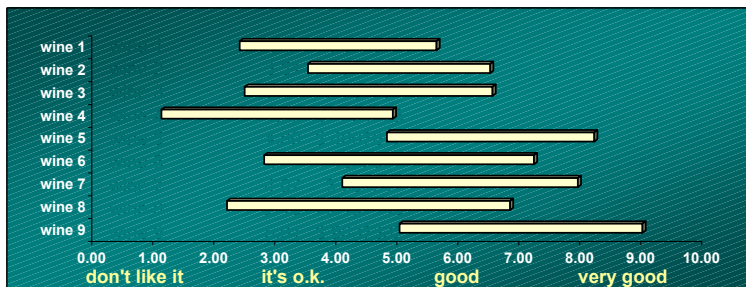
Discussion:

A quick overview shows us that wine 9 came out as overall best wine, before wine 5. It is also conspicuous that there is a great variability of opinion, above all with reference to the assessment of flavours, though to a lesser extent in the case of the parameters describing mouth feel.....

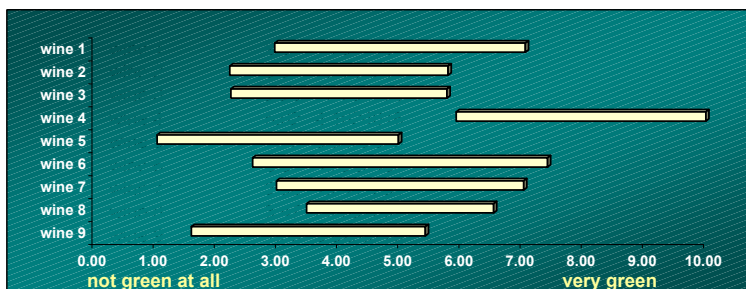
BUT MANY MORE QUESTIONS ARISE! However, we would love to hear what you think of this tasting. Everybody is invited to take part in the discussion, whether he was part of the tasting or not. Please give us a feedback. We will compile a summary of all your comments and present it on this site! We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Please note: wine number 5 is the reference wine that received a silver medal at the TWS 2009. .

PARAMETER	WINE	SCORE	s
overall impression		out of 10	
		median	s
	wine 1	4	1.61
	wine 2	5	1.49
	wine 3	4.5	2.03
	wine 4	3	1.90
	wine 5	6.5	1.70
	wine 6	5	2.21
	wine 7	6	1.93
	wine 8	4.5	2.32
wine 9	7	1.99	



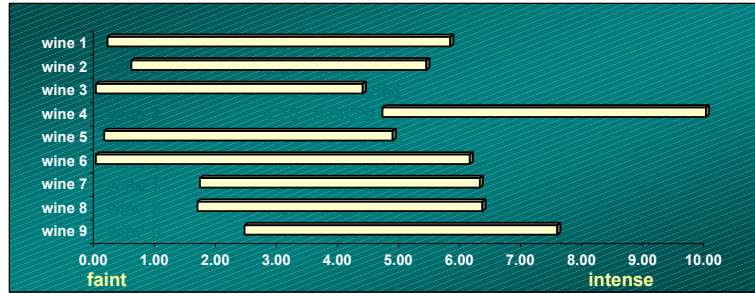
PARAMETER	WINE	SCORE	s
overall "greenness"		out of 10	
		median	s
	wine 1	5	2.05
	wine 2	4	1.79
	wine 3	4	1.77
	wine 4	8	2.08
	wine 5	3	1.97
	wine 6	5	2.41
	wine 7	5	2.02
	wine 8	5	1.53
wine 9	3.5	1.91	



FLAVOURS

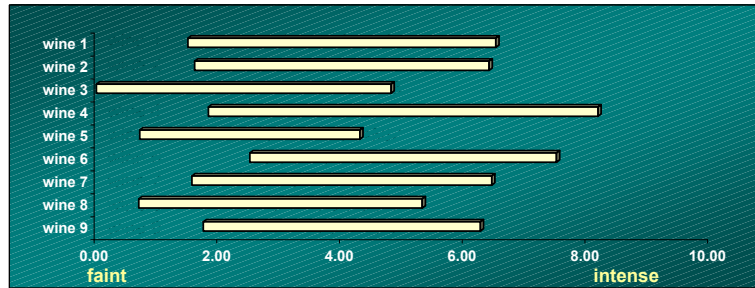
fresh green flavours

	median	s
wine 1	3	2.81
wine 2	3	2.42
wine 3	2	2.19
wine 4	7.5	2.80
wine 5	2.5	2.36
wine 6	3	3.06
wine 7	4	2.29
wine 8	4	2.33
wine 9	5	2.56



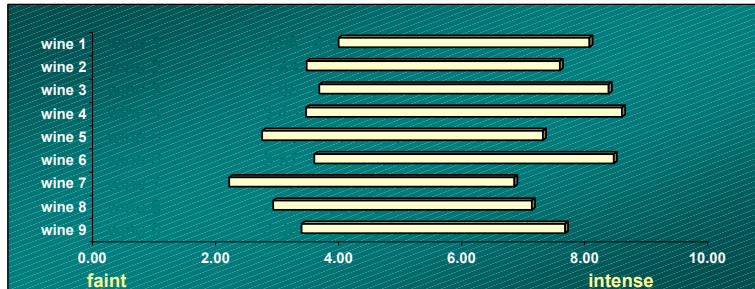
cooked vegetal flavours

	median	s
wine 1	4	2.51
wine 2	4	2.40
wine 3	2	2.40
wine 4	5	3.18
wine 5	2.5	1.79
wine 6	5	2.50
wine 7	4	2.44
wine 8	3	2.31
wine 9	4	2.26



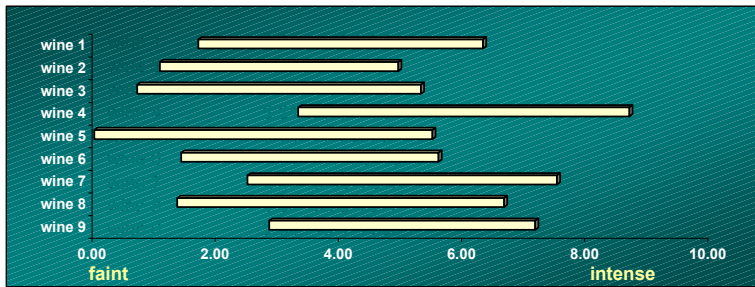
dried herbs

	median	s
wine 1	6	2.04
wine 2	5.5	2.06
wine 3	6	2.35
wine 4	6	2.57
wine 5	5	2.28
wine 6	6	2.43
wine 7	4.5	2.32
wine 8	5	2.10
wine 9	5.5	2.14



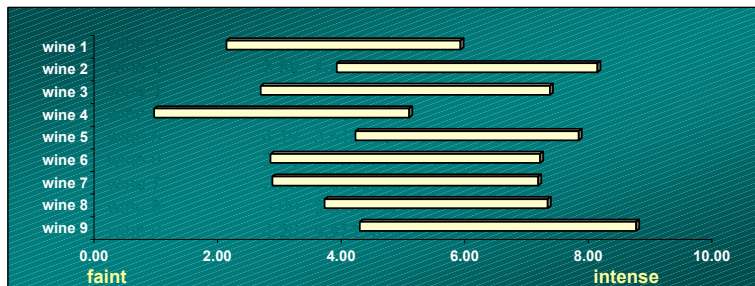
mint flavours

	median	s
wine 1	4	2.31
wine 2	3	1.94
wine 3	3	2.30
wine 4	6	2.69
wine 5	2	2.74
wine 6	3.5	2.09
wine 7	5	2.51
wine 8	4	2.65
wine 9	5	2.16



fruit flavours

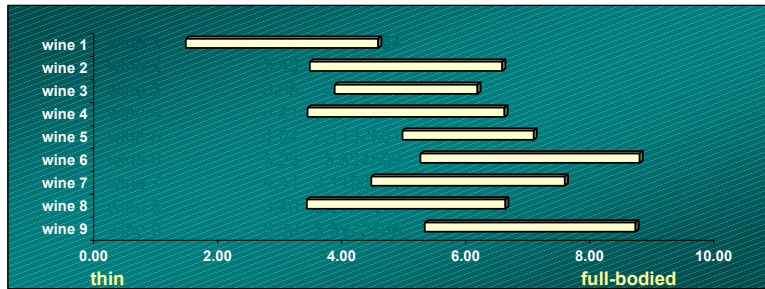
	median	s
wine 1	4	1.89
wine 2	6	2.11
wine 3	5	2.34
wine 4	3	2.06
wine 5	6	1.81
wine 6	5	2.18
wine 7	5	2.15
wine 8	5.5	1.81
wine 9	6.5	2.24



MOUTH FEEL

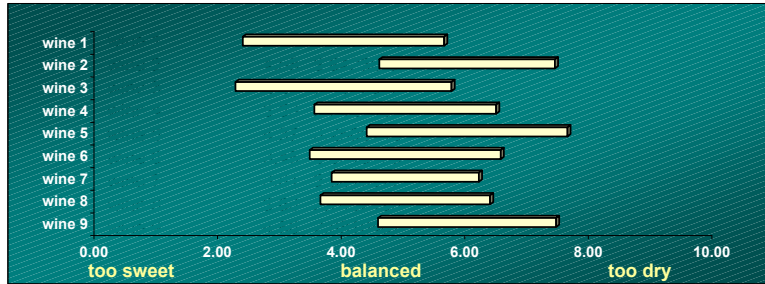
body, volume

	median	s
wine 1	3	1.55
wine 2	5	1.55
wine 3	5	1.15
wine 4	5	1.59
wine 5	6	1.06
wine 6	7	1.77
wine 7	6	1.56
wine 8	5	1.60
wine 9	7	1.70



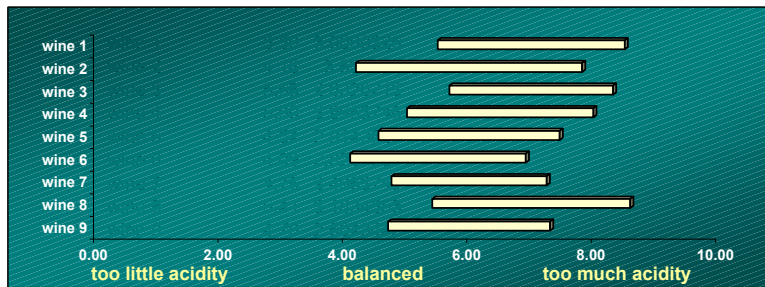
sweetness

	median	s
wine 1	4	1.63
wine 2	6	1.42
wine 3	4	1.75
wine 4	5	1.47
wine 5	6	1.63
wine 6	5	1.55
wine 7	5	1.19
wine 8	5	1.37
wine 9	6	1.44



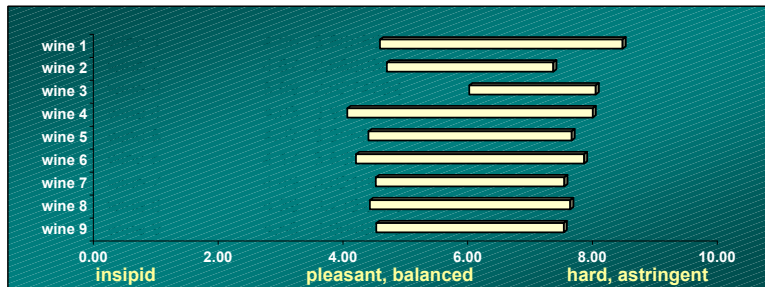
acidity

	median	s
wine 1	7	1.50
wine 2	6	1.82
wine 3	7	1.32
wine 4	6.5	1.50
wine 5	6	1.46
wine 6	5.5	1.41
wine 7	6	1.25
wine 8	7	1.59
wine 9	6	1.30



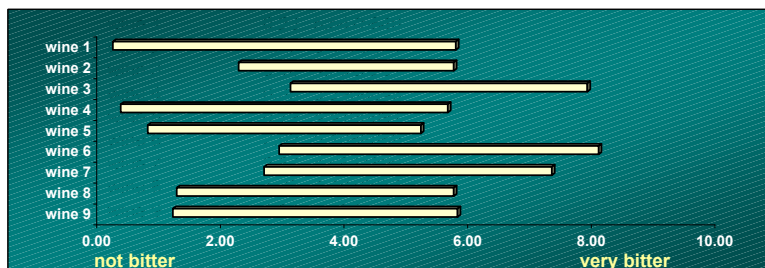
tannin quality

	median	s
wine 1	6.5	1.94
wine 2	6	1.33
wine 3	7	1.01
wine 4	6	1.97
wine 5	6	1.63
wine 6	6	1.83
wine 7	6	1.51
wine 8	6	1.61
wine 9	6	1.50



bitterness

	median	s
wine 1	3	2.77
wine 2	4	1.74
wine 3	5.5	2.40
wine 4	3	2.65
wine 5	3	2.21
wine 6	5.5	2.58
wine 7	5	2.33
wine 8	3.5	2.24
wine 9	3.5	2.30



faulty?

It has been suggested at the tasting that we introduce an additional parameter for faulty wines. In fact there were wines that were criticized for excessive VA, Brett or even both. Unfortunately, the tasters in general only marked this point when they felt there was a problem with a wine. I.e. the obtained figures do not represent the real state of a wine, so I abstain from a report of these results.