

WHAT PRACTICES IN THE VINEYARD LEAD TO THE PRODUCTION OF WINES THAT CONSISTENTLY WIN MEDALS?

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Abstract:

Context and purpose of the study -High quality wines start in the vineyard however little is known about the role vineyard management practices play in this quality outcome.

Gold medals and well-known regionality increase consumer preference for purchasing a wine. An increase in the former will certainly also drive an increase in the latter and therefore practices in production that consistently lead to gold medal winning wines will improve both the marketability of the region and its products. It is argued that vinification is the main driver of wine quality and in fact, the presence of some oak compounds is a well-known consumer and expert mark of quality. However, only select wines are vinified in oak and therefore the original grape quality at the winery door must in fact drive all further downstream vinification decisions.

Grape composition is also an important driver of flavour and aroma in a final wine. Management practices are able to alter berry chemistry as well as the concentration of enzymes and compounds that act as precursor to many esters affecting wine volatile compounds.

This study aims to identify vineyard practices associated with the consistent production of high-quality wine-styles as defined by consistently earning medals at the Barossa Wine Show.

Materials and methods – Twenty years of results from the Riesling and Shiraz categories from the Barossa wine show were analysed for consistent award winning wines. Consistent was defined as a wine that was awarded a medal for at least three successive vintages one of each was a Gold medal. Growers were then asked to respond to a survey to gather information on their viticulture practices including pruning, trellising, nutrition, soil health, pest and disease management, mid-row and under-vine management, irrigation, canopy management and harvest management. This data will be analysed for commonalities.

Results - Shiraz and Riesling wines that have consistently earned medals over a period of 20 years at the Barossa Wine Show have been identified. Growers are being surveyed and their specific vineyard management practices recorded. The analysis of these responses will be presented and aims to identify commonalities in vineyard management. A matrix, linking vineyard practices and wine medals will be created and deployed to the wine industry. Growers in the Barossa Valley will then be able to make more informed management decisions to produce grapes that leads to consistent quality wines. Findings from this study will also create opportunities to validate the matrix in other regions.

Keywords:

Viticultural practices, medal winning wines.

1. Introduction.

What practices in the vineyard lead to the production of wines that consistently win medals?



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Background

- High quality wines start in the vineyard however little is known about the role vineyard management practices play in this quality outcome.
- Gold medals and well-known regionality increase consumer preference for purchasing a wine (Lockshin et al. 2006).
- This study aims to identify vineyard practices associated with the consistent production of high-quality wine-styles as defined by consistently earning medals at the Barossa Wine Show

Wine Show Results

12 years of results from the Class 1 Riesling (current vintage) and Class 1 Shiraz (1 year old) categories at the Barossa wine show were analysed

Consistent was then defined as a wine that was awarded a medal for at least three successive vintages one of which was a Gold medal. These were wines selected to complete the survey.

Shiraz

Most predominant planting in the Barossa Valley and is found in all sub-regions.

120 wineries
453 entrants
From across sub-regions of the Barossa Valley

↓
Consistent winners
9 wineries
109 entrants
10 wines



Survey

Growers were then asked to respond to a survey to gather information on their viticulture practices including pruning, trellising, nutrition, soil health, pest and disease management, mid-row and under-vine management, irrigation, canopy management and harvest management.

Is mulch the difference?

Respondents to date have indicated that mulch may be an indicator of vineyard quality. Studies have shown that mulch helps decrease water requirements (DeVetter et al. 2015) particularly important in a dry climate like the Barossa Valley.



Riesling

Eden Valley – minimum 400 m above sea level, cooler climate, highest rainfall of all the sub-regions.

103 wineries
505 entrants
All from the Eden Valley

↓
Consistent winners
11 wineries
128 entrants
15 wines



Conclusion

A matrix, linking vineyard practices and wine medals will be created and deployed to the wine industry. Growers in the Barossa Valley will then be able to make more informed management decisions to produce grapes that leads to consistent quality wines.

References

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