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INTRODUCTION

This report has been compiled with the primary aim of assisting those who are preparing to sit Diploma Examination Papers in the future. It will also be of benefit to lecturers, course co-ordinators, tutors and mentors. It aims to give brief comments on candidates' answers to each question, as well as highlighting common pitfalls and successes. It is designed to provoke constructive thought as much as to give all the answers. Comments on individual questions are preceded by some statistics and general comments. In some instances, guidance notes are supplemented by extracts from candidates' responses. Where appropriate, advice is given on where additional marks could have been gained. Whilst examples are not provided for every question set, there are examples of sections from each of the specific styles of question – coursework assignments, tasting questions and theory questions from closed book papers. In each instance, the scripts have been selected to illustrate good coverage of either the topic as a whole, or a specific sub-section of it.

It should be borne in mind that these are not the definitive answer to any of the questions. Some may omit a number of facts, or in the case of the coursework assignments, may express a degree of personal opinion rather than fact. Nevertheless, they are reproduced here because they are a good representation of the standard required to pass or excel in the Diploma examination. In some instances, we have also included less than perfect answers. These illustrate the difference between a very good script and one that requires more work to reach the standard to justify a pass, or in some instances to illustrate what is not acceptable in an examination of this level.

Candidates' responses published in this report were actual submissions in the 2009-10 examination cycle and as such are anonymous and are reproduced as submitted to the examiner. In some instances, they will contain information that is incorrect.

It is suggested that candidates revising and preparing for a particular type of question - tasting, paragraph, essay etc - read all comments on similar questions, as these often contain general advice, which is applicable across the board. Therefore, the candidate preparing for Unit 4, 5 or 6 may also find comments relating to both tasting and theory in Unit 3 helpful.

On a final note, as always, I would like to convey my thanks to all those who contribute their time and expertise to help the Awards team put the Diploma examination together and who contribute to the success of this qualification both in the UK and overseas.

To the internal and external members of the Examination Panel, the Moderating Panel, the examiners, the administration teams in the Diploma Approved Programme Providers, the examination invigilators and tasting teams who work so hard behind the scenes on the big day, the Results Panel and the Appeals Panel – my thanks to all of you!

Janet Bangs
Director, WSET Awards
December 2010

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS
Comparative Pass Rates by Paper**

| Paper | 2010 | | 2009 | | 2008 | | 2007 | | 2006 | | 2005 | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Unit 1 CWA | April 75% | Nov 90% | April 99% | Nov 82% | (1) | | | | | | | |
| Unit 1 Case Study | June 68% | March 71% | June 66% | March 77% | Not applicable | | | | | | | |
| Unit 2 | 88% | | 81% | | 84% | | 81% | | 84% | | 79% | |
| Unit 3 Tasting | June 62% | Jan 62% | June 78% | Jan 76% | June 69% | Jan 63% | June 63% | Jan 55% | June 49% | Jan 55% | June 62% | Jan 48% |
| Unit 3 Theory | June 66% | Jan 49% | June 59% | Jan 53% | June 63% | Jan 50% | June 59% | Jan 42% | June 54% | Jan 42% | June 41% | Jan 24% |
| Unit 4 | 61% | | 64% | | 60% | | 70% | | 61% | | 69% | |
| Unit 5 | 64% | | 74% | | 63% | | 69% | | 61% | | 58% | |
| Unit 6 | 66% | | 67% | | 61% | | 61% | | 67% | | 45% | |

NOTES:

(1) Direct pass rates for Unit 1 are not given as this Unit is awarded on completion of all four coursework titles. Individual pass rates for each title are given within the body of this report.

GUIDANCE ON EXAMINATION PREPARATION

The Candidate Assessment Guide provides plenty of valuable guidance on how to approach the various assessments of the WSET Diploma qualification. This report contains additional information, not only here but also under the sections on individual question types.

This section of the report covers some general comments on the issues and problems that come up year after year and also gives guidance on pitching responses at the right level, plus an insight into examination grading criteria.

Supplementary reading

Candidates are reminded that the Study Guides issued by the WSET contain an overview of each section of the syllabus only and make frequent reference to additional sources of information. Candidates should be warned that the examination panel specifically refers to material listed as “required reading” when setting examination questions. Candidates who limit their study to the Diploma Study Guides in isolation run the risk of coming unstuck in the closed book examinations as a result. These additional sources of information should be just as much part of a study plan as the Study Guides themselves, and for candidates intent on achieving high grades, the importance of study beyond the “required reading” cannot be underestimated. In addition, there is clear evidence that candidates are not reading the Candidate Assessment Guide. This has been written specifically to help them prepare for assessment, and gives very clear guidance on the approach to assignment writing and the candidates’ obligations in this respect, as well as general exam technique. Candidates who do not read this document, may not reach their full potential in the examination.

Commercial awareness

Unit 1, The Global Business of Wines and Other Beverages specifically examines candidates’ commercial awareness through the means of coursework assignments and the closed book case study. There is some evidence that candidates are ignoring the fundamental fact that wine and spirit production and trading are business enterprises, and therefore fail to bring a commercial approach to their answers where appropriate. All coursework assignments have a commercial focus and a pass cannot be achieved simply by reiterating facts relating to production methods. Titles for the 2010/11 coursework assignments are on the WSET website under www.wsetglobal.com/qualifications/diploma. Titles for the 2011/12 academic year will be published at the end of May 2011.

Examination Technique

Taking note of these can make a big difference to your examination result.

- Answering the question as set.
- Writing legibly and presenting answers clearly.
- Avoiding careless errors such as mis-spelling a word contained in the question.
- Applying the Systematic Approach when answering tasting papers

In addition, we have noticed that candidates who take advantage of “examination preparation schemes” perform considerably better on the day than those who do not. Many of the Diploma Programme Providers run such schemes for their candidates.

Where these are not available, candidates can apply to join the Wine & Spirit Education Trust's Diploma Assessment Preparation scheme (DAPs) and should speak to the administrator at their Approved Programme Provider in the first instance.

Levels of Assessment Skills

Having an idea of the kinds of skills that are being assessed will help candidates to direct their study effectively and write an answer that demonstrates they have these skills. Consider the following types of assessment, and how each successive one requires a deeper level of expertise:

- Factual Recall - (how things are)
- Explanation - (how things could be and why)
- Analysis - (how things might become and how they ought to be)

Factual Recall

Factual recall tests basic knowledge. This usually takes the form of an answer to a 'what', 'where' or 'who' question. This knowledge can be simply recalled, if known. This is the simplest form of assessment and success can be achieved through "learning by rote".

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Sample question | What style of wine is Châteauneuf-du-Pape? |
| Answer | Full-bodied red wine with relatively soft tannins, lowish acidity and high alcohol. |

Factual Recall + Application

Factual recall can be combined with application to assess to a greater depth. This is commonly achieved by putting the question into a relevant context, eg:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Sample question | A customer asks you to recommend a soft, full-bodied red wine. What would you recommend? |
| Answer | Châteauneuf-du-Pape. (<i>This is obviously only one of several legitimate answers.</i>) |

No matter how many facts the candidate has memorised, these do not constitute an **understanding** of a subject area. If the facts have been learnt by rote, the candidate either knows the answer or not. Using insight to work out what would be a correct answer, when the answer is not known, only comes at the next level: explanation.

The lower level WSET qualifications (Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced Certificate) mostly limit themselves to testing factual recall, assessed via multiple-choice format questions.

In the Diploma, the multiple choice Unit 2 examination, and the questions that require the candidate to write a paragraph about given topics which appear in units 3, 4, 5 and 6 are also mainly testing factual recall and recall + application. Factual recall will get candidates a reasonably long way in the WSET Diploma, but is not sufficient to guarantee success in Unit 1, and is unlikely to be adequate for the Unit 3 theory paper either.

Explanation

Explanation goes beyond ‘what’, ‘where’, and ‘who’, and asks ‘why’. This type of question tests not just memorised knowledge of the subject, but understanding as well. This is because in order to explain something, the candidate needs to know not just ‘*what is the case*’ but ‘*what would be the case if things were different*’. This kind of ‘counterfactual’ understanding is achieved by spotting patterns in the basic facts, and deducing explanatory mechanisms behind them. Alternatively, a tutor could explain the mechanisms. However, if the candidate then finds that they have to memorise this information, it is a clear sign that they have not really understood it, and will not be able to apply the mechanism themselves in other scenarios, such as in the examination itself.

The human brain naturally tries to find patterns in data – though some people are able to do this more easily than others. These patterns mean that a lot of information can be deduced from a few simple principals. The skill of explanation is a higher order skill than recall, but the amount of data that needs to be memorised is less.

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Sample question | Why is Châteauneuf-du-Pape a full-bodied, high-alcohol red wine with relatively soft tannins? |
| Alternatively | Account for the style of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, or explain the style of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. |
| Answer | The Grenache grape naturally gives wines that are high in alcohol, and full-bodied, but with soft tannins. The hot ripening conditions due to the location in sunny Southern France, aided by low-trained bunches benefitting from heat reflected from the ground also helps achieve fully ripe tannins and speeds sugar accumulation in the grapes. |

A much more detailed explanation is also possible of course, and would be expected in the examination itself.

The basic facts (hot climate, Grenache-dominated blend) could be memorised and recalled, but what makes this a question about *understanding* rather than *factual recall* is the implication that if these causal factors were altered, then the style of Châteauneuf would change. For example, if the climate were cooler, then alcohol levels would be lower, and the tannins less ripe, or if more Carignan (or Cabernet) were used in the blend, then the wine would have firmer tannins, lower alcohol and less body.

Explanation + Application

Just like factual recall, explanation can also be applied to a particular situation to assess explanation combined with application. This is where the counterfactual implications of the causal process are explicitly put to work. For example, if X were not the case, then B, rather than A would be the outcome.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Sample question | You are a producer of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and one of your important clients has requested a wine with lower alcohol. How can you meet this demand? |
| Answer | This would take the form of a list of things you could do to achieve this style, such as altering the blend to include less Grenache; sourcing grapes from cooler sites; increasing yields; using the vine canopy to shade the ripening fruit; retraining the vines to raise the fruiting zone; using open fermenters and low-conversion yeast strains, etc, etc..... |

The WSET Diploma assessment, particularly the essay-format questions in Unit 3, aims to test *understanding* of the subject, rather than an ability to *recall facts*, but there is another level above this which should be considered during preparation for Unit 1. This is *analysis*.

Analysis

Analysis requires you to draw conclusions from the facts and the causal mechanisms behind the facts. This might involve issues such as:

- identifying and extrapolating trends to make predictions.
- identifying which of a set of explanations is the most likely, or which of a set of causes is the most important.
- identifying what the consequences of something are.

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Sample question | Average alcohol levels in Châteauneuf-du-Pape have been rising over the last ten years. What are the main reasons for this and to what extent is the trend likely to continue? |
|-----------------|--|

| | |
|--------|--|
| Answer | An important point here is that in this context the inclusion of the word ‘main’ (as in ‘main reasons’) is not making life easy by limiting responses to <i>some</i> rather than <i>all</i> of the possible reasons. It is challenging the candidate to identify which, of all the possible reasons, are the most important ones. Once these have been identified, the candidate would have to argue to what extent they are likely to continue to have an effect. |
|--------|--|

Analysis + application

In the same way that recall of knowledge and explanatory skills can be “applied”, so can analysis. This usually takes the form of making recommendations.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Sample question | What, if anything, should producers in Châteauneuf-du-Pape do in order to slow or reverse the trend towards increasing alcohol levels? |
| Answer | Note the subtle difference between ‘what can they do’ (a list of possible responses, as set out under ‘explanation + application’ above) and ‘what should they do’. In order to establish what producers should do, it is necessary to consider the possibilities, and argue which of these are going to be the most prudent or effective and this forms the basis of the response to the question. |

Summary

As candidates progress from Foundation and Intermediate Certificate to Advanced Certificate, they move from learning ‘what wines are like’ to understanding ‘why they are like that’. An understanding of the six factors taught at Advanced Certificate level will form an excellent foundation for Units 3, 4, 5 and 6, but Unit 1 offers the chance to go beyond ‘what the world is like’ and ‘why it is like that’ to examine ‘what the world could be like’, ‘what it should be like’ and ‘what we should do about it’. These are far more interesting and challenging questions than mere factual recall. They should inspire candidates to explore the possibilities as they ponder them and hopefully find some convincing solutions.

Examination Grading Criteria

Grade bandings for the Diploma examination are largely determined by the content of the submission judged against the “marking key” or “marks schedule” for each question. For example, the candidate covering 75% or more of the content defined in the marking key has a good chance of achieving a distinction grade. However, there

are also other elements that come into play beyond pure factual content. The grade bandings are summarised below:

Fail Unclassified **<44%**

Seriously inadequate answer, through lack of information, or errors, demonstrating in general a very weak understanding of the subject. Insufficient evidence of understanding to award a pass, through brevity, lack of detail or inaccuracies.

Fail **45 to 55%**

Borderline candidate, who whilst close to a pass does not give the examiner enough to award a Pass grade. Insufficient evidence of understanding to award a pass, through brevity, lack of detail or inaccuracies.

Pass **55% to 64%**

The candidate demonstrates an adequate understanding of the topic, covering sufficient of the main points to be "more right than wrong." A basic answer, with limited use of examples and depth of information, which may contain some errors.

Pass with Merit **65% to 74%**

There should be evidence of clear understanding here, with a greater factual coverage, and better depth and accuracy of information and examples. Very sound, but without the extra edge for a pass with distinction.

Pass with Distinction **>75%**

The candidate should demonstrate a thorough and accurate understanding of the subject in depth, and show some flair, creativity or originality in analysis, argument or choice of examples.

COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

Unit I, The Global Business of Wines and other Beverages

Before commenting on each specific assignment title, here are some general comments about the grading of coursework assignments:

All assignments are graded out of 100. Of this, 20 marks are available for the candidate's handling of the assignment. This includes the diversity of the bibliography, the presentation of the work in terms of spelling, grammar and legibility and the structure and style of the assignment. The latter incorporates issues such as coherence, flair, fluency, use of illustrative examples and the candidate's method of approach to the assignment.

The allocation of the balance of 80 marks varies according to the individual assignment and will be detailed as appropriate under each Assignment Brief.

In terms of presentation, marks will be lost where work is presented with spelling and/or grammatical errors. With spell checkers on all PCs these days, there is really no excuse for errors of this kind. Structure is also important, particularly if candidates do not follow the format dictated by the various sections of the Assignment Brief, as an automatic fail grade is awarded where any section is not addressed. The bibliography is an essential part of the assignment and those submitted without one are penalised as a result. Many candidates appear confused over the difference between a bibliography and "Reference Notes". The Candidate Assessment Guide explains this. The bibliography needs to draw on a variety of sources – books, magazines, internet, interviews – and certainly needs to have strong commercial evidence of the kind that can be obtained from trade journals such as *Harpers*, *Drinks Business*, or *Just Drinks*. These are vital for identifying trends and topical issues. The internet features strongly in many candidates' bibliographies. This is fine, so long as there are other sources as well such as text books, personal contact with subject experts and trade press. There is however a worrying dependence on "unreliable" sources such as Wikipedia. The bibliography should be correctly referenced throughout the body of the assignment – something very few candidates actually do. This is where the "reference notes" or footnotes come into play. Guidance on this is given in the Candidate Assessment Guide. Failure to follow this will result in lower marks in this section of the Assignment Brief.

A number of examiners have commented on misuse of footnotes and appendices. Some assignments are submitted with footnotes which account for up to half of each page of the assignment. This is simply abusing the restriction on the maximum permitted word count and in such cases their content is not included in the marking process. In addition, some candidates submit excessive quantities of appendices. In many instances, these are not even referenced within the body of the assignment and their purpose is therefore questionable. There is a general feeling that these are often included to show how much work had been done since they are often actually surplus to requirements.

Next, a few words on the use of the SWOT analysis in coursework. Whilst these do have their uses, some candidates include them indiscriminately without really making any conclusion regarding their findings. At worst they can be repetitive, of limited relevance, and eat into the word-count with little to show for it. At best they can highlight key points, generate imaginative thought and clear the mind. They should be used with caution and should never form the bulk of the work.

Finally a general comment that applies to all assignment writing. Some pieces of work submitted show signs of collaboration or “leading” by the Approved Programme Provider, or in the worst cases, plagiarism or simply copying another candidate’s work. There have been some appalling instances of candidates simply lifting huge sections of work from papers published on the internet. Where this has been detected, a fail grade has been awarded. Candidates must remember that assignments are to be the sole work of the individual submitting them and they should be in no doubt that it is always very obvious to the examiner where this is not the case. The penalties in such instances can be very severe indeed, and in repeated instances, will lead to the candidate being barred from completing this qualification.

Coursework Assignments

With effect from 1 August 2010, Unit 1 is assessed by means of one open book coursework assignment and one closed book case study examination. This report will therefore focus on the two assignment title options that were offered in conjunction with the three case study examinations.

Assignment Title November

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Producing, distributing and selling wine in a global recession | |
| <p>Required content and suggested approach</p> <p>The second half of 2008 saw many parts of the global economy tumble into recession. The prospects for 2009 are pretty bleak. Of course the wine industry is not immune from this turn of events. All parts of the wine supply chain, producers, wholesalers/distributors and retailers, face substantial challenges over the next few years. Those companies and individuals who do not respond successfully may well be forced out of business. The candidate should choose a category (wine and/or spirits) and part of the supply chain, in a country of their choice, consider the challenges being faced by that particular sector and then suggest tactics for surviving the downturn.</p> | |
| <i>Answers: 212</i> | <i>Passes: 190 (90%)</i> |

The open book coursework assignments always generate high marks, and this was no exception. This is hardly surprising since the candidate brief tells the candidate what they need to address and it is simply then a case of them researching to subject and presenting their findings IN THEIR OWN WORDS. Unfortunately, the temptation to copy text from source materials is very strong for some candidates. In most instances, it is very obvious when this has occurred, as the style of writing invariably changes, - often dramatically in the case of candidates for whom English is not their first language. Whilst examiners are prepared to ignore small instances of such “copying”, where it is blatant or excessive, candidates will be failed.

For this assignment, candidates were required to select a category (wine and/or spirits), part of the supply chain (production, wholesale/distribution or retail) and a country (of their choice) which would form the subject of their assignment. The purpose of the initial section of the assignment was to “introduce” the chosen sector to the examiner. This should have been sufficient for the examiner to feel they had a good grasp of the anatomy of the sector under analysis having read the assignment. Most candidates did this well, but some spent far too long on this “factual reporting” section, which only accounted for 10% of the marks, at the expense of the more open and discursive analytical sections that followed and also carried the bulk of the marks. In general, there was a very interesting spectrum of responses relating to

various countries/markets and trade sectors, showing good detailed research. However, the majority were weaker when it came to speculation of what could or should be done to survive the downturn and what the likely outcome of this would be.

The following script achieved a high grade and considers the challenges being faced by the Champagne industry. The assignment is well structured, with an excellent and extensive bibliography (not reproduced in this report) and clear referencing of all the sources used throughout the assignment. It starts out with a concise account of the Champagne sector, a good presentation of the various challenges being faced and a well researched survey of the tactics that could be employed to overcome the downturn.

Introduction

In 2008, apart from the banking world, no other business in the world had any inkling that their industry faced imminent collapse. The global situation has destroyed many well-established and essentially profitable businesses simply because their customers, from companies to individuals, had either gone bust or simply could not afford to buy as before, and those otherwise essentially profitable businesses did not have any time to prepare for such a downfall in sales. The only exception to this is the Champagne industry, which has grown accustomed to cyclical sales and has had eight years to prepare for the current slump.

Having overcome phylloxera, two wars that destroyed their vines, and various economic downturns, the Champenois have learnt to be good at being cautious. Since the turn of the new millennium, Champagne has experienced some exceptional years, with sales breaking an all-time record in 2007, it was therefore natural that things would soon change, even if nobody predicted the unprecedented slump experienced in the first half of 2009. In the March 2009 issue of "The World of Fine Wine" magazine, Tom Stevenson wrote that "Champagne has always been a notoriously cyclical business, going from boom to bust and back to boom again, but predicting the peaks and troughs has not been easy and this has caught many houses on the hop".

This report focuses on the challenges the producers of Champagne faced before the global recession started and on the measures they have taken to face the global downturn.

Structure of the industry

The first vineyards in the French region of Champagne date back to Roman times but it is not until about 1670 that a monk called Dom Pérignon was appointed cellarer of the monastery of *Hautvillers*, situated on the *Montagne de Reims* and invented sparkling Champagne as we know it today. The legally delimited surface area today covers 34,000 hectares, of which 32,902 were in active production in 2008¹. With a yield of 14,200kg per hectare, 405 million bottles were produced in 2008; 36 million of which were exported to the United Kingdom, by far Champagne's largest export market. Five markets – France, the UK, the US, Japan and Germany – account collectively for 80% of the global Champagne consumption².

With a total of 4,765 growers, 65 *coopératives* and 289 *négociants*, the champagne industry is divided into two types of houses: those who own some vineyards and additionally buy grapes as their production is not self-sufficient, and the growers who may grow the grapes, make their own wine and sell it but also sell their grapes onto the houses or the *coopératives* who will subsequently make the wine. The Champagne sold through *coopératives* and champagne growers has seen a very slight increase from 32.2% in 1999 to 33.6% in 2008³. Champagne houses have continued

¹ www.champagne.fr

² Euromonitor International

³ See appendix 1

to dominate the market and were responsible for 66.4% of all Champagne exports in 2008⁴.

Nowadays, 24 Champagne houses are members of the *Club des Grandes Marques* and amongst the many names that command high prices and world recognition are Bollinger, Veuve Clicquot-Ponsardin and Moët & Chandon (the latter two both part of the luxury goods company LVMH, also the world's biggest Champagne producer).

The *Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne* (CIVC), founded in 1941, was formed to manage the common interests of Champagne growers and houses. Their role is to balance economic interests, enhance technical qualities in the vineyard and the wine and defend the Champagne appellation worldwide. The INAO, responsible for fixing the maximum yield, are also responsible for administering AOC (*Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*) regulations, which extend well beyond geographical boundaries and apply to each stage of the production of Champagne⁵.

Challenges faced pre-recession

Despite rising prices and a significant drop in US sales, shipments of Champagne increased for the 8th year running in 2007, to hit an all-time record of 338.7 million bottles. Champagne has nevertheless had to face three major challenges, with which the industry is still battling.

The first one is climate change. Due to an annual average temperature of no more than 10.5 degrees centigrade, the vines are pruned low so as to conserve heat and energy. Paradoxically, it is these difficult growing conditions that produce the quality of grape required to meet the exacting standards of Champagne production. If the average growing season temperature continues to rise, the wines will result in lower acidity and higher Ph levels. To balance the wines, dosage levels will be lowered, resulting in a wine that will not be suitable for longevity. As a rider to the low or no-dosage response to climatic conditions, Tom Stevenson wrote in *Meininger's Wine Business International*⁶ that "the only long-term remedy (to climate change) is a fundamental reassessment of clones and viticultural practices based on a warmer climate". Whilst the threat climate change poses is not an immediate one, producers cannot rule out that it will have an effect on champagne production in the long run. Small producer Aurélien Laherte from Champagne Laherte-Frères in Chavot is thus in the process of converting his entire production to both organic and biodynamic cultivation, in the hope that others will soon follow and hence protect the *terroir* that makes Champagne so unique⁷.

For political, technical and economic reasons, the Champagne region experienced successive periods of growth and decline. Having been forced to reduce the historical boundaries of the Champagne area in 1951, the Champenois have been entertaining the idea of a geographical "re-expansion" for over thirty years and a public inquiry has now been launched in the hope that new vineyards may be planted by 2016. The

⁴ www.champagne-civc.fr

⁵ www.champagne-civc.co.uk

⁶ Stevenson, Tom. *Meininger's Wine Business International*, April 2008, page 13

⁷ Private interview with Aurélien Laherte on 2nd June 2009

challenge that the expansion however presents is that the consumer will have to be convinced that this expansion will not dilute the quality of the wine produced and will not simply lead to overproduction. To achieve this, total transparency will be required to demonstrate that all proposed new vineyards are of superior quality to the current average level vineyards.

The next big challenge faced by Champagne is the competition from the world of sparkling wines and most recently the surge of Prosecco and Cava onto the international markets. As Spiros Malandrakis writes in "the Drinks Business" magazine⁸, "as the global financial contraction continues, France's leading fizz falls prey to the trading-down trend, with Cava and Prosecco emerging as beneficiaries". Other sparkling wines have always been seen as a cheaper alternative to Champagne and had already established "a solid audience and registered an upbeat volume CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of approaching 4% over 2003 to 2008, and a strong 6% current value CAGR" and are therefore "perfectly positioned to take advantage of the ongoing trading down trend to the detriment of the once untouchable Champagne industry"⁹.

Amongst the challenges faced by the Champagne industry over the past ten years, the above one has become the most acute, an opinion that was echoed by Gerard Basset, Master Sommelier and Master of Wine¹⁰, operating in the UK. In addition to increased costs, Champagne producers have to battle with the increased value of the euro against the pound, making New World sparkling wines a financially more attractive option for a lot of consumers. The major challenge is therefore for the Champagne region to prove to consumers that the combination of *terroir* and *méthode champenoise* (traditional method of making sparkling wine used in Champagne) is a premium worth paying for¹¹.

Initiatives to deal with the recession

At the beginning of 2009, the CIVC reported a 4.8% drop in sales in 2008, with sales volumes down to 322.5 million bottles, the biggest decline being exports to EU countries which fell by 6.5%. Just six months later, sales volumes have plummeted to indicate a 36.43% drop in export for the first half of 2009¹², this time with a greater fall for countries outside Europe (43.1%). Global sales of Champagne plummeted, "when the world found it had little to celebrate, or could not afford to pay £25 for a bottle of reasonable quality Champagne"¹³.

The first real response of the Champenois to this slipping demand has been to limit the permitted level of yield. This was decided by the CIVC and the *appellations* authority, the INAO, just before the start of the Champagne harvest in September 2009. In an attempt to address the immediacy of the market whilst keeping the anxious growers and the cash-strapped merchants in business, it was decided that this

⁸ The Drinks Business, issue 87, October 2009

⁹ Euromonitor International

¹⁰ Private interview on 20th September 2009

¹¹ See BBC news interview with Dr Jamie Goode on 29th September 2009

¹² See appendix 2

¹³ Lichfield, John. The Independent, 12th September 2009

year's harvest base yield would be a maximum of 9,700 kg per hectare, which means that a total of 363.94 million bottles will be made after the 2009 harvest, as opposed to the 405 million bottles produced after the 2008 harvest. The merchants will have to pay for only 8,000 kg per hectare in four quarterly payments in the twelve months following the harvest, and the additional 1,700 kg per hectare will not be awarded the Champagne *appellation* until October 2010, and paid for in a one-off fifth payment to be made to the growers in November 2010. In addition to this, and as 2009 appears to be a promising harvest, growers may also choose to add to their *réserve individuelle*, i.e. qualitative reserve, providing it does not take them over the maximum limit of 8,000 kg per hectare for a qualitative reserve. According to Giles Fallowfield, the average qualitative reserve that growers currently hold in Champagne is 4,900 kg per hectare, which means that their total average yield from the 2009 harvest will be a maximum of 12,800 kg per hectare, although 3,100 kg per hectare of this, even if bottled, will not have the right to the Champagne *appellation* until permission is given by the CIVC. In a recent interview¹⁴, Françoise Peretti, the Director of the Champagne Information Bureau (body representing the CIVC in the UK) confirmed that the goal of the above measure is to address the economic reality of the international market and will allow to regulate the demand; whilst the topping up of the qualitative reserve will ensure that both the consumer and producer benefit from this promising harvest in a few years' time.

Whilst the above measure deals with the future of the Champagne industry, the slump in sales has meant an increase in stock, not only in the Champenois' cellars – they work on the basis of having three year's supply in their cellars, this has now risen to four years – but also for the off-trade. Reports in UK national papers predict heavy discounts in preparation for the forthcoming festive season (Devaux and Canard-Duchêne are already on offer at £15.99 if you buy two bottles and dumping of Champagne at just 9 euros is also on-going in French Lidl supermarkets). The *grandes marques* and well-known names are however planning to resist this trend as the long-term effect of discounting their product will be calamitous, as it has been in other wine-growing regions which followed that route in recent years.

Despite reports by many journalists that the grapes of the Champagne region will be left on the vines to rot this year, this will not be the case as all the grapes will be required by the growers to reach their maximum yield. Aurélien Laherte from Champagne Laherte-Frères confirmed this¹⁵ by saying that in previous years, due to the organic and biodynamic aspect of their cultivation, Laherte harvested between 5% and 25% less than the maximum authorised but as 2009 has been an exceptional year, both in terms of quality and quantity of grapes harvested, it allowed them to reach their maximum yield. In simple terms, the average-size grower does not normally reach their maximum yield but may do so this year as the maximum yield is set 30% lower than last year.

In the case where more grapes are picked than the maximum allowed, it will allow those growers to keep the *cuve*, the best juice harvested from the first pressing and discard the *taille* harvested from the subsequent pressing, thus producing higher quality wines.

¹⁴ Private interview on 29th September 2009

¹⁵ Private interview on 29th October 2009

Another response of the producers has been to develop new styles in the hope to keep consumer's attention. The recent trend in the UK has been for low-dosage champagne and rosé champagne, many houses have thus developed an extra-brut or rosé sec. Champagne Pol Roger have indeed released their new no-dosage "Pol Roger Pure Brut" at this year's Vinexpo in Bordeaux in June 2009 and Champagne de Venoge presented their "Louis XV Rosé Extra-Brut" during the same wine exhibition. For some producers, diversification may therefore be the key to success. Whilst the sale of Prestige cuvées is suffering the most, consumers have come back to the more affordable brut and entry-level champagnes but the general feeling is that as long as the wine justifies the price, the niche market of vintage champagnes and Prestige cuvées will continue to attract consumers.

In a recent interview¹⁶, Robert Joseph admitted that "this recession is different. Previously, Champagne resisted bad times". In 2001, Datamonitor's drinks analyst Neil Broom said that "generally the people who are drinking high volumes of champagne aren't the ones who are going to be particularly badly hit by recession". This time, that may still have been true for some Champagne drinkers, but the mood is against the ostentatious spending that Champagne represents. Earlier in the year, Channel 4 chairman Luke Johnson wrote in the Financial Times: "ostentatious luxury as a social spectacle is now seen as offensive. That's why at dinner parties, it's fine to serve Cava instead of Champagne. Apart from anything, we've always known the drinks taste the same - it's simply been clever marketing by the French and snobbery that has persuaded us to pay four times the price for near identical products". To this argument, Robert Joseph added¹⁷ that the challenge facing Champagne in this recession is a two-edged sword: Champagne is now frowned upon as a drink of celebration (see all the coverage of the Tory party conference during which Champagne was banned) and "there's no way that anyone is going to open bottles casually as an aperitif".

Conclusion .

The limitation of the yield was the merchants/houses' response to the sales downturn and their first effort at stopping the escalation of stocks. Talking in a recent interview¹⁸, Françoise Peretti maintains her faith in the international market, especially the British market, Champagne's top export market. Peretti expects the trend to be reversed in the second semester of 2009 as thanks to end of year celebrations, 40% of all annual Champagne sales are between September and December. A number of small growers and producers, like Laherte-Frères, also still benefit from high demand which will allow them to get through this difficult period.

While demand outstripped supply, the idea of a geographical expansion – although a long-term plan due to both political and technical reasons – appeared to be the solution to the growing demand for Champagne. Although, like in the past, it will take a few years for the industry to recover, when the world's economical situation is restored, newly planted vineyards may just be the answer to successfully deal with the

¹⁶ Private interview on 14th October 2009

¹⁷ Private interview on 14th October 2009

¹⁸ Private interview on 29th September 2009

next boom, which may be brought on by the rising consumption in emerging markets such as Asia.

Every crisis provides an opportunity to correct, re-construct and give new impetus. The Chinese translation of the word “crisis” in fact combines two ideograms: one expresses danger and the other one opportunity; with their eternally unflappable confidence, the Champenois certainly seem to have taken the latter approach to the current economic situation.

END OF SCRIPT

Assignment Title April

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| The growth of mass appeal wines | |
| <p>Required content and suggested approach</p> <p>Some people characterise the market with opposing extremes – wines that aim for mass appeal and niche market wines. Mass appeal wines are targeted at a broad swathe of the market. They achieve this by a range of strategies including having easy appealing style, recognisable generic names, eg Pinot Grigio or Cotes du Rhone, or by branding. In contrast, niche wines achieve individuality by reflecting terroir, vintage, producer philosophy, indigenous grape varieties or idiosyncratic production techniques. There are fears that mass appeal wines could push these niche wines out of the market.</p> | |
| <i>Answers: 200</i> | <i>Passes: 150 (75%)</i> |

The pass rate here was less good, although there were more merit and distinction grades than any another other grade band, so the majority of those who passed, did so with a very solid mark.

In this assignment, candidates were asked to examine their national market in terms of wine availability and diversity and to use statistical evidence to show what actually generates the bulk of sales in that market. This section was covered well with good statistical evidence in the majority of cases. Candidates invariably score well in the factual reporting sections of assignments, but when it comes to the more discursive sections, weaker candidates tend to stand out. This was certainly to case in the next section, where candidates were required to analyse what had led to the popularity of mass appeal wines in the GLOBAL market, from the point of view of the consumer, the producer and the retailer. A significant number of candidates only covered this from the point of view of the consumer and missed out on a portion of the marks as a result. Responses were also weaker where candidates were asked to consider what the consequences of the growth of mass appeal wines have been. The candidate

brief for this section posed the question, “could niche wines be squeezed out?” Some candidates took this to mean that this was all they should consider in this section, and their response was simplistic and narrow as a result. This section of the brief carried the largest percentage of the marks (35%) and certainly needed to consider much more than the effect of mass appeal wines on niche wines. Those who achieved higher marks were well aware of this and made sure they looked at the bigger picture.

The following candidate achieved a borderline pass grade. They gave a good survey of the UK market, but could also perhaps have included some information on the volumes of mass appeal wines versus “niche” wines. Unfortunately, this candidate then strayed from the candidate brief and in doing so, they actually failed to answer either of the two key sections particularly well. They gave an extensive historical account of the emergence of mass appeal wines, but did not really get to grips with the reasons for their success with consumers, producers and retailers. Instead they brought the consumer, producer and retailer into the picture when looking at the impact these wines have had, which meant they did not approach this section in quite the way they were instructed to. When candidates deviate from the candidate brief in this way, it makes it much harder for the examiner to mark their scripts accurately because they have to hunt around in the script for information that is relevant to the various sections rather than having in presented to them in a logical format. This candidate was lucky that they covered enough of the required elements of the question to achieve a pass mark, but this approach certainly cost them a higher grade.

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The growth of mass appeal wine

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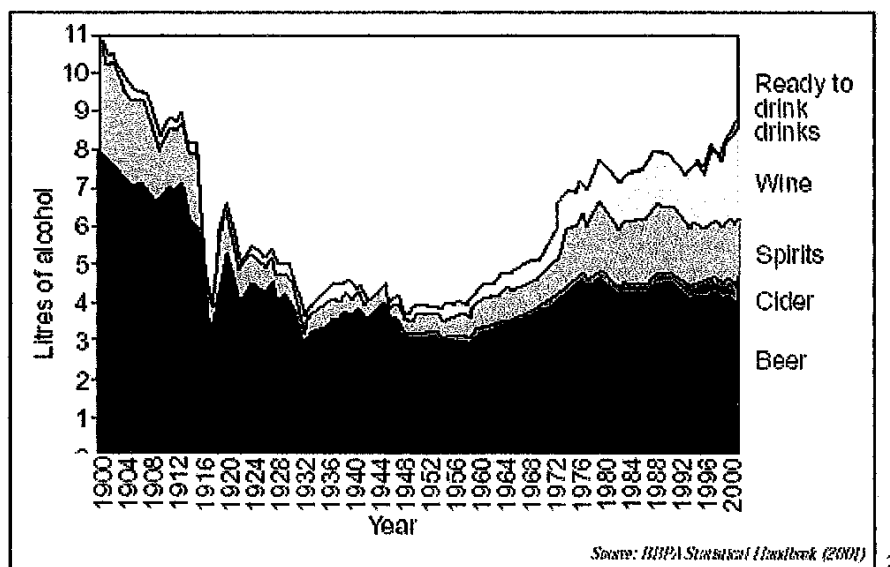
Word Count 2996

Introduction to the UK Market

Mass appeal wine means that a wine has a broad reach to large portions of the population. There may be a number of reasons why it is mass appeal including style, price, brand, reputation, packaging and availability. The end result, however, is that the particular wine gets consumed in very large quantities. The phenomenon started in the seventies with examples such as Black Tower and Mateus Rose becoming very big brands. This led to an explosion into varietal types from different countries; pinot grigio, chardonnay and shiraz being good examples

Today the UK Market is one of the most diverse wine markets in the world. Internationally the UK is one of the largest importers of wine by value and the fifth largest wine market. It is without a doubt one of the world’s toughest, most competitive and desirable wine markets. The UK’s total wine value in 2008 was US\$19.9 billion¹.

There has been a huge change in consumer behaviour over the last forty years, beer consumption has slightly declined but wine has grown considerably from the early 1970s as demonstrated in the chart below:



There has been a substantial growth of home consumption relative to consumption on licensed premises. Government figures suggest that, overall, less alcohol is now consumed on licensed premises than in the home³.

¹ New Zealand Trade and Enterprise – Wine-market-in-the-UK-2009

² Institute of Alcohol Studies - IAS fact sheet

³ Institute of Alcohol Studies – IAS fact sheet

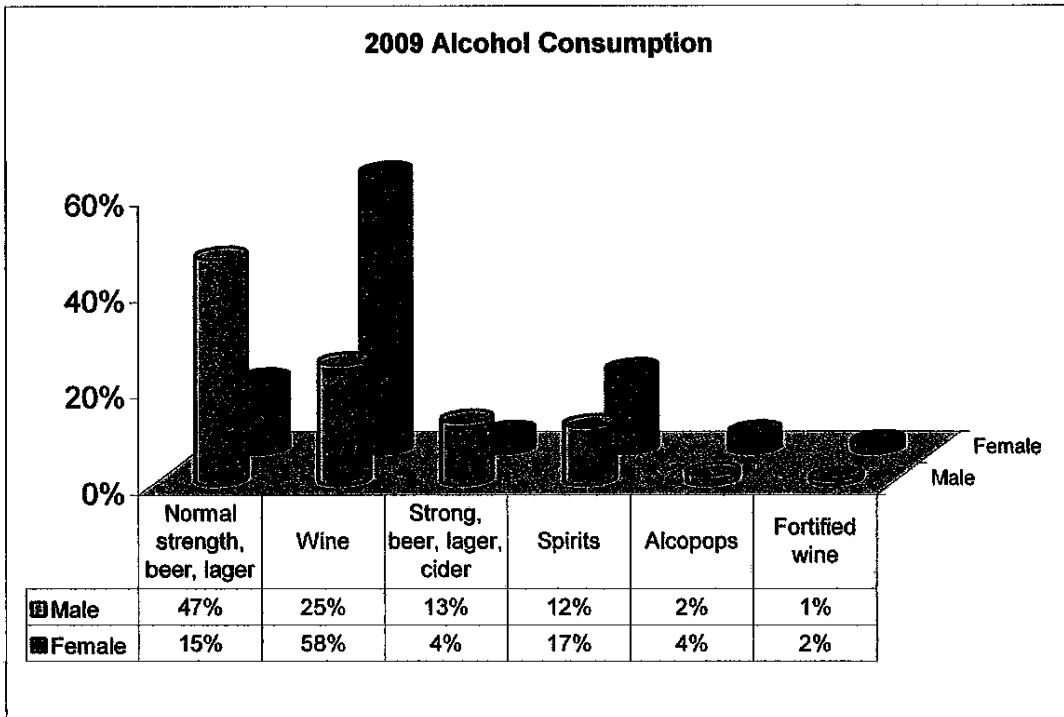
| United Kingdom ml per person per week⁴ | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | All alcoholic Drinks | Beer | Cider & perry | Wine | Spirits | Alcopops | Other |
| Consumption within the home | | | | | | | |
| 1992 | 527 | 298 | 47 | 152 | 30 | 0 | - |
| 1993 | 536 | 297 | 44 | 164 | 32 | 0 | - |
| 1994 | 552 | 311 | 52 | 162 | 28 | 0 | - |
| 1995 | 627 | 338 | 77 | 180 | 32 | 0 | - |
| 1996 | 656 | 351 | 82 | 188 | 34 | 0 | - |
| 1997 | 653 | 365 | 58 | 196 | 32 | 2 | - |
| 1998 | 645 | 340 | 61 | 212 | 30 | 1 | - |
| 1999 | 640 | 329 | 60 | 213 | 35 | 4 | - |
| 2000 | 725 | 388 | 58 | 232 | 37 | 10 | - |
| 2001/2 | 735 | 386 | 55 | 236 | 39 | 18 | - |
| 2002/3 | 726 | 380 | 50 | 239 | 39 | 18 | - |
| 2003/4 | 792 | 416 | 64 | 251 | 41 | 19 | - |
| 2004/5 | 763 | 395 | 55 | 261 | 38 | 14 | - |
| 2005/6 | 739 | 377 | 52 | 262 | 38 | 11 | - |
| 2006 | 760 | 393 | 59 | 255 | 41 | 12 | - |
| Consumption outside the home | | | | | | | |
| 2001/2 | 733 | 623 | 21 | 20 | 21 | 34 | 15 |
| 2002/3 | 704 | 592 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 36 | 15 |
| 2003/4 | 664 | 557 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 25 | 21 |
| 2004/5 | 616 | 515 | 18 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 22 |
| 2005/6 | 597 | 499 | 16 | 22 | 20 | 15 | 25 |
| 2006 | 561 | 459 | 24 | 23 | 18 | 11 | 25 |

The above table shows that wine is the major benefactor of increased consumption in the home.

Another interesting factor is the differences between men and women in terms of wine consumption. Although men drink more alcohol in general (mean weighted male average 15.6 units for 2009 versus 9.6 for women), women drink much more in terms of wine 58% compared to only 25% for men⁵. Please refer to chart overleaf.

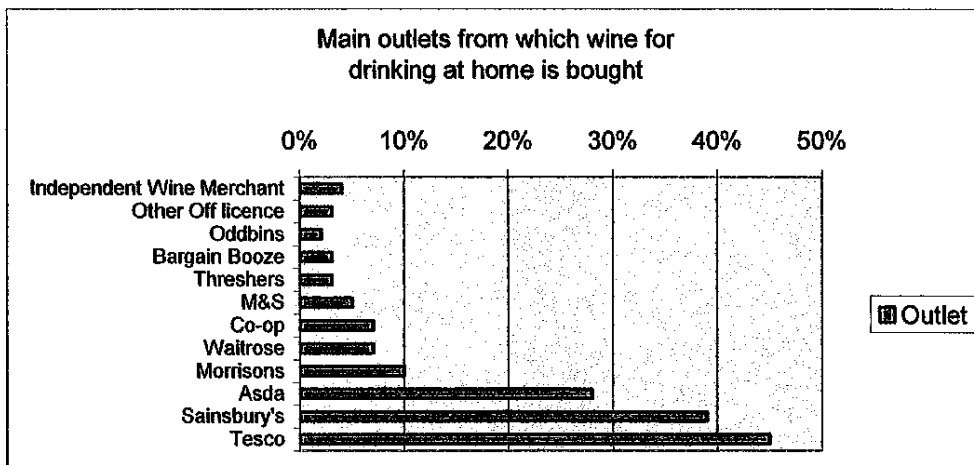
⁴ Institute of Alcohol Studies – IAS factsheet

⁵ Office for National Statistics - Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2009



6

How is the consumption of mass appeal wine supported? A number of different avenues are available to the wine consumer to purchase their wines - the key suppliers are the major UK supermarkets plus a number of speciality chain retailers e.g. Majestic, a large number of small specialist wine retailers and some wine clubs. However it is the supermarkets who dominate the sales of wine in the UK. This is not just supported by physical stores but the continued growth in online sales across the Internet.



7

Television advertising and wide media coverage (most main newspapers have wine commentaries) has helped to increase our wine consciousness.

⁶ Office for National Statistics - Drinking: adults’ behaviour and knowledge in 2009

⁷ Off Licence News Wine Report 2009

The emergence of mass appeal wines

The emergence of mass appeal wines really began in the seventies and the author has been fortunate enough to experience a large part of that period. A large number of factors have led to the dramatic rise and these are discussed below:

Wine Brands

It is impossible to look back without thinking about some of the brands that began to emerge during the seventies. Firstly there were a group of German wine brands, Black Tower, Blue Nun, Piesporter, alongside a Portuguese pink wine; Mateus Rose. The best known red wines were French Piat D'or and Hungarian Bull's Blood. A common link to these wines was the addition of a healthy dose of sugar, pandering to the then UK consumer's sweet tooth. Wine brands still play an important role in today's market. Below is a comparison of the top wine brands of 2000 and 2009.

| | Current Position (July 2009) ⁸ | | | Year 2000 Position ⁹ | |
|----|---|-----------------|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| | Brand | Company | Change | Brand | Company |
| 1 | Blossom Hill | Percy Fox | Up 7 | Ernest & Julio Gallo | E&J Gallo Winery |
| 2 | Gallo | Gallo | Down 1 | Jacobs Creek | Orlando Wyndham |
| 3 | Hardy's | Constellation | No Change | Hardy's | BRL Hardy Wine |
| 4 | Jacobs Creek | Pernod Ricard | Down 2 | Stowells of Chelsea | Matthew Clark |
| 5 | Lindemans | Fosters EMEA | Up 1 | Rosemount | Rosemount Wine Estates |
| 6 | Wolf Blass | Fosters EMEA | New Entrant | Lindemans | Southcorp Wines |
| 7 | Echo Falls | Constellation | New Entrant | Penfolds | Southcorp Wines |
| 8 | Stowells | Constellation | Down 4 | Blossom Hill | UDV |
| 9 | First Cape | Brand Phoenix | New Entrant | Le Piat D'or | Piat Père Et Fils |
| 10 | Kumala | Constellation | New Entrant | Banrock Station | BRL Hardy Wine |
| 11 | Banrock Station | Constellation | Down 1 | | |
| 18 | Rosemount | Fosters EMEA | Down 13 | | |
| 26 | Black Tower | Reh Kendermann | Old Brand | | |
| 28 | Piat D'or | Percy Fox | Down 19 | | |
| 39 | Mateus | First Drinks | Old Brand | | |
| | Penfolds | Southcorp Wines | Out of Top 50 | | |

⁸ www.just-drinks.com 15th August 2000

⁹ Off Licence News Wine Report 2009

The table shows how robust a large number of those brands have remained. 7 of the top brands in 2000 are still in the top 11 brands of 2009. The interesting change has been the take over of ownership by the large conglomerates of the leading brands. Only one of those 2000 top ten has dropped out of today's top 50. Also it is worth noting that three of those 1980s brands remain comfortably in the top 50. Brands have played a major part in the introduction of new mass appeal wines for the consumer as well as a vehicle for the large producers.

Foreign Travel

The seventies witnessed the first generation of cheap packaged holidays and the UK population started to travel to major European destinations including Spain and Italy as well as France. This meant the consumer started to see people bringing wines back from their travels such as Rioja and Chianti. This undoubtedly helped the spread of different wines.

Wine Bars

Some of the oldest wine merchants in the city of London had established wine drinking venues; Corney and Barrow (bought W. Coates & Co. in 1959, which already owned two wine bars¹⁰), Davy's (first wine bar in 1964¹¹) and Balls Brothers (Gows restaurant bar in 1884¹²). These places tended to be very dark inside and not particularly women friendly. However it was not until the mid eighties that the wine bar really took off. Some of the old established names started smartening some of their wine bars but there were a number of new entrants, including small private wine bars but also chains such as Pitcher and Piano¹³ and All Bar One¹⁴. These places were, and still are, brighter, lighter and provide a less formal and much friendlier atmosphere. In my opinion, these wine bars did two important things; firstly they attracted more women and secondly they exposed the public to a greater range of grape varieties and countries.

Television and Media

Firstly there was rise of the TV chefs. The best early example was Keith Floyd (Floyd on Fish 1984), which helped promote the idea of a glass of wine with your food. (Keith Floyd often cooked with one in his hand!). Ever since, there have been a plethora of TV chefs and food programmes and wine is often associated with these programmes (e.g. James Martin - Saturday Kitchen). Secondly television advertising has been used by a number of producers and retailers to promote and market their wine. Advertising started in the late seventies with the most well known adverts being created by Piat D'or which gave the impression that it was a French wine that the French loved and it also accentuated on the curvy shape of the bottle. This became a number one brand in the early eighties. Mainstream newspapers developed wine columns, produce special wine supplements and some have wine clubs (e.g. the Times).

The producers and retailers have successfully used these mediums to rapidly increase the consumers' awareness of wine and increase sales.

¹⁰ www.corneyandbarrow.co.uk

¹¹ www.davy.co.uk

¹² www.ballsbrothers.co.uk

¹³ www.pitcherandpiano.com

¹⁴ www.allbarone.co.uk

Varietals

By the late eighties, the growth in the market led the consumer, producers and retailers to find new wines which were inexpensive samples of the famous French grape names. These came from places like Australia, New Zealand as well as Italy and Bulgaria. The French virtue of subtlety was replaced by wines with stronger aromas and obvious fruit flavours¹⁵. The change for some of these countries has been extraordinary. The volume of Australian wine exports for the 1981/82 financial year was just over 8 million litres, valued at almost A\$14 million and the principal export market was Canada and New Zealand. Six years later export volume for the 1987/88 financial year had soared to 39 million litres with a value of A\$97 million, and Sweden and the United Kingdom had taken first and second positions in the export market¹⁶. In the nineties, we saw the exponential growth of wines such as pinot grigio as well as further advancement from the New World including South America and more recently South Africa.

Clubs and Societies

Again during the nineties the concept of wine clubs started to grow. Some had been in existence for a long time such as The Wine Society - founded in 1874; its aim is to introduce members to the best of the world's vineyards at a fair price¹⁷. Laithwaites is the largest with other major clubs being Virgin Wines, the Sunday Times Club and Direct wines; which also runs the Nectar Wine Club and British Airways Wine Club. The wine clubs have been very good at putting together mixed cases, enabling the consumer greater exposure to different wines from around the world¹⁸.

Behaviour

Some events have also helped changed the consumer's wine drinking behaviour. The Austrian/German antifreeze scandal of 1985, where the same components as antifreeze were added to sweeten wine, led to consumers turning to other wines. The opening of more friendly off-trade and on-trade premises enabled women to purchase wine where previously they would have been unable to do so. Also the toughening of drink driving laws have changed where people drink. Whatever the underlying causes the end result is that the consumer drinks much more at home¹⁹ – see the table on page three and the biggest jump has been the consumption of wine. Going back to the eighties, eating out became much more popular and also pubs started to convert some of their drinking space into restaurants. This also led to a change of habits and people began to consume more wine with their food.

Packaging

From the seventies, packaging has played its part in the growth of mass appeal wine. Bottle shapes and labels have been distinctive for a number of mass appeal styles, Mateus (round), Black Tower (tall and dark), Paul Masson (Vase) are some of the more memorable. Also boxes became quite popular in the early nineties (Stowells of Chelsea). More recently focus has shifted to screw cap closures which have been adopted heavily by the New World producers and of course make it easier for the consumer to open the bottle!

¹⁵ Confessions of a wine lover – Jancis Robinson

¹⁶ Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation

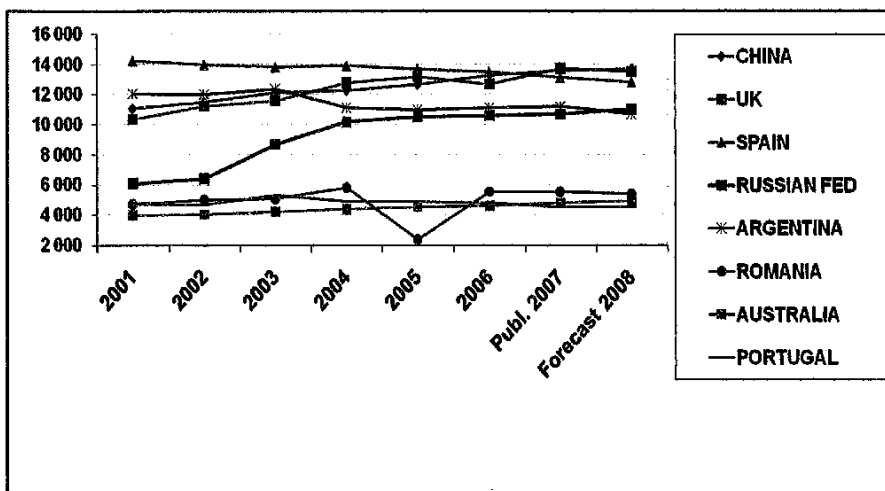
¹⁷ www.thewinesociety.com

¹⁸ www.laithwaites.co.uk

¹⁹ Times2 February 2010

The impact of mass appeal wines

The UK wine market has grown hugely since the emergence of mass appeal wine and has continued to grow in the 21st century.



20

Wine imports to the UK are set to grow by 6% between 2008 and 2012, enough to see the country overtake Germany to claim number one spot in the world wine import league, according to figures released by Vinexpo²¹.

The major impacts are as follows:

The Internet

The Internet has become a key vehicle for mass appeal wines; the online market share is estimated to be at 12% of total wine sales today²² and will continue to grow. The market is dominated by the large supermarkets, key wine supplier brands and some of the wine clubs. The figures below show how the on line market share is dominated by a few players²³.

| | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Tesco Wine Warehouse | 25.64% |
| Laithwaites | 13.94% |
| Virgin Wines | 12.11% |
| Sainsbury's Wine | 6.11% |
| Nectar Wine Club | 5.13% |
| The Sunday Times Wine Club | 5.00% |
| TheDrinkShop.com | 4.94% |
| Waitrose Wine Direct | 3.86% |
| Ooddbins | 2.96% |
| The Wine Society | 2.08% |

²⁰ OIV International Organisation of Vine and Wine

²¹ Just-Drinks.com Vinexpo article January 14th 2010

²² www.newbrodeaux.com

²³ Harpers Wine and Spirits 14th December 2007

The Internet has enabled the consumer to get access to most of the wines around the world and continues to expose them to wines that they would have not naturally considered.

Consumer

The consumer is much better off today than they were 30 years ago. The emergence of mass appeal wine has given the consumer an ability to purchase wine at very reasonable prices, consumer pressure has continued on wines where the average market price has now reached £4.26²⁴. The Internet, in particular has enabled the consumer to access many more wines – the downside of this is there is just so much information, so how does the consumer make a choice? For example how does the consumer select a reasonably priced good quality Pinot Grigio? This will depend on each consumer but the likelihood is that for the majority, they will go with a trusted brand either a retailer brand or a producer brand or a combination of both. A recent survey has shown that many consumers still remain in the dark and most admitted choosing the second cheapest bottle on the menu²⁵. The consumer will also continue to be influenced by media comments and will make purchases based on them. The growth of New World wines over the last few years has been dramatic - with them have come higher levels of alcohol. The Government remains concerned about the level of UK consumption will consumers respond by drinking lower alcohol wines in future? The UK recession has led to a continued increase in drinking at home but levels of wine consumption have remained unaffected although consumers have gone for cheaper wines recently²⁶. Packaging will always play apart, screw caps have been very warmly received and therefore it is likely in future that selection between two brands may be influenced by closure type. There will continue to be other influences on the consumer such as exchange rates. The popularity of New World wines is amplified as the exchange rate with the Euro remains poor. Consumers in general do not own cellars (they may have a wine rack) and therefore, the consumer is likely to buy wine on a regular less than a case basis. This has been evidenced recently by Majestic Wines decision to move down to a minimum purchase of six bottles rather than twelve²⁷. Mass appeal wine is here to stay, however as the consumer's wine knowledge continues to grow, some of them will branch out and buy higher price wines.

Retailer

The retailer off-trade market has become more and more polarised as the Internet market share grows. Large supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury dominate market share, supplemented by very specialist wine suppliers supplying unique wines and fine wines. In the middle ground a number of key wine club operations are gaining traction. However those middle ground wine chain retailers have lost out the most; as the Internet has risen, the demise of the smaller high street wine chains has continued. Bottoms Up, Peter Dominic, Augustus Barnett, Victoria Wine, Wine Rack, Threshers, Haddows and more recently First Quench (Wine Rack, Threshers) have all now disappeared²⁸. Some of this was due in part to lack of Internet capability but probably more simply, it is easier either to

²⁴ Off Licence News Wine Report 2009

²⁵ The Daily Telegraph, April 9th 2010

²⁶ Off Licence News Wine Report 2009

²⁷ www.times.co.uk 16th November 2009

²⁸ www.telegraph.co.uk 9th December 2009

order wine and have it delivered or purchase it as part of your major regular food shopping. Based on other retail market areas, the Internet is likely to grow substantially over the next few years and therefore Internet capability will be key to the retailers' future success. Those retailers who have exclusive arrangements with various producers will be able to compete and also those retailers that specialise in fine wine should find an appropriate market space. What the Internet doesn't offer is the consumer a chance to taste or smell. Will there be developments in this area? Recently, we have seen the introduction of the enomatic wine serving systems²⁹. This enables a retailer to keep a bottle of wine fresh for three weeks after it is open and therefore consumers can try a small sample before buying. A local wine retailer in Fulham (Le Petit Canon) has already installed one and they charge for the sample – making this an economic way of “try before you buy”.

Producer

The early 1980s brands had diminished significantly but have recently made a resurgence³⁰. This has demonstrated that brand is a key element to success even if it means significantly changing their product set (e.g. Black Tower).³¹ This is a trend that has continued where producers are making wines to suit the consumers taste and this has been a successful ethos of the New World countries. The UK figures show Australia leading the import table with USA second and France demoted to third³².

On page five, we have seen how successful the big brands have managed to sustain themselves over a long period of time. There is a key battle between the producer brands and the big retail “own-name” brands and both sides will continue to push their own brands to protect their market shares and revenues.

In a true testament to the power of brand, a recent case shows Lacheteau, a Loire valley winemaker, who introduced a wine called “Kiwi Cuvee” has just been refused the ability to register the name in Australia and New Zealand. It is fairly ironic that the French who have done the utmost to protect their key wine brand and names would fall foul of trying to capitalise on one of the key New World Brands i.e. New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc³³.

Much of the advertising and branding has concentrated on New World wines. However, a new, simplified brand called “Pays d’Oc,” has been launched in the sun-drenched south of France, the world's largest vineyard, creating the number one French wine export to compete against New World brands. Languedoc-Roussillon covers 35 percent (or 260,200 hectares) of all French vineyards, making it the biggest producer worldwide³⁴. Producers also are using the latest forms of advertising such as sponsorship of particular programmes including “Come Dine with Me” sponsored by Hardys, “Will and Grace” sponsored by Blossom Hill, “the F-word” sponsored by Gallo and the recent “England versus South Africa cricket series” sponsored by Namaqua Wines.

²⁹ www.enotrade.co.uk

³⁰ www.blunenwines.com

³¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1908934.stm>

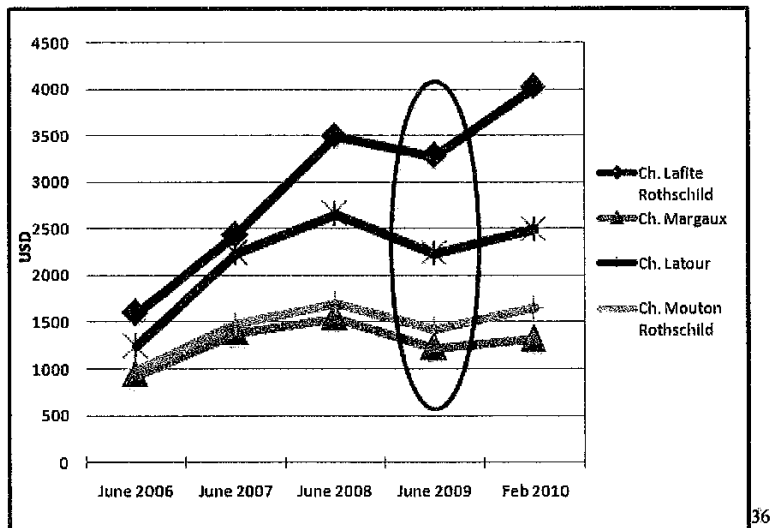
³² Off Licence News Wine Report 2009

³³ www.times.co.uk 8th January 2010

³⁴ Daily Star Lebanon 1st March 2010

Fine Wines

There have been some concerns that the growth of mass appeal wine has been detrimental to the developments in fine wine. This does not appear to be the case. The main impact on Fine Wine seems to have been the worldwide recession (see graph below) but all the evidence recently suggests that the Fine Wine market is again increasing in value. It also seems that Fine Wine is now attracting the Asian market³⁵ and this may continue to be the case if the pound/euro remains weak.



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Conclusion

The growth of mass appeal wine has been an important part of the UK's development of wine drinking. It has given us an unbelievable array of choice which I don't think is matched anywhere in the world. All of our palates are subject to change over time and therefore I think that the UK wine market will continue to seek new and different wines as well as support the large brands. I think that the consumer will continue to demand good quality wine at reasonable prices. Hopefully the re-emergence of France through Pays D'oc will lead to another set of challenges which will ensure that wine quality continues to improve and will ensure the New World does not get complacent. There will always be room for small specialists producing exceptional wine. Also consumers continue to educate themselves which is demonstrated by this non-Trade author attending the Wine and Spirit Educational Trust wine courses.

³⁵ Financial Times 19th April 2008

³⁶ Wine-searcher.com

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END OF SCRIPT

Closed Book Case Study

In comparison with other closed book theory papers, the pass rate for the case study in Unit 1 is high and reflects the fact that candidates go into the examination having already carried out the research required to answer the question. This means when they get to the examination hall and open the paper, they simply need to collect their thoughts and structure their response to address the sub-sections of the question on the examination paper. This is very similar to what is required for the open book coursework assignments, but with the added constraint of working in a timed environment and without access to research sources.

Those who fail generally do so because they do not address the question as set or are too brief in their response.

November 2009

| | |
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| The closure debate – will it ever end? | |
| <p>Candidate Case Study Brief: The closure debate continues. With key producers in France trialling screwcap and figures released stating 90% of New Zealand wines are closed under screwcap, it could be viewed that the battle is over. However, Amorim have been producing cork closures since the 19th century and 2007 was their best ever year for sales. Other forms of closure are well established giving the bottler a number of options.</p> <p>The closure debate ranges across technical, financial and aesthetic issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical issues e.g. haloanisole taints, oxygen ingress, reduction. • Financial issues e.g. choice of bottle, bottling equipment and the closure itself. • Aesthetic issues e.g. consumer acceptance, packaging design. <p>Large sums of money have been spent on research and development to address some of the technical shortcomings and measure consumer acceptance which varies widely in different markets.</p> <p>Over the last few years, the environmental issues associated with closures have also entered the debate. The two key antagonists are the natural cork producers and screw cap manufacturers. Claims and counterclaims abound, yet many of these are controversial and are presented with a certain amount of “spin”.</p> <p>One can’t help wondering how long this debate will continue to rage and in which direction it will eventually go.</p> | |
| <i>Answers: 255</i> | <i>Passes: 194 (76%)</i> |

Examination question (all three sections compulsory)

- a) Describe the various closure options available with particular reference to technical, financial and aesthetic issues. For each closure, discuss how manufacturers have attempted to address any technical shortcomings. (70% weighting)
- b) What are the environmental benefits and drawbacks that are claimed for cork and screwcap? How convincing is the evidence that is put forward by both sides? (20% weighting)
- c) In your opinion, which closures will still be used in ten years time and why? (10% weighting)

76% was a good pass rate. The examiner felt that candidates had researched the topic thoroughly and, more importantly, had digested what they had learned. This is where the assessment for the case study differs from the coursework assignment, and is one of the reasons pass rates for this assessment tend to be slightly lower than that for the coursework, where many candidates simply “lift” information from their research sources without retaining any of the knowledge that is the primary purpose of the research. It is these candidates who do less well in the case study examination.

The examiner also commented that the majority of candidates had structured their essay appropriately, so that it mapped to the various sections of the question. This is really encouraging as examiners often comment on poor structure. Not only does this make it extremely difficult for the examiner to mark scripts, but also often leads to the candidate omitting sections of the question, so is something to avoid.

Not surprisingly, section a), describing the various closure options available was the most consistently answered section of the study. However, not all candidates remembered to consider technical, financial and aesthetic issues, and simply described various closures. Scripts were also weaker at considering how manufacturers have addressed technical shortcomings. There is plenty of information and data freely available from the major players in the closure industry that would have provided the data necessary to answer this part of the question, such as the Diamant process developed by Oeneo's Diam or Amorim's ROSA, or Saratin or Saranex liners for screw caps. Candidates who had done extensive research, were able to refer to these. Those who did less well in this exam, were often weak in sections b) and c) – particularly the latter, which relies on the candidate expressing their own opinion rather than relying on factual recall. Many responses in this section were overly simplistic.

The following candidate gave a good response in this final section, as well as giving extensive descriptions of the various closures, and good arguments throughout. They have also included references to the sources used in their study, which is something very few candidates do in this exam, but which they are instructed to do in the guidance notes.

In the last twenty to twenty five years there has been an increase in cork tainted wines and random oxidation in the wines made around the world. Modern technology prompted wine producers from around the world to start looking at new viable closure options to the natural cork. With cork taint affecting between 5-15% of the world's wine production and all that wine being poured down the drain something had to give. With 20 billion bottles of wine produced a year and 14 billion of them were under cork, 2.5 billion are now under screw cap closure and the rest under a variety of technical cork, synthetic, Vinolok or crown cap the field is wide open.

Cork has been the traditional choice for wines produced in the world since the 17th century when a monk in France named Dom Perignon first used it to close a champagne bottle. It was the romantic choice for most wine lovers and still is for most wine loving consumers and old world wine producers. It had the perfect seal as a closure, good O₂ ingress into the wine to help develop

(continue on reverse)

and age the wines over time. It was permeable, had good pliability, elasticity, was cheap, environmentally sound, biodegradable and coming from a renewable source. The cork forests covered 2.7 million hectares of land over seven countries on the Mediterranean coast. (Harpers) was only ^{used for those countries producing cork and making wine.} However, due to the confinement of 2, 4, 6, Trichloroanisole^(TCA) which tainted corks during the processing of them, it became a big issue in the last twenty years. TCA which happens when the cork bark was cleaned with chlorine bleach and it had a reaction with the naturally living fungi that exists in the lenticels or pores of the cork bark and the taint was the outcome. Due to market demand over the last twenty years for corks due to the increase in demand for wines and the market dominance of larger wine companies like Yellow Tail, Gallo and Foster's Wines, the cork industry started to back off on quality control to get the corks out to market and problems with (TCA) started to occur more frequently. Amorim, the largest cork producer in the world had a major decline in sales in the late 1990s due to the problems with cork. They have spent 6 million dollars in the early 2000s on research and development and

quality control to make their corks and technical corks better. They also spent money on a new cleaning system called 'ROSD' that steam cleans out the (TCN) to almost eighty percent free. Carlos de Jesus, Marketing director for Amorim said back in early 2000 the cork industry needed to do something to get back into the game because a new wave of closures were taking over.

Synthetic closures were the next thing to happen due to the cork problems. It looked like a natural cork; no need for wineries to change their bottling lines; so no cost was incurred. They were cheaper than cork, more readily available because you get them from companies set up around the world. Supreme Cork and Integros were the first companies to produce them. The problems with synthetics were the earlier versions were hard to extract and reinsert, they busted up bottling lines and the odd corkscrew. These were made by the Injection Method. Now the big synthetic companies are using the Extrusion Method which is a long sleeve of plastic foam that is sealed and then cut into corks. The synthetic cork appeared the "Cork Lover" but it had problems

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still. People did not see it as biodegradable source, made from plastic foam, not renewable, hard to open and there were problems with flavour scalping. Winemakers found that the synthetics leached volatile compounds into the wines and "dumbed" down the fruit. Synthetics were found to be very susceptible and vineproducers still now were looking for the next best thing.

The Screw Cap! Screw cap has been around since 1959 (Stelcap Vin) and Stelvin the most recognised screw cap brand in the world started up in 1970 in Australia. It is the perfect Oxygen barrier, perfect seal everytime, can open easily, can be stored upright or lying down, humidity and temperature resistant in the cellar, cheap closure to buy and can be produced all over the world. Stelvin/Alcan, the company have production facilities set up in France, USA, Chile, Canada and Australia. The problems with screw cap were "the fact the wine community thought the seal and liner on the cap was giving the wines a reductive element and so the debate raged on. Reduction is lack of Oxygen in the wine and some skeptics said that wine under the screw cap could not develop aromas and age properly in a variety of climates."

Winemakers will tell you that the "PRO" screw cap that it is not the closure but winemaking that gives a wine reductive aromas. These aromas would be cabbage, onion, rotten egg and ~~no~~ it gets worst longer the wine ages under screw cap. :-

But if you talk to an Australian or New Zealand winemaker, the screw cap was the closure of choice. So much so, that in 2000 the Clouse Valley Riesling winemakers banded together to purchase screw caps because of the (TCA) found in their TCA prone Riesling. This led to the New Zealand Screw Cap Initiative where most winemakers (95% 2009 decanter) are now under screw cap. Over 50% of Australia is under screw cap and those two countries are driving the market. Furthermore, there is the VINO-LOK (S&W) which is German made, very premium in its price tag but winemakers love it for its premium look. Seals like a screw cap but has better consumer acceptance due to its glass opener look and it has to capsule over it. Producers like Stephen Hinkle from Australia who was a proponent for screw cap since the 1980s with his Rieslings and Hill of Grace is now putting all his wines

(continue on reverse)

Under VINO-LOK. Better consumer appeal and still has the screw cap technology that he loves. And he is not sure consumers are ready to buy Hill of Grace, pay \$20000 for it and it's in a screw cap that leads to the biggest obstacle for the screw cap still is the stigma attached "Jug Wine" and how long will they really age a wine. Time will tell.

The environmental issues surrounding the different closures has been a heated one over the years. Due to the slow cork sales back in the 90's & 2000's the cork industry claimed the synthetics and screw caps were not biodegradable, burned up a tonne of CO₂ emissions to be produced. If you talk to the synthetic and screw cap manufacturers they claimed that you could not buy cork, that the forests were being over harvested and we were running out of cork.

Organizations like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Forestry Stewardship Council had to step in to protect the cork industry and keep it thriving and producing.

They put in place best practises on the ground and started to certify cork farms. Amalim from Portugal went to New Zealand the "Screw Cap Hot Bed" to launch the environmental credentials of cork to win their business back.

The ScrewCap and Synthetic companies have replied with more recyclable closures. Supreme cork has an X2 Synthetic that is better with oxidation and recyclable (Harper) as well as NOMCORK is looking at their CO₂ emissions and have to recyclable synthetic. And Sidelwin Alcan have always claimed that their Aluminium alloy caps are 100% recyclable.

The cork forest are not going any where any time soon. They are renewable, bark stripped every 9-12 years and with companies like Amalim controlling their quality better on their corks and technical corks the cork industry will continue to thrive. With old European Wine laws in place, cork will continue to thrive in those countries like Italy, France and Spain. DOCG rules alone in Italy say the wine must under cork closure.

(continue on reverse)

That being said, the technical advancements with technical cork and synthetics and screw caps will give producers from around the world plenty of choice. With the companies such as Oenoc Bouchage (France) leading the way on (TCO) control with their supercritical CO₂ system and making better corks with cork flour and synthetic component their sales will continue to soar.

With Italian producers like Antinori, Frescobaldi trialling synthetics and screw caps for their international market time will only tell if this closure debate will ever end.

Do we want a first growth Bordeaux keeping for 50 years or more before we drink it? I don't think so. Maybe it's different closures on different styles of wine.

The world wine market is open bottles and there is room to play around and test wines still. It will be exciting to see.

March 2010

How does the consumer make decisions on wine and spirit choice

It is the aim of a good marketer to know the consumer and be able to communicate with them effectively. Traditionally the main routes for communication included things like TV advertising, print journalism and Point of Sale. In the new "media age" there are so many channels of information that making a decision on where to spend a marketing budget is no longer as straight forward. For example, the Internet has generated a whole new genre of wine enthusiasts who are thirsty for knowledge and eager to share their interest with others.

This proliferation of information does not necessarily mean all of it is reliable and accurate. For example, Malcolm Gluck has raised the subject of conflict of interest on the part of wine journalists.

The challenge for the marketer is in selecting the most appropriate communication channels for each product. For the discerning consumer, the challenge lies in ensuring that the information they get, from whatever source, is unbiased and totally objective.

Answers: 191

Passes: 136 (71%)

Examination question (all three sections compulsory)

- a) Describe the different ways in which consumers gain access to information about wines and spirits. How can marketers gain exposure through these different channels? (50% weighting)
- b) Of the various mediums identified, discuss which are the most accurate and free from bias. (20% weighting)
- c) Explain which of these channels could be used as an aid to selling:
 - a. Domaine bottled red Burgundy
 - b. premium Vodka
 - c. branded California White Zinfandel. (30% weighting)

Some candidates handled the first section very well, giving a thorough account of both traditional and new forms of media such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter. It was important to do well in this section, as it carried the bulk of the marks at 50%. However, some candidates devoted too much space to new media at the expense (and occasionally complete exclusion) of traditional media. The best candidates struck a balance between the two.

The section examining which methods were most accurate and free from bias was often dealt with very briefly, and in some instances also naively – such as claiming that advertising was unbiased.

The following script was graded as a merit. It is well written, flows very well and is easy to follow in terms of mapping to the examination questions. It makes a lot of very valid points, particularly section a) which is handled very well.

In today's global market, there is a proliferation of ways in which a marketer can present their product(s) to the buying public. With the ever changing market place, consumers are inundated with information, not all of which is accurate or even truthful regarding the products they are buying. Historically, marketers have relied on the more traditional methods of advertising - print journalism, (magazines, newspapers and trade journals) radio (through sound bytes, focused talk-radio programming, commercials) and television (mostly through commercials but also through sport sponsorship and celebrity endorsement). A fourth method, Point of Sale, has also been utilized with success.

With the dawn of the Internet age, from the early 80's to present day, the amount of accessible information to consumers has grown exponentially. So too have the opportunities for marketers to gain exposure through these channels. It becomes increasingly easier to gather information about specific wines and spirits every day. One needs only google the name of a wine or spirit and is immediately led to a variety of resources to help educate them. Most of this information however is biased on the part of the producers, the person writing who wrote the entry. As consumers, we need to be very careful about the information we gather and our reliance on it. When one examines the demographics of wine & spirit consumers in today's markets, two distinct influential groups emerge, and marketing to one is much different than marketing to the other.

The two main driving forces ~~that~~ in wine are the Baby Boomers and the Millennials (or Generation Y). The former is more likely to rely upon the traditional avenues and resources when gaining access to information about wines and spirits. They are educated and affluent, with an estimated 30% disposable income. They are also numerous – 77 million individuals ^{29% of} whom consume wine on a daily basis. They are loyal and like to stick with what they know. This group is also more likely to read wine and spirit publications in a print form, either in magazines or newspapers. Marketers looking to gain exposure of their products to this group should focus attention on print ads that appeal to a Boomer's senses of accomplishment, stability, tradition and staying power. Products that are well established with proven reliability and good value – consistency – appeal to this demographic. While the Boomers are a significant influence on wine industry marketing and sales, they are quickly being usurped by a younger generation – the Millennials.

Millennials or Generation Y'ers are the largest and most influential consumers in the wine and spirit industry. They number in excess of 100 million and have a reported buying power of \$172 billion. These individuals, born between 1980 and 1995, are demonstrating an interest in wine much like the Boomers before them but at a much younger age. For these individuals, wine is the beverage of choice. It fits into their lifestyle and is often touted for its health benefits. This is the technologically savvy group and it is these individuals that are driving the current challenges for marketers of wine and

spirits. 97% of all Millennials own a computer and are quite comfortable with the technology. The vast majority of them also own cell phones and are avid texters and messengers. In today's society, the social media dominates over the traditional.

For these consumers, they are more likely to consult online communities, blogs and peer groups than established journals such as Wine Spectator or Wine Advocate. Although by definition biased, user generated information on wines and spirits are consulted frequently when making choices. For a marketer to gain exposure through the new social media it would require a great deal of effort on the part of the producer of the product, but it could potentially yield great returns.

In the media age, particularly with reference to the social media, producers of wines and spirits have a new and unique opportunity to communicate directly with their clientele. In the past, print ads, television and even radio, marketers relied on statistical information provided by these media regarding readership demographics etc. They were/are basically marketing to strangers, trying to woo them with their copy. In the new media age, particularly in the social media arena, marketers have the opportunity to connect one on one with their clientele. Social media is about conversations. Building relationships that establish trust and lead to brand loyalty. Most every wine and spirit producer has a web

presence. These days, either through their own generated web site, a community blog, a Facebook page or the latest fashion, a Twitter id. These may appear to some conservatives tacky and quirky, but to the Millennials, they are second nature. (~~to them~~)

An example of this new trend can be found in Montalano, Italy. Tradition abounds here and the Brunellos produced are "terious" wines. One producer, Il Palazzone decided to put their twitter id on the front label of their 2004/2005 Riservas. Laura Bray, estate manager, justifies this decision by saying that having this information on the bottle allows the consumer immediate access to the people behind what's in the bottle. Even if the consumer does not avail of the technology, they at least know that if they wanted to communicate with the winemaker, they could. This is very powerful and helps to cement consumer loyalty.

Having all of this information so readily available does not, however, guarantee that all of it is accurate or unbiased. Many wine writers, in order to survive, sell advertising to support themselves. As a result, the reviews and information they provide is inherently biased as no one likes to offend those who sign their paycheques. When gathering information regarding wine + spirits it is far better for the consumer to use as many platforms as possible to derive information. Most winery websites or spirits websites will provide the consumer with hard facts: technical specs on production, harvest dates, bottling, suggestions on when to consume etc. For the most part, this information is unbiased. Where the bias and inaccuracies come in is where the wine journalists

and critics step in. To write a review of a wine or spirit automatically involves some degree of bias. No wine or spirit will taste the same to all consumers. It is impossible to avoid bias. A third source of information which is full of bias is user generated information found on sites such as CelleTracker.com and Corlid.com. In order to avoid bias and receive the most accurate information the consumer should consult all mediums and consolidate their information in order to make their buying decision.

Deciding which medium to use as an aid for selling your product is therefore not such an easy one. If you are selling luxury products or highly branded generic ones, your choices are no longer cut and dry. A domaine bottled red Burgundy for example, is a premium product not easily accessible to the population at large on a regular basis. In order to maintain the luxury status of the product, the marketing should match. High gloss ads showing the product with highly rated scores and reviews as part of the copy would be most appropriate. Placement of these ads also is crucial and trade publications or *Wine Spectator* would be best suited. Conversely Branded California White Zinfandel would not require such ads. An ad depicting a vineyard scene with a family gathered around a picnic or BBQ seems more appropriate. This could translate easily to print or television and

would give the consumer a sense of accessibility & comfort, ~~and~~ A premium vodka would require a different strategy again. Lifestyle would be the focus of an advertising campaign for this product > luxury cars, jets, exotic locales; these types of exclusive products by association would generate the message that the vodka is enjoyed only by those with exquisite taste, making the consumer feel better about themselves & their choices. As with the Zinfandel, print or television would be acceptable mediums for this product.

Regardless of the products offered and the efforts to which marketers go to ensure that their product is chosen, the consumer ultimately holds all the power. With the proliferation of information available today's consumers are far better informed when making their purchase decisions. Be they Boomers or Millennials, the face of modern marketing is influenced by their buying & lifestyle choices. The media age is here to stay. Marketers need to embrace all aspects of it in order to ensure future success.

Many candidates simply do not write enough to address the questions in sufficient detail. As you can see, this candidate submitted five and a half pages of text. To have been able to write this amount, this candidate clearly prepared very well ahead of the exam, researching the subject well and digesting the information they had gathered. This meant they only had to re-organise this information on the page to address the various sections of the question, which they did very well.

June 2010

| | |
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| Wine education | |
| <p>There has been a boom in wine education over the last decade. The WSET and other institutions involved in wine education have enjoyed growth in candidate numbers, not just from members of the industry but also from wine consumers. Many personnel involved in wine production have studied at university for academic qualifications in subjects like viticulture and oenology. Of course, wine education is not confined to classroom courses. Books, magazines and newspapers are important sources of information and TV and radio have also played a part. The internet is now the way many people find out more about wine. Wine tourism has developed enormously, bringing the consumer into direct contact with the place where the product is made.</p> <p>The wine industry has generally been highly supportive of education initiatives that bring product knowledge to the trade and consumers. Generic bodies and brand owners have also invested in consumer education through websites and promotional activity, and many see these initiatives as a way of building interest in their product.</p> <p>In some cases, it is not clear where education ends and promotion begins.</p> | |
| <i>Answers: 180</i> | <i>Passes: 122 (68%)</i> |
| Examination question (all four sections compulsory) | |
| <p>a) Why has wine education seen such growth in recent years? (40% weighting)</p> <p>b) How has the wine industry benefitted from this trend? (40% weighting)</p> <p>c) Discuss whether there is a conflict of interest between consumer education and brand loyalty. (20% weighting)</p> | |

This was a rather disappointing pass rate for what should have been a relatively easy question. The examiner reported that there was a tendency for candidates to be too factual in their responses. For example, when asked to give reasons for something, it is not sufficient to simply list examples of that thing. Many candidates did this in section a) where they gave extensive descriptions of the various types of education available, but did not explain **WHY** wine education has seen such growth in recent years. In addition, many of the scripts submitted for this question were hard to mark accurately because candidates did not make it clear which bit of the question they were addressing. In fact, in some cases the structure was so chaotic, the examiner had to constantly make a judgement call on where to allocate marks. This is a common problem in all examination questions in all units. Candidates should indicate in the margin of their script, which section of the question they are addressing. It is perfectly feasible to do this and still write your answer in the form of a cohesive essay format.

Unit 2, Wine Production

This report is not able to give examples of questions used on the Unit 2 paper as these are live questions and not in the public domain.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that statistics continue to show a very good pass rate for this paper. Whilst the questions are certainly not easy, candidates have little to fear providing they study the Diploma Course Notes thoroughly and read around the subject. Visits to wine growing regions and winery tours are also invaluable in understanding the “theory” of this unit.

Unit 3, Wines of the World

Tasting Papers, general comments

Many candidates take advantage of the WSET examination feedback service because they do not fully understand what is required of them in the examination, or are unsure how marks are allocated. This chapter will provide similar feedback and will take each section in the tasting paper and explain how to maximise marks as well as highlighting common errors.

Firstly, some general comments about good and bad tasting notes. One way to lose marks on this paper is through poor application of the Systematic Approach to Tasting Technique (SAT). Missing out key features such as sweetness, acidity, body, alcohol etc is simply throwing marks away. Many candidates still do not appear to understand what is required in a professional, analytical tasting note. There is a general tendency amongst some to compare the three wines rather than describe them individually. This leads them to write imprecise comments such as “deeper than wine no 1”, “more intense than wines 1 and 3”, “higher acidity than wine 2”. This is not correct application of the Systematic Approach. Each wine must be assessed on its own merits with all attributes analysed according to the terminology defined in the SAT. Finally, the most common problem is that of smelling and tasting the wine and deciding what it is before writing the tasting note. This inevitably means the candidate writes the tasting note “to fit” their (often incorrect) conclusion rather than concentrating on what is in the glass and then drawing conclusions based on this information. It is vital to keep an open mind when writing tasting notes.

Finally, a small insight into how the Panel selects wine for the examination. In all tasting questions the examiners aim to select one wine which will be the “banker” (the one that candidates should be able to identify immediately), another that is fairly obvious but requires a bit more analysis to reveal its origin, and one wine that will provide a challenge and differentiate the excellent candidates from the rest. When making their selection, the Panel tastes all potential wines blind, finally whittling these down to the three that best represent the wines they depict, yet work well together and allow the exceptional candidate to shine.

Looking at the key headings on the examination paper, these are the points to bear in mind:

Appearance

With three marks available for the appearance, the candidate needs to make three valid observations. By simply correctly identifying the colour of the wine, the intensity of the colour, and any variation between the rim and core, the three marks could be assured. Other observations that could be made where appropriate include comments on signs of development, viscosity or bubbles. Vagueness or inaccuracy in terms of colour will not secure marks, such as describing a wine as “straw gold” in colour. Even worse, are the candidates who simply use the term “yellow” or “red”. There is also a tendency to use colours not defined in the Systematic Approach. This may appear dictatorial, but the SAT was established for a very good reason – to provide a means by which wines can be analysed systematically and precisely

irrespective of language. The candidate who describes a red wine as “cherry red” is less precise than one using the term “ruby” or “garnet”. This is because “cherry” is open to interpretation. Is the candidate referring to red cherries or black cherries, or even those cherries that are golden with a pink blush? The examiner has no way of knowing. In addition, colour is an area where many candidates appear to get muddled. A large number use the terms ruby and garnet indiscriminately – there is a very clear distinction between the two. Garnet heads more towards the brown end of the red spectrum rather than the blue/purple side, which applies more to ruby. For red wines, look at the rim to see if it is still basically pink-red (i.e. ruby) or is showing some orange/brown (i.e. garnet). Almost all wines are one of these two. Save ‘purple’ for wines that still display a distinct youthful blue colour at the rim, and save ‘tawny’ for wines that are distinctly brown in colour. For rosé wines the colours are pink (bluish pink) - salmon (pinkish orange) – orange (brownish pink) – onion Skin (brownish-orange). The colour of white wines is most easily assessed at the core (where the wine is deepest). Nearly all white wines fade to a water-white rim, where the colour is imperceptible.

Nose

Candidates often fail to say enough in this section. With seven marks at stake, one is allocated for commenting on development, one for intensity and five for aroma characteristics. Candidates who only mention one or two aroma characteristics are therefore reducing their chances of gaining high marks. It is helpful to cluster the aromas into ‘primary’ (deriving from the grape, but probably including some fruity fermentation esters); ‘secondary’ (deriving from the production, including malolactic by-products, lees extracts, and oak extracts), and ‘tertiary’ (deriving from ageing processes, whether reductive or oxidative). These in turn help you determine the development of the wine.

‘Youthful’ indicates the wine is dominated by primary and, for some wines, secondary aromas (mainly fruit and oak). It is common for secondary aromas, when present, to stand apart from the fruit at this stage.

‘Fully Developed’ indicates that the dominant aromas are tertiary. In contrast to youthful wines, the secondary aromas are usually fully integrated at this stage.

Many wines pass from ‘Youthful’ to ‘Past their best’ without ever being ‘developing’ or ‘fully developed’. Only use **‘Developing’** if the wine is changing in ways that will lead to it becoming more interesting at some point in the future, otherwise there is a danger that it becomes a default for almost all wines.

It is good discipline to think in terms of ‘clusters’ of aromas: primary fruit (type of fruit, under-ripe or over-ripe, fresh or jammy), lees/autolysis, malolactic, oak, reductive tertiary characteristics, oxidation. A wine is not fully described unless at least some descriptor from each of the main clusters present in the wine has been described. For a wine to be described as complex it must have the presence of several aroma clusters.

Palate

Many candidates are guilty of loose, unquantified or vague application of the Systematic Approach to Tasting Technique (SAT) when assessing the palate.

Examples found on some scripts were “marked acidity” (this could imply medium or high and is not precise enough) or “tannic” (this simply implies that tannin is present, candidates need to specify whether it is high, low, medium, soft, harsh etc). Such comments do not specifically tell the examiner what he/she needs to know about the wine, and marks cannot be allocated. Examples of other terms to use with caution are “nice”, “good”, “some”, “fairly”, “reasonable”. In isolation, they convey nothing to the examiner, for example “nice tannins”, “good acidity”, “nice finish” – all far too vague to merit any marks. Many candidates use the term “balance” incorrectly. Consider the following comment “very balanced between alcohol, acidity and fruit/oak”. This tells the examiner nothing unless each of these attributes is defined in turn. They could all be “in balance” because they are all high or low or medium. On the other hand, the acidity could be high but the fruit intensity only medium yet still be “in balance”. This is precisely why such comments are not appropriate unless quantified using the parameters defined in the Systematic Approach.

Many candidates forget that the Systematic Approach is a five point scale (low / medium (-) / medium / medium (+) / high), rather than a three point scale (low / medium / high). It is useful to start with the three point scale for your initial assessment and then refine this within the five point scale.

Assessing tannin is a two stage process which includes both the level and nature of the tannin. Using the five point scale, start with the three main groups (low-medium-high) and then refine this within the medium category if necessary to arrive at a level which best describes the wine. As an example consider two wines from Chateaunuef-du-Pape, one Grenache dominated, the other having a large percentage of Syrah in the blend. Both may be categorised as having medium tannin on a three point scale. However, the Grenache based wine would probably be more accurately graduated as medium or possibly medium (-) whilst the Syrah dominant wine would have higher levels of tannin, probably medium (+), but the difference would not be enough for it to be graduated as high. It is this level of accuracy that ensures high marks.

When describing the tannin's texture you should use the tannin descriptors in the Systematic Approach. Assessing the texture in addition to the level shows how a wine with a low level of unripe tannin can seem very astringent, whilst a wine with high levels of ripe tannin can seem soft and velvety.

Some candidates fail to apply the Systematic Approach in the correct way when referring to alcohol. In the Diploma examination we do not expect candidates to state what the level of alcohol is in terms of abv %. Instead, you should aim to assess the perceived **level** of alcohol using the terms defined in the Systematic Approach – low, medium, high etc.

Assessing body accurately can be difficult for many candidates. Alcohol, sugar and extract can all contribute to body, whereas acid seems to lighten body. Ripe tannins can add to body but hard tannins can make a wine seem thinner. Wines that are high in sugar but low in alcohol are hard to assess. Looking at viscosity can help in this instance. Wines that are high in acid and tannin (such as Barolo) can also seem hard and thin, but looking at the weight, concentration and viscosity will help to accurately assess them as full-bodied.

Candidates also lose marks by stating under the palate that “fruit is the same as the nose”. This is not sufficient to gain any marks. Candidates must state what the flavour characteristics are, as in some case they do **not** mirror those on the nose exactly, and at this level candidates should be able to distinguish between these subtle differences. For example, woodiness and spiciness tend to increase on the palate whilst floral notes tend to be less noticeable than on the nose.

Other common reasons for low marks are notes which are contradictory, “hedging their bets”, or applying the scatter gun approach in the hope of a few correct observations in amongst the incorrect ones. Consider the following extract from a script:

“Ripe plum, prune and dark cherry, hints of pepper and vegetal notes, jammy and boiled sweets, hint of vanilla. A developing wine, simple.”

This candidate is describing two very different styles of wine in this one note, one complex and aged and the other basic, simple and youthful. This is not a convincing note.

Assessment of quality

Many candidates give insufficient information when assessing the quality of the wine or simply repeat the observations made under the nose and palate without explaining how they relate to quality. The assessment of quality should seek to place the wine in an appropriate quality category, and, **most importantly**, explain why it belongs in that category. It is not sufficient to simply state what the wine is. Ask yourself how you would describe it to a customer, is it a large volume wine that is correctly made but lacking in complexity? Is it a top quality, premium wine, and if so, what leads you to this conclusion? The components that contribute towards quality are intensity, structure, balance, complexity, typicity and length.

Readiness for drinking/ageing potential

The key points to consider here are:

- Is the wine ready to drink?
- If it is, how long will it continue to be ready to drink before beginning to decline?
- If it is not ready to drink, how much time does it still need?
- If it is ready to drink, will it evolve any further in bottle?
- If it will evolve, how long will it be before it reaches its peak and starts to decline?

Country and region of origin

In most instances, one mark is allocated for correctly identifying the country and two for the region. This is to allow those candidates with superior skills to demonstrate these by identifying the origin of the wine precisely. However, the increased “homogenisation” of some wines makes it increasingly difficult to identify regional typicity in all cases and sometimes it is genuinely felt that some wines could be from a number of countries. In these cases, we sometimes reverse the emphasis of the marks, giving two marks for country and only one for region or we may instruct markers that marks may be allocated for more than one country or region. This is particularly true in the case of some New World wines and a case in point was a

California Chardonnay in the June 2007 examination where marks were also awarded for identifying this as Australian. However, some candidates really do push this to the limit. It is never a good idea to list more than one alternative in your answer, particularly where these cover multiple styles of wine or simply appear opportunistic such as the following candidate:

“This wine is from Italy, although it could also be from California or Australia.”

Finally, a comment regarding tasting order. Do not assume the order the wines are presented is the best order in which to taste them. In any tasting examination, whether Unit 3, 4, 5 or 6, the first step should always be a quick nose of all three samples to determine in which order they should be sampled. This usually results in assessing the least intense wine first and working up to the most intense or complex. This ensures that your palate does not get blasted with a heavily oaked Chardonnay which then makes it impossible for you to detect the delicate neutral, yeasty aromas of a simple Muscadet for example.

Tasting Paper 1

Question 1: Wines from a single grape variety (not given)

It is clear that candidates find the format of the questions in Paper 1 more challenging than those in Paper 2. The easiest way to lose marks in this paper is by failing to identify the grape variety. A number of candidates insist on giving a different variety for each wine despite being told in advance that one variety applies to all three wines. Another classic mistake is assuming the identity of the grape variety on the basis of the first wine tasted. It is easy to become distracted and attempt to make the remaining descriptions fit the variety chosen rather than use the information in the tasting note to arrive at the correct variety. A number of candidates give two varieties rather than one. This is “hedging your bets” and earns no marks at all even if one of the varieties is correct. If asked to give one variety, that is what you must do. In addition, the candidate must give evidence of the logic behind their decision. It is not sufficient to simply recognise what the grape variety is, you must be able to demonstrate how you arrived at this conclusion. This section carries five marks, and you should therefore aim to give at least five valid reasons for your choice.

| | |
|--|------------------|
| January 2010: White wines from Viognier | |
| Answers: 80 | Passes: 41 (51%) |

This was a poor result, particularly as there was a classic Condrieu in the line up, along with two further wines of differing quality and ripeness levels (a Vin de Pays and a California Viognier).

A number of candidates identified the variety as Sauvignon Blanc or Riesling. This was illogical given the “weight” of these wines. Pinot Grigio was a more convincing mistake to make and was a popular choice of variety for many.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| June 2010: Red wines from Cabernet Sauvignon | |
| <i>Answers: 364</i> | <i>Passes: 257 (71%)</i> |

Clearly candidates found it easier to identify this variety than the Viognier in the January exam.

For this question, the three wines were a Chilean Cabernet, a classic Bordeaux (Chateau Batailley 2005) and an Australian Cabernet from Coonawarra – three very different, but distinctive styles of wine from this variety.

The Chateau Batailley should have been the benchmark here with the clear varietal character on the other two wines confirming Cabernet Sauvignon as the variety. However, there was evidence to suggest that a large number of candidates are extremely poor at recognising quality and ageability in classic wines. This is also evident when we use Vintage Champagne in the Unit 5 tasting papers. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah were the most popular choice, along with less convincing options such as Grenache, or the really obscure such as Aglianico. In addition, a number of candidates left this section of the paper completely blank and far too many who did identify a variety were too brief in their reasoning for a section worth five marks. This was certainly the case with the following candidate who correctly identified the variety but could not give enough convincing reasons for more than a couple of marks:

Reasons for choice: (5 marks)

Strong blackcurrant aspects and tannins suggested it was Cab, also spicy aspect and the body.

Compare this to the following candidate who achieved all ten marks in this section:

Reasons for choice: (5 marks)

Deep colour, black fruit character and firm tannin structure. Affinity with oak, quite high acidity, intensity of fruit and complexity coming with development indicates a variety with ability for significant ageing. Potential to produce wines of very good quality points to a noble variety. Cabernet is also a variety grown in many countries and the different styles suggest many different climates.

Question 2: Wines with a common theme

Despite being given information in the question regarding the common theme, a number of candidates ignore this and lose marks as a result. The importance of reading the question cannot be stressed enough. There is often information in the stem that is there to help and guide you in your assessment of the wine – ignoring this is careless and simply throws marks away unnecessarily.

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| January 2010: Red wines with a common link in respect of origin | |
| <i>Answers: 80</i> | <i>Passes: 42 (53%)</i> |

The aim here was to deduce that all three wines were from the Veneto. The wines were three different quality levels and styles of Valpolicella – a £10 fairly simple wine, and good quality Superiore Ripasso and an Amarone showing some age. Only four candidates identified the region as the Veneto. Twice as many failed to read the question carefully enough and gave a country instead of a region. The worst culprit here was the candidate who stated that all three wines were from France. This could have covered a multitude of different styles of wine and showed no skill at all. In general, descriptions of the cheaper wine were most accurate and convincing, with candidates confidently picking up the simple primary fruit character. In contrast, the majority failed to recognise the quality of the Amarone which should have been the wine most likely to have led them to the correct region.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| June 2010: White wines with a common link in respect of origin | |
| <i>Answers: 364</i> | <i>Passes: 217 (60%)</i> |

As with the January exam, candidates were required to identify the region of production, not just the country - in this instance, Marlborough in New Zealand. However, by far the most popular choice was the Loire Valley. These candidates would have made this assumption on the basis of the first wine alone (Sauvignon Blanc), assuming it to be a Sancerre or Pouilly Fume. This was an understandable error to make in the case of this single wine, (although the pyrazine character was far too strong for this to realistically be a valid option), but was totally illogical given the style of the remaining two wines.

Candidates who took this route, found themselves adapting their note for the Pinot Gris to fit a Loire Chenin Blanc and “sitting on the fence” with the Chardonnay. Other options given were South Africa or Chile – neither of them a “region” as specified in the question. Most candidates who gave the Loire as the region still managed to pick up some of the five marks available for the reasoning if their arguments were logical.

The following candidate was one of the few who identified the region. Their reasoning for this was particularly well argued:

“The mix of the three grape varieties gives a strong clue and rules out many regions of the world. In addition, the structure of the wines, particularly acidity, discounts many warm climate regions. The varietal character of the first wine is very distinctive of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. Alsace style Pinot Gris (the second wine) is not found in many regions and the other two wines rule out Alsace as an option in any event. Barrel fermented and matured Chardonnay indicates a premium quality wine-making region and the level of ripeness and purity of fruit adds extra weight to the possibility that Marlborough is the region as Pinot Gris is also grown here”.

Tasting Paper 2

Question 3: Partly-Specified Wines

As the focus of this question is to test the candidates’ ability to differentiate between the quality levels of the three wines, it is vital that the candidate fully understands how to demonstrate this skill. Unfortunately many are confused or not precise enough when it comes to the quality assessment. Comments such as “average quality” will not gain marks unless some reference is made to the quality level the wine is pitched at. For example, is it “average” for a Grand Cru or for an entry level £3.99 wine? This section of the paper carries a large number of marks and comments such as “good” or “AC level” are simply not detailed enough. What the examiners are looking for here is a statement of the quality of the wine that is supported by well argued reasoning and analysis that demonstrates an understanding of the elements of a wine that contribute to its quality. The key to success with this question is being able to recognise these characteristics. Once the premium wine has been identified, the other two should fall into place.

The format of this question allows us to select wines, which, in a blind tasting, could be considered too much of a challenge. In some cases, we might consider a grape variety that may be less familiar to some candidates. Removing the pressure of needing to “identify” the wine, means that candidates can concentrate on writing accurate tasting notes describing the wine and focus on relating the evidence they extract in this process to an evaluation of the possible quality level. In reality, for many, quality assessment is a significant area of weakness so this paper is not as easy as it appears.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| January 2010: White Burgundy | |
| Answers: 80 | Passes: 45 (56%) |

This was not an impressive set of scripts, with only one candidate out of 80 achieving distinction grade. This was a trio of white Burgundies from Louis Jadot’s portfolio.

They were all from the same 2007 vintage to provide some consistency and prevent other aspects such as the effect of vintage variation clouding the issue of quality. The three wines were a generic £10 Bourgogne Chardonnay, a £30 Chassagne-Montrachet and a £50 Chassagne-Montrachet Premier Cru.

As is so often seen in Diploma tasting exams, candidates were very poor at recognising the quality of the £50 wine. In the worst instances, this was deemed to be the cheapest of the three wines.

Many candidates also mis-use the term “commercial”, particularly in the assessment of quality. This is neither a quality level nor a market segment. Something that is described as “commercial” is simply a wine that has a market. Both Mateus Rosé and Château le Pin could claim to be “commercial” – they both sell very well, yet are worlds apart in terms of style, target market and quality.

The following extracts relate to the concluding sections of the paper for wines 7 and 8, the £50 Premier Cru and the £10 generic wine. The first response is from a candidate who has completely reversed the quality of these wines and the second is from a candidate submitting an accurate paper.

POOR RESPONSE:

Chassagne-Montrachet Premier Cru Monopole Clos de la Chapelle - £50

Detailed assessment of quality:

Good but not really enough complexity to be more than that. Nice fresh quality, very drinkable.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing:

Ready to drink. Not a wine meant for ageing – will not improve.

Bourgogne Chardonnay - £10

Detailed assessment of quality:

More complex than #7 on nose. Good complexity – minerality and fruit both present. Concentrated stone fruits and citrus. Balanced with acidity and citrus flavours. All of this points to very good quality wine.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing:

Ready to drink, but will probably improve for 3-5 years.

Apart from the fact that this candidate has completely missed the quality on wine 7 and vastly overestimated the quality on wine 8, the comments made in support of the quality of wine 8 are **not** an assessment of quality, but simply unfounded statements, and repetition of comments made elsewhere in the tasting note (i.e. reference to minerality and citrus fruit).

VERY GOOD RESPONSE:

Chassagne-Montrachet Premier Cru Monopole Clos de la Chapelle - £50

Detailed assessment of quality:

Very good to outstanding quality premium wine. Vibrant with layered flavours giving complexity. Concentration of flavour with a creamy smooth texture. Excellent balance of fruit, acid and alcohol with none dominating. Well integrated oak which complements rather than overwhelms and a long length.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing:

Drinking now, will improve over 3 to 5 years and hold for another 7 to 10.

Bourgogne Chardonnay - £10

Detailed assessment of quality:

Acceptable to good quality. Some complexity of flavour but oak is a little clumsy and acid a little dominant. Overall a little green, raw and disjointed. Moderate intensity that drops away giving a medium length finish.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing:

Drinking now, at peak. Will hold for 1-2 years but not improve.

Being critical, this candidate should really have tied their assessment of quality down to one level rather than spanning two, but their other comments were a good analysis of the factors that led them to their assessment.

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| June 2010: Chianti | |
| Answers: 364 | Passes: 222 (61%) |

There was a similar story here to the January paper – candidates tended to overestimate the quality of the cheap, generic wine. A large number of candidates consistently confuse very ripe jammy fruit with quality – basing their judgements on power of fruit rather than subtlety, complexity or elegance.

The following candidate achieved high marks for accurate tasting notes that correctly highlighted the differences between these wines both in terms of style and quality level.

WINE No. 7 Tenuta Fontodi 'Vigna del Sorbo' Chianti Classico Riserva 2006

Appearance: (3 marks)

*Intensity: Medium (+)
Colour: Ruby with a narrow pink rim
Other observations : Very obvious legs*

Nose: (7 marks)

*Intensity: Medium
Development: Developing
Aroma Characteristics: Blackberry, strawberry, raspberry, cherry, subtle oak - vanilla, pencil shavings, dark chocolate, perfumed, savoury, meaty, earth.*

Palate: (10 marks)

*Sweetness: Dry
Acidity: Medium (+)
Tannin: Medium (+), firm and fine-grained
Alcohol: Medium
Body: Medium (+)
Flavour intensity: Medium (+)*

Flavour characteristics: *Blackcurrant, strawberry, cherry, plum, vanilla, dark chocolate, meaty.*

Other observations: *Concentrated and powerful but fleshy and supple*

Length: *Long*

Assessment of quality: (7 marks)

Very good quality premium wine. Rich and powerful but still refined and elegant. There is plenty of acidity and tannin to balance the vibrant, ripe fruit which is starting to develop tertiary flavours and consequent complexity while retaining freshness. The oak is subtle and well-integrated and the length is long. At present the tannin is rather dominant although there is sufficient fruit to balance this over time.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks)

Entering drinking window now but will improve for 3 to 5 years and hold for 10+.

Estimated off-premise retail price per bottle including all taxes : (2 marks)

£28

WINE No. 8 Sardelli Chianti 2008

Appearance: (3 marks)

Intensity: *Medium*

Colour: *Ruby with a pale pink rim*

Other observations : *Moderate legs*

Nose: (7 marks)

Intensity: *Medium (-)*

Development: *Youthful*

Aroma Characteristics: *Simple, juicy, primary fruit, blackcurrant, plum, redcurrant, raspberry, confected, bubblegum, slightly stinky and a hint of thyme.*

Palate: (10 marks)

Sweetness: *Dry*

Acidity: *Medium*

Tannin: *Medium (-), rounded*

Alcohol: *Medium*

Body: *Medium (-)*

Flavour intensity: *Medium (-)*

Flavour characteristics: *Blackberry, plum, redcurrant, slightly metallic edge.*

Other observations: *Palate seems angular, disjointed and a little thin.*

Length: *Medium (-) with a bitter finish.*

Assessment of quality: (7 marks)

Acceptable aimed at the lower end of the market. It is competently made with simple primary fruit and no obvious use of oak. The bubblegum note indicates a possible use of carbonic maceration. The structural components are in balance but at a fairly low level and the finish is not very long and a little bitter.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks)

Ready to drink now. Will not improve but will hold for 1 to 2 years.

Estimated off-premise retail price per bottle including all taxes : (2 marks)
£4.99

WINE No. 9 Villa Cerna Chianti Classico 2007

Appearance: (3 marks)

Intensity: Medium (+)
Colour: Ruby with a narrow pink rim.
Other observations : Obvious legs

Nose: (7 marks)

Intensity: Medium
Development: Developing
Aroma Characteristics: Ripe and a little jammy, damson, raspberry, strawberry, black cherry, vanilla, smoke, coffee, earth, gamey, herbal, violets.

Palate: (10 marks)

Sweetness: Dry
Acidity: Medium
Tannin: Medium (+), ripe and fine-grained
Alcohol: Medium (+), warming
Body: Medium
Flavour intensity: Medium (+)
Flavour characteristics: Blackberry, raspberry, black cherry, vanilla, coffee, savoury, gamey.
Length: Medium (+) but with warm alcohol and a slightly bitter finish.

Assessment of quality: (7 marks)

Good quality, mid-market wine. It shows elegance and some complexity from oak and tertiary flavour characters. The tannins are ripe and well-integrated and support the fruit but the overall balance is spoiled by the warmth of the alcohol. There is not sufficient concentration and intensity for a higher quality rating.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks)

Drinks well now but will improve for 1 to 2 years and hold for a further 3 to 5 years.

Estimated off-premise retail price per bottle including all taxes : (2 marks)
£15

This candidate has written a check list of all the headings in the Systematic Approach down the side of their paper to make sure they comment on every component of the wine. Many candidates do this, and it is a good idea as it is easy to forget to mention something in the heat of the moment.

Question 4: Unspecified Wines

It is a common misconception amongst candidates that if they identify the wines correctly, they will pass this paper. This is simply not the case. If you total up the marks available for the conclusion compared to marks awarded for the sections on the appearance, nose and palate of each wine, you will see that the tasting note itself generates the bulk of the marks, (20 marks for the description, 8 marks for the assessment of quality and state of maturity and only 5 marks for identifying the wine and grape variety). This means it is quite feasible for someone to write accurate tasting notes, yet not identify the wines and still pass (sometimes even with a high grade), whilst someone else can identify all three wines yet fail because their tasting notes are inaccurate and short. It is not enough to simply recognise what the wines are (anyone can do this if they taste a wine often enough). The candidate needs to be able to strip the wine down to its component parts, describe these accurately and make judgements based on this information. This is what professional tasting is all about. Without an extensive and accurate tasting note, the examiner has no way of knowing whether the correct identification was anything more than a lucky guess or the result of tasting something familiar – no tasting skills have actually been demonstrated. The answer lies in the accuracy of the tasting notes themselves and in the assessment of quality.

Candidates often fall prey to the common error of deciding what the wine is having smelt or tasted it, and then write a tasting note to match their conclusion, which in some instances may be incorrect. This is easy to do under examination conditions and is very tempting when you think you know what the wine is. However, it is always a bad move as the tasting note is invariably less accurate because the candidate tends to describe how they “expect” the wine to taste rather than the actual taste. It is vital to keep an open mind until the tasting note has been completed and re-read, and only then reach a conclusion.

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| January 2010: Red wines – Navarra Rosado 2008, Spice Route Pinotage 2007, Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon 2004 | |
| <i>Answers: 80</i> | <i>Passes: 55 (69%)</i> |

Candidates seemed to struggle with identifying these wines, despite there being two very distinctive wines in the line-up. There was no single reason for the low marks achieved by many candidates. These were down to inaccurate descriptions, illogical conclusions, poor assessment of quality or bad judgements on the “readiness for drinking”.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| June 2010: White wines – German Spätlese 2004, Hunter Valley Semillon 2002, Rias Baixas 2008 | |
| <i>Answers: 364</i> | <i>Passes: 169 (46%)</i> |

This was a very low pass rate. Candidates clearly struggled to identify these wines, but this was not the reason for the low pass rate, as it is perfectly feasible to pass this paper without identifying the wines.

The real problem lay in the accuracy of the tasting notes themselves, particularly for the Hunter Valley Semillon. I write frequently in this report, and in candidate feedback reports, that it is vital not to make any decision about the identity of the until after the tasting note has been written. This is because it is easy to “twist” the description to fit an incorrect conclusion, and this leads candidates to convince themselves they detect aromas and flavours that are not there, and also to misjudge the structural components of the wine. This was certainly the case with the Semillon. The structure of this wine is quite unusual and very distinctive – high acidity, lowish alcohol (medium -), only medium body but very pronounced aromas and flavours. This makes it quite light in texture but very intense. To add to the confusion, this was clearly showing quite a lot of age which a vast number of candidates completely missed. Most candidates, apart from those who had tasted this wine before and were therefore familiar with the style, were at a loss as to what it could have been. Suggestions were many and varied – Vinho Verde, Chablis, White Bordeaux, White Burgundy, Muscadet, Italian Pinot Grigio, German Riesling. It is clear from the wide diversity of options here that it was not simply of case of describing the wine correctly but reaching an incorrect conclusion on the basis of the note. These tasting notes would have been extremely different in just about every aspect, and show that these candidates allowed their tasting skills to be clouded by their conviction that the wine must have a particular structure to fit their assumption regarding provenance.

Theory Paper, general comments

There is definitely a technique to answering questions in the Unit 3 theory paper and a few simple, common sense rules can help to maximise marks.

1. With a requirement to answer five questions in total in three hours, some candidates clearly do not pace themselves appropriately, producing three answers of reasonable length, then two that are skimpy or rushed (or in some cases only one more). More practice at writing essays precisely, and within the time allowed is essential examination practice. Candidates should allow themselves a maximum of 30 minutes to answer each question. This will leave them half an hour to spare. The best way to use this time is to read through the examination paper and decide which questions to attempt, spend around five minutes on an essay plan for each question, and read through responses before submitting them for marking.
2. There is often very little evidence of candidates planning their responses. It is always a good idea to make a quick essay plan before starting to write. This ensures that the key points are covered in a logical way. Those who do not follow this advice often fail to address specifically the key words in the question. The five minutes spent jotting down key facts is never time wasted. This is often the best way of determining which questions are the best ones to attempt. A question that seems easy initially may be one that is difficult to come up with hard facts for. An essay plan is the best way to determine if this is the case.
3. When drafting questions for the Diploma examination, the Examination Panel takes great pains to ensure that the wording they choose leads candidates to the answer they require. This means that questions contain vital, key words that form the basis of the question and therefore, by default, the answer. It is a really good idea to underline these key words and use them as the basis for the essay plan. This ensures that all aspects of the question are covered and the writer does not stray "off topic".
4. Some candidates do not appear to read the question carefully enough. This is often a problem with "multi part" questions where the candidate may be asked to write about four or five topics from a list of six for example. Candidates who mistakenly answer all six sections are creating unnecessary work for themselves as the examiner will only mark the number of sections requested in the question and ignore any surplus.
5. A number of candidates simply write generally "around" the question, without actually answering it as set. Remember, questions are set with a purpose – none of them are phrased "write all you know about....." Examiners work from a marking key or marks schedule that details the scope and detail required in an answer. They will not allocate marks for information that is not relevant to the question as set.

January 2010

Group A: Compulsory Question

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| <i>Discuss the various options for blending in the Bordeaux region (50% weighting). For each option, explain why each of these might be used (50% weighting).</i> | |
| <i>Answers: 126</i> | <i>Passes: 43 (34%)</i> |

This was a disastrously low pass rate for what should have been an easy question for the majority of candidates. This was almost universally because candidates took far too narrow an approach and answered this question as if it had read “Discuss the various grape varieties used for blending in the Bordeaux region”. Irrespective of how well or how extensively they discussed these varieties, they would still have only addressed part of the question. To make matters worse, in some instances candidates limited their response even further to red varieties in isolation, with no mention of white wines.

To answer this well, candidates needed to consider options from both the point of view of the vineyard and the winery. This meant writing about different grape varieties, different parcels of grapes from different vineyards, communes/ areas, different producers/growers, for sweet wines – picking of individual botrytised grapes, different soil types. In the winery they should have considered the use of different pressings, use of free run juice and first pressing, different vinification techniques, (different parcels and grape varieties vinified separately), for red wines – maceration of fruit, fruit selection prior to fermentation, addition of stalks, chaptalisation, reverse osmosis, choice of fermentation vessel, fermentation temperature and for white wines – selection of fruit (particularly for sweet wines), fermentation in oak or stainless steel, for all wines different oak treatments such as fermentation or ageing in oak, (age, provenance, toast of oak, length of time spent in oak), blending of different vintages (extremely important in Bordeaux), particularly for generic blends and white wine blends in Entre-Deux-Mers.

Having identified all these options, the second part of the question should have considered the reasons for their use.

Very few candidates indeed took this broad approach and this is reflected in the poor pass rate.

The following script is a classic example of a candidate who only wrote about varieties. They did include white varieties, but incorrectly identified these as “*Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscat*”. This candidate was one of the many who failed this question despite writing a reasonable amount.

Within the Bordeaux region there are numerous varieties allowed to be used though generally there will be five red varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Malbec) and three white varieties (Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscat) that are normally available. If we start with Cabernet Sauvignon this is a black skinned variety that adds black currant and cassis flavours to a blend, it also adds alcohol, tannins and some acidity. Adding this variety to any blend will assist a wine to age slowly and while not always pleasing to the palate early in its life it will allow the wine to develop further pleasing complex flavours and aromas over a long period of time. Cabernet Franc is also high in tannins and alcohol. It also will add black fruit flavours such as black plums and black cherries to any blend. It sometimes is easier to ripen than Cabernet Sauvignon so it can be useful if Cabernet Sauvignon has a 'lean' year thanks to cooler weather conditions during the ripening period. Merlot has softer more rounded tannins and less acidic qualities than the two Cabernet varieties. It is an early ripening variety and adds juicy fruit flavours of plums to the blend. It is popular with early drinking varieties because of these reasons. Malbec is not used often in Bordeaux blends but it does add spicy, meaty, gamey flavours when used which develop with ageing in oak cask and bottle. Petit Verdot adds fresh acidity and spice to any blend and would be used to assist the wine to soften earlier than it otherwise would if not used in a red wine Bordeaux

P T O

blend. While generally the wines from the Medoc or left bank would use more Cabernet Sauvignon than merlot in their blends this is not always the case. Red wines from the right bank would generally use more merlot in an effort to produce a softer earlier drinking style though their varieties can also age for a considerable length of time thanks to addition of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc.

For white blends, which the best sweet wine examples are made in Sauterne in Graves, the majority of the blend would be Semillon. The reason for this is this variety is most susceptible to noble rot which allow concentration of flavours by removing the water from the grape. This intensifies the fruity esters and flavours. Added to semillon would be Sauvignon Blanc which is less likely to be susceptible to noble rot but adds a freshness of fruit flavours and high acidity which balances the white blend so it is not overbearing and flabby.

Added to these is a small amount of muscat which brings grapey fresh fruit flavours to the blend. Traditionally a good sauterne will be 60-70% semillon, 20-30% Sauvignon blanc and ^{upto} 10% muscat. As a result of blending of the available varieties in Bordeaux there is a degree of minimisation of the adverse affects of poor vintages. This blending allows complex flavours, aromas and textures to further develop with time allowing wines to have the capacity to age better and further than would otherwise be possible without blending varieties.

Group B: 4 questions to be answered from a choice of 6

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| <i>Account for the success of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc (25% weighting). Evaluate the main threats to its continued success and discuss whether the region has a guaranteed future with premium Sauvignon Blanc (75% weighting).</i> | |
| <i>Answers: 104</i> | <i>Passes: 76 (73%)</i> |

Every Unit 3 theory paper contains one question that must be answered in an essay format. These questions are usually more topical and discursive in nature and are therefore more suited to this form of response. Although fewer candidates tend to opt for these questions, those that do, invariably do very well. This was no exception, not only generating a very solid pass rate, but with as many merit grades as pass, a good smattering of distinctions and not too many fail (unclassified) scripts, inevitably from candidates who answered this in the hope of “bluffing” their way to a pass grade. Those who scored low marks, did so because they failed to cover the second part of the question in sufficient detail, which carried 75% of the marks.

The following candidate achieved a distinction grade. Their submission is well written, they have not spent too long accounting for the success of Sauvignon Blanc and have demonstrated sound commercial awareness through their discussion of this topic.

①

The late 70's 80's saw the emergence of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc on to the market, with one Premium Brand coming to the fore. The Creation of Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc by Cape Mentelle, which at the time ~~the~~ grapes were bought in and made in another winery, but their ability to market this wine, and create it to near cult status, by its limited release in the UK market, set the ball rolling for New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc.

The UK is one of ~~the~~ its major export markets and in creating this a whole range of Sauvignon blancs from Marlborough came on the market. It has an appeal to the consumer, from the person in the supermarket, to the independent retailer, to the person who buys from their wine club.

They created a style, a product that was recognisable, with good packaging, good descriptive back labels and the consumer knew that there was a consistency and that their favorite style would taste the same each time and be less prone to vintages compared to the Sauvignons of Bordeaux or a family firmé or a Sancerre. The style was fresh, crispy with good acidity, gooseberry flavors and didn't necessarily need to be drunk with food. It became the alternative to Chardonnay.

But like all products, it is prone to threats and needs continuous work to see the success that has been created maintained.

In the last vintage there was an over production of Sauvignon blanc, which in the long term is not good

Question 2 (2)

for the market, in the short term, it will create possibly a glut of special offers on the market.

When you take a look at an average Supermarket shelf The New Zealand Sauvignans on sale will be around 6.99 to 7.99 and they may also be on promotion.

There are at present too many similar styles of Sauvignans on sale, from Montana, Bishop's Leap fault line, to Villa Maria, each is similar with no apparent difference, which leaves the consumer in this price bracket little room to change or discover something new or exciting. Its price point, the value of the New Zealand Dollar to the Pound, the distance from its main export markets as green issues come more to the fore along with the cost of transportation increasing.

And its competition from France and Spain and its competition from other grape varieties such as Pinot Grigio, Riesling and Viognier.

Touraine in France is creating some really nice well balanced Sauvignon blancs as good as Pouilly Fume and Sancerre but at entry level New Zealand prices from 6.99 upwards - "Domaine Octavie Sauvignon" from Touraine is an example, crisp balanced with good citrus and green flavours great with food as it has depth but quite nice on its own £7.49. But in value terms it is more value for money than a Villa Maria Sauvignon Blanc, as more people travel and taste the French Sauvignon. And Bordeaux are starting to make Sauvignon varieties but their blends with Semillon can also be spot on like Belair Perpiche Blanc. Spain is also creating interesting whites like Esperanza, and Marques de

(3)

Risat Sauvignon Blanc both priced similar to New Zealand wines both crisp good acidity, plenty of fruit and well made.

As the flooded the market people tire of the taste and may redevel some fabulous Unoaked Chardonnays Light Pinot Blancs and Pinot Gris's - which are light with nice floral notes balanced acidity and can also be drunk with or without food.

Chile is another market that is making great headway and create's some stunning Sauvignon blanc like 'Cepiro' Casablanca Sauvignon blanc + Energetic Sauvignon Blanc, with clean crisp acidity green citrus fruits well balanced and drinking well.

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc as a fine market share at its premium end. At present it is there no one can question its ability to produce a quality Sauvignon Blanc Cloudy Bay, ^{Mud House, Swan reserve} ~~Marlborough~~ Te Fera Sauvignon Blanc + Graggy range to name some have set the standard high and on the whole they are well worth there price point from £12.95 to £19.99 plus.

Cloudy Bay is released each year in November in limited availability and is reasonably price in relation to say Chateau Tracer family fume. But its lack of availability all year may be its down fall, but it may also play to the advantage of the Graggy range and Mud House Swan reserve as these are more reasonable priced at £13.99 approx, and an average family fume or Sancerre is £11.99 and may not always be consistent.

If Premium labels can place them selves in the Consumers mind like Montana and Villa Maria, they will survive

(4)

as the down turn in the Economy and Resturants are more inclined to charged corkage, it is in the off trade's ability to educate the consumer to trade up a few pounds for a wine that is better with only small corkage.

New Zealand wine growers are well placed to promote their wines on the world stage, they know their markets and as a young wine developing market, it has the ability to change to develop better styles with more character to appeal to the consumer, to create an image to learn from the Chardy bag concept and to take it from there, they don't have the same restrictive rules and practices that France have, they have fantastic winery and a good infrastrucure compared to some developing wineries in Spain, so yes the Premium Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough can survive and as a future - as any wine person will tell you there are no guarantees but they are well placed to succeed, build and grow and to ~~the~~ develop their market share for the future

Discuss the FIVE major black grape varieties currently used for AC wines in Languedoc, such as Minervois and Coteaux du Languedoc.

Answers: 38

Passes: 16 (41%)

This was not a very popular question, answered by only 30% of candidates, and was answered badly by most of those who attempted it, with only nine candidates achieving a pass grade, four on merit and three on distinction. The majority of candidates (46% of those who answered this question) scored fewer than 45%, which is extremely poor.

The question gave Minervois and Coteaux de Languedoc as example wines specifically to guide candidates to the correct varieties, in case there was any doubt as to what the five major black varieties might be. They were of course, Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, Mourvedre and Carignan. Nevertheless, a number of candidates fell into the trap of including varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, which although grown in the Languedoc, are not relevant in the context of the example

wines given. One candidate even listed the major varieties as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, Tannat and Muscat. Most responses to this question were short and shallow, and in the majority of cases where candidates listed the varieties correctly, although the sections on Grenache and Syrah tended to be better than those on the other varieties, they were still largely too superficial.

This should have been an easy question to answer provided candidates had covered the syllabus well, as this was a straight-forward, factual question. All that was required was identification of the five grapes and some discussion of the key characteristics of each, which could be summarised as follows:

Grenache Noir

Suits hot, dry, windy conditions.

Drought resistant.

Buds early, can be prone to coulure.

Usually bush trained.

Wines can lack colour, tannin/acid structure and oxidise easily unless old vines are used (when there is high quality potential).

Gives fruity, rich, sweet flavours, often red fruit (strawberry) and white pepper.

High in alcohol, full bodied with soft tannins.

Can be meaty and leathery with age.

Syrah

High quality potential variety, suitable for hot and moderate climates.

Hardy and disease resistant.

Small berries with thick skins giving high skin to juice ratio.

Versatile – can be used for light fruity wines and serious, structured, age-worthy wines.

Fashionable, marketable variety.

Often a high percentage used in premium wines.

Responds well to oak ageing.

Can be prone to develop reductive (mercaptan) flavours (possible disadvantage).

Gives deep colour, high acid and medium to high tannin.

Black fruit, dark chocolate and spice flavours etc.

Cinsault

Drought resistant.

Adaptable to many soil conditions.

Prone to high yields at the expense of quality.

When yield is restricted, can produce wines of intense colour and flavour with good acidity but fairly low tannin.

Short growing season, - buds relatively late and ripens early.

Prone to rot.

Ripe and meaty rather than elegant.

Adds roundness and fruit which is useful for toning down the harshness of Carignan.

Carignan

Late ripening.

Sensitive to mildew and rot.

Can be very high yielding but produces concentrated wines from old, low yielding bush vines.

High in acid, tannin and colour.

Can have green, unripe flavours and a bitter finish.

Carbonic maceration widely used to reduce these characteristics.

Not very highly regarded; lacks finesse.

Percentage of blend reducing in better wines.

Up to 40% permitted in Coteaux du Languedoc.

Mourvedre

Adaptable to many soil conditions.

Buds and ripens late – even later than Carignan.

Needs lots of heat and sun to ripen fully.

Does well in windy climates where ventilation avoids rot in the tight bunches.

May be affected by mildew (downy and powdery).

Small, sweet, thick skinned berries.

Adds colour, tannin and alcohol to the blend.

Fruit characters of blackberry, spice, liquorice and a gamey note.

Gives wines longevity.

For each of the Alsace wines listed below, describe the wine using the format of a tasting note and comment on the factors in the vineyard and in the winery that determine the style of the wine.

- a) Muscat d'Alsace AC**
- b) Pinot Gris Grand Cru AC**
- c) Gewurztraminer Selection de Grains Nobles AC**
- d) Pinot Noir d'Alsace AC**

Answers: 89

Passes: 43 (48%)

This was also a poor pass rate, with a fairly equal number of candidates achieving pass, fail and fail (unclassified) grade bands. Clearly, it is undesirable for so many candidates to fall into the lowest grand band, but this is a phenomenon we have seen more and more frequently as candidates approach this qualification without first consolidating and building on the knowledge they gained at Advanced Certificate.

As in the past, when asking similar styles of questions, candidates are able to write fairly convincing tasting notes for the various wines, but are unable to explain convincingly **why** the wines taste the way they do, and this is what this question is all about. This is a classic example of the way the questions in the Diploma exam require candidates to apply both explanation and application in their answers rather than just factual recall in the form of the tasting note (see page 8 of this report for more on this).

The four wines in this question were chosen to span the full spectrum in both style and quality levels and candidates needed to show this through their response, but very few did. On the whole, the section on the Gewurztraminer SGN was covered in slightly more detail than the other wines, where there was a tendency to vagueness in the hope of picking up a few marks for generic comments about white winemaking (or red, in the case of the Pinot Gris).

Every year this report urges candidates to spend a few minutes putting together a short essay plan, before answering any question. I suspect there is reluctance to waste “precious” time on this, but the plan does not need to take long or be extensive, and it really does help. In the case of the Pinot Gris Grand Cru, the plan would have highlighted the following topics for further discussion within the script itself:

- climate – rainfall, ripening conditions.
- Soils - rich in clay, particles of volcanic rock.
- Grand Cru vineyards - better aspect.
- Vine density.
- Yield - Max yield, more restricted, also prone to problems with fruit set.
- Winery - whole bunch press, reduce skin contact, ferment in stainless steel or large, old oak casks (retains aromatics), maturation on lees (gives complexity).

A similar approach for each of the other wines would have generated the information required to pass this question.

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| <p><i>With reference to the Americas, write a paragraph on FIVE of the following:</i></p> <p><i>a) Malbec</i> <i>b) Fetzer</i> <i>c) University of California at Davis</i> <i>d) Okanagan Valley</i> <i>e) Pacific Ocean</i> <i>f) Italian grape varieties</i></p> | |
| <p><i>Answers: 88</i></p> | <p><i>Passes: 59 (67%)</i></p> |

This was a reasonably good pass rate with some very good scripts showing very extensive knowledge, possibly from those candidates studying in the US.

There were the inevitable pitfalls with this type of question, such as answering all six sections (inevitably too briefly) rather than the five asked for, failing to restrict comments to the Americas only (a particular problem in section f) where a number of candidates wrote about Italy), or relying on guesswork (most prevalent in sections b) and d)).

The following candidate wrote a very good response on section d), giving plenty of detail which generates high marks.

“A wine producing region in British Columbia, Canada and one of the world’s most northerly wine regions. A narrow, 160 km long valley which lies in a rain shadow, between the Coastal and Monashee mountain ranges. This results in very low annual average rainfall (the southern part is an extension of the Sonoran desert). A large lake, Lake Okanagan, is the source for irrigation and tempers the continental climate. Summers are warmer than the Napa Valley, reaching 40°C during the day, and winter temperatures can drop below zero for long periods. There are 5 sub-regions, the most well known being Kelowna, and Okanagan Falls. There are significant climatic differences between these from north to south - reflected in the wide range of grapes grown e.g. Riesling and other cool climate whites in the north, Bordeaux varieties and Syrah in the south. Once mostly hybrid grapes were grown, but now these are mostly *V. vinifera*.”

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| <p>Discuss the factors to be considered when replanting and managing an existing vineyard for the production of</p> <p>a) Chablis Grand Cru b) Inexpensive Central Valley Chilean Chardonnay</p> | |
| <p>Answers: 74</p> | <p>Passes: 37 (50%)</p> |

This question was actually considerably more challenging than it appeared, and needed very specific detail to earn good marks. This was reflected in the low pass rate, the fact that only a third of those candidates who passed, did so with a merit or distinction grade and that there were as many fail (unclassified) grades as pass grades.

Many candidates just wrote generally about the two regions without fully understanding what this question was about – explaining the different approach dictated by wine style, location, natural elements etc. Many candidates also failed to appreciate that this question was about **re-planting** an **existing** vineyard, not planting a vineyard from scratch, with the result that they dwelt on site selection which was not the focus of this question. It was also not enough to simply describe the factors in the two regions. Candidates needed to show they understood **why** these differed. There were certain key aspects that should have formed the basis of this answer, such as choice of rootstock, the task of balancing the vine, work in the vineyard, the issue of frost risk, the effect of sunlight, legal restrictions and precipitation. The following script was better on Chile than Chablis, and had some good detail, sufficient to justify a low merit grade.

(3 pages)

page ①

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| (a) | Chablis Grand Cru. |
| | <p>Important to remember is that the classification here revolves around the terroir of the vineyard, Chablis therefore Grand Cru and thus limestone with limited clay bed. The vineyards are also position on the slopes across the Serein river from the town of Chablis and do face into get the best of afternoon sun.</p> |
| | <p>Managing the existing vineyard will revolve around quite drastic pruning in order to give maximum rest to the vines but also to allow for new shoots. Canopy management is also important to allow for maximum exposure to sun during the ripening season. This area is also prone to frost during spring and you will need to use techniques such as aspersion, heaters, smudge pots in order to eliminate the impact thereof.</p> |
| | <p>Limited ventilation vert to allow better ripening may be necessary and also the removing of weeds and spraying if needed. Also to limit the yield.</p> |
| <p>Also ensure that your rootstock remains phylloxera free</p> | <p>The replanting considerations will be that you replace it with vines that can give you the same quality wines as you currently are producing. It is therefore important to assess where you are getting your stock from and if your rootstock is still good enough or also needs replacement. In the area of Chablis you should get your new stock from the area of from own grafts. Continuity will be key here as you would like to replace the vines here with exactly</p> |

page 2

the same quality as before or even better wines.

The terrors do play a key role here but it is still up to the managing of the vineyard and ultimately the production of the wine that will ensure continuity of the status of your Chablis Grand Cru.

(b) Inexpensive Central Valley Chilean Chardonnay

The word inexpensive does not necessarily mean that you are allowed sloppy practices in the vineyard! The focus should still be on doing everything to your best knowledge but you may allow yourself higher yields etc which may result in fruit that is not necessarily the best.

When planting a Chardonnay vineyard in Chile you may need to consider issues such as irrigation that is not required in the Chablis area. Chile is phylloxera free and this will not be a major consideration, but as you may consider drip irrigation ^{neematodes} ~~netts~~ may be an issue and you may therefore consider.

The weather here is harsh and you will need to look at canopy management in order to ensure that the vines get enough protection from the heat. Ripening seasons are long and the fruit will ripe to a lesser level of acid and you need to take this into account. High training and guyot system is preferable.

page ③

As it is going to be inexpensive the area that you are replanting is not so important to improve but healthy vines are still needed, so pest control and weeding if needed remains key.

In Chile spraying against downy mildew may be required.

The yields here can be high as the climate allows that and as you are going to produce inexpensive Chardonnay you do not need the fruit to develop complex flavours and lower levels of acidity are acceptable.

To me the main difference is that you may not be ~~so~~ particular over the quality of your vines and rootstock as you are not trying to express the terroir (~~prob~~-alluvial in Central Valley) and are not trying to create the most complex wine. So key will be good practices, but not such a focus on yield control.

Ultimately it is still the winemaker that needs to produce the best quality possible wine from the grapes. Inexpensive should mean rather bulk production in not (by) such prime location.

Describe the two wines below under the following headings:

- a) Climate and soil (24% weighting)**
- b) Viticulture and grape variety(ies) (24% weighting)**
- c) Vinification (24% weighting)**
- d) Assessment of quality (16% weighting)**
- e) Food combination (12% weighting)**



Answers: 112

Passes: 80 (71%)

This format of question is always a popular choice, and the January exam was no exception. This was the most popular optional question on the paper, answered by 89% of candidates. However, despite the high pass rate, there were some extremely poor responses amongst the large number of candidates (20% of the total) achieving fail (unclassified), or a mark lower than 45%.

There were a number of reasons for low marks – failing to structure responses to reflect the weighting in the various sections, such as writing far more on food and wine matching than any of the first three sections, not knowing what style of wine Rias Baixas is (some described it as a red wine area), giving superficial responses on the three key sections – in particular on climate and soil, or saying very little in terms of vinification of the Rioja beyond stating what the legal requirement is for ageing.

June 2010

Group A: Compulsory Question

Describe the two wines below under the following headings:

- a) **Climate and soil**
- b) **Viticulture and grape variety(ies)**
- c) **Vinification**
- d) **Scale of production and quality of wine**

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| <p>Answers: 403</p> | <p>Passes: 269 (67%)</p> |

The mainstream topic matter of this question meant that the majority of candidates were able to provide sufficient detail for a pass grade, with almost as many merit grades as passes.

Inevitably there were some candidates who thought Grands Echezeaux was a white wine and lost a considerable portion of the marks because many of their comments were incorrect as a result. There were also some who thought it was a Chablis.

The following candidate achieved a high grade for answering the question in full, with a focussed response full of good detail.

The 2 wines presented are a Grand Cru Burgundy from the Côte de Nuits (Grand Échezeaux) produced by the Négociant Louis Jadot and a Beaujolais en Village from Fleurie also produced by the Négociant Georges Dubouef. Although the wines are both Négociant wines, we will see that they are made in very distinct ways and are targeting different customers.

a) Climate & Soils.

The Côte de Nuits in Burgundy where the Grand Échezeaux comes from (Wine 1) has been formed about 150 million years ago and the hill that is now the Côte d'Or resulted from the Alpine formation.

Prior to this event, the Côte d'Or was underwater and once the water was chased away, the resulting soils were filled with sedimentary elements that are found all around the region. The soil formation in this part of France is "argilo-calcaire" i.e. limestone clay.

The climate in the Côte de Nuits around Échezeaux is continental without any maritime influence. The winters can be severe, spring frost can be an issue in this region and summers are mild rather than hot. We are already at 47° latitude which approaches the more marginal zones. ^{Rainfall} harvest can be an issue.*

By contrast, Beaujolais & the Village of Fleurie is located (Wine 2) about 120 km south of the Côte d'Or. The soil formation here is different and the region starts a large plateau with some hill formations at the top of the region where the crus Villages are produced.

The soil formation here is Metamorphic and the main soil type is granitic which maintains the acidity in the wine.

As we are heading south from Burgundy Côte d'Or, the climate gets also warmer, still continental with some protection from the Massif Central to the West of the region. Rainfall also mainly occurs in winter

* although most of the rainfall is concentrated in the winter

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| | b) Viticulture & Grape Varieties |
| ✓ | <p>Wine 1 – GC G. Echezeaux is made from Pinot Noir exclusively. The appearance can be deceptive in this region that is considered "mono" varietal as there are a vast number of clones that the winemakers can choose to plant in the vineyards. Some offer better frost protection, some regulate yield, some are effective against diseases.</p> <p>The density of planting in Côte de Nuits is high; > 5,000 vines per ha. The Côte de Nuits, especially Grand Echezeaux has a perfect easterly exposure that receives the benefit of the morning sun. The Côte south of Santenay closer to Beaune is more south east exposed but in this part, we are directly facing east.</p> <p>Grand Echezeaux is a Grand cru vineyard and despite its name, it is of smaller size than Echezeaux its neighbor. The best vines are planted in a mild slope where the soils tend to be poorer and the vine is forced to create deep roots in search for nutrients. The type of training is usually Guyot (single or double) and as spring frosts can be a risk, the vines tend to have a vast proportion of permanent wood to combat frost. Producers also use smudge pots or even helicopters to remove the risk of frost. There is a real effort in Burgundy despite the rainfall frequency to limit spraying. The vines were saturated until the 90s with the excess of pesticides and producers are leaning towards more lutte raisonnée or even biodynamic agriculture. The vines are manually harvested & Pinot Noir is handled with great care.</p> |
| ✓ | <p>In Beaujolais, the main grape is Gamay. It is less delicate to handle in the vineyards and tends to be planted "en gobelet". The "en gobelet" training means that the vines are trained upright and form a sort of chalice (Gobelet in French).</p> <p>The density of planting is also fairly high but the risk of spring frost is mitigated by the lower latitude.</p> <p>Viticulture in Beaujolais is a lot more mechanised than in the Grand Cru vineyards of the Côte de Nuits. We find that producers tend to use more pest control than in the Northern part of Burgundy and harvesting will most likely occur earlier than in the Côte</p> |

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| | due to the late ripening nature of Pinot Noir but also due to the lower latitude. |
| | The best sites of Beaujolais of which Fleurie is one tend to be planted on hill sides. Note that yields on wine 1 would be ~ 30kl/ha vs. closer to 50kl/ha in Beaujolais. |
| | c) Vinification |
| ✓ | Wine 1 being from a Grand Cru site would be handled with extra care. Pinot Noir is a fragile grape that can be prompt to oxidation. As the grapes are harvested, they would be destemmed and only partially crushed. It is not rare to see whole berries in the fermentation vats. Fermentation would be kick started with cultured yeast or with wild yeasts to give the wine more complexity. The fermentation is done at 28-30°C for 2-3 weeks. The wine will then undergo malolactic fermy, once the wine is racked off its lees. It is placed in barrels (mostly old oak although some producers are now using more new oak barrels or a mix of both). Racking doesn't open very often with Pinot Noir as it can affect the grape ^{wine} & cause oxidation. It would occur about 1 or 2 only in the maturation period that can last up to 2yrs for a Grand Cru. |
| ✓ | Wine 2 is one of the best Villages of Beaujolais Cru. Although entry level Beaujolais is done by carbonic maceration with fermentation kickstarted by the grapes own enzymes; this wine is more likely to be fermented in stainless steel after the grapes being fully destemmed & crushed. The fermentation would be started with cultured yeast & the temperature would be 24-26°C. The fermentation would also be shorter than for wine 1, possibly 10-15 days. The wine is designed to be fruity & fresh and doesn't undergo extended maturation in barrels. It goes through malolactic & gets bottled after a short tank maturation. The best examples may be matured for a short period in old oak to preserve fruitiness |

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| | <p>d) Scale of production & style</p> |
| | <p>Wine 1 is done in very small scale. Louis Jadot most probably had to buy grapes from growers to supplement its own holdings & meet customer demand. G. Echezeaux is < 50 ha and doesn't produce vast quantities of wine. It is a premium niche wine with a high reputation. The style of wine 1 is varietal Pinot Noir with medium(+) acidity, Med. body & alcohol, Gamey / leaty / savoury / red fruit notes & a long length. It is meant to be cellared and aged for up to 20 yrs. Note that Burgundy itself only covers 26,000 ha and the Grands Crus production as a whole are less than 5% of the production. Grand Echezeaux is bordering some of the most prestigious vineyards of the Côte de Nuits just North of Vosnes Romanée.</p> |
| | <p>Wine 2 (Fleurie) is meant to be drunk young and is part of the Beaujolais region that produces more than half of the Burgundy entire production. Fleurie is one of 10 Crus villages and despite this fact, the production of wine 2 will be far greater than wine 1. Georges Duboeuf is the largest negociant in Beaujolais and holds a market share of more than 1/3 of all production. Likely that grapes were purchased also to satisfy demand. The wine style is fruity, red fruit & herbaceous with medium(+) acidity, Med body & alcohol & is meant to be consumed young rather than cellared.</p> |
| | <p><u>Conclusions</u> The target market for those wines is also quite different as well as the prices fetched. Wine 1: Premium, niche > £ 50 Wine 2: Easy drinking, fruity < £ 15</p> |

Group B: 4 questions to be answered from a choice of 6

**Areas of Australia have seen excessive temperatures, drought and bush fires in recent vintages. Discuss how these affect wine production (60% weighting). How is the Australian wine industry responding? (40% weighting)
(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)**

Answers: 189

Passes: 92 (49%)

There was a reasonably high take up (47% of candidates) for this compulsory essay question, where it is not just a case of getting the facts across - structure is also important. This was clearly a very topical question, and candidates needed to be aware of recent events to answer this with enough authority for a pass grade. Less than half of them achieved this. However, of those who were awarded pass grades, there was an equal split between the three pass grades with more distinctions awarded here than in any other question. At the other end of the spectrum, however, more candidates were awarded fail (unclassified) than any other grade.

The following script is well written, extensive in terms of scope and makes some very sound commercial observations. It achieved a low level distinction grade.

Australia in recent years have established themselves as the prime source of good to excellent wines. Its reputation is largely based on good value, easy drinking, beauty, straightforward and powerful wines. But in recent years it has been struck by the wrath of mother nature in the form of global warming, drought, bush fires etc. All those above factors have been threatening the well built reputation of Australia a wine producing nation.

The production of wine in Australia is affected by a spate of recent phenomena. The increase in global temperature is driving the Australian vinedressers to look for alternative places to grow grapes. Grapes are getting over ripe year after year and hence there is a gradual increase in the alcoholic level in the wine. Fully ripe grapes due to an excessive heat altering the flavour of wines. The white grapes are losing the all important acidity which required for a well balanced wine. It's a battle against time. More sugar level, less acid driving the flavour of the wine towards flabbiness. ~~the~~ Red wines are getting more deeper in colour with alcohol level often exceeding 15% abv. White wines losing their fresh acidity and fruit character

Which is vital for a good white ~~wine~~ wine. Drought is another problem in Australia. It is an arid and dry nation with scarcity of water. Drought is making irrigation necessary and water is in short supply. Although, it has brought the reduction in fungal diseases but also at the same time creating vine stresses which bad for the quality of wine. The vineyard needs to be irrigated very frequently in Australia especially part of Western, South and some area in Victoria. It is creating an unnecessary stress in the vine which results in a bad off flavours in the resultant wine. Cost of wine production also shooting up due to installation of irrigation lines and equipments. This is reflected in the price of wine. There is a very chance that grape are getting shrivelled on the vine due to excessive heat and drought. Sometime this drought is brought by change in atmospheric pressure ~~due~~ near the Pacific Coast of Australia due to EL Niño.

~~The response of the Australian wine industry has been very quick and effective~~

Drought is resulting in the dry climate which is the perfect situation for a bush fire. In recent years Australia has suffered a number of bush fire due drought and dry climate. It has destroyed vineyards after vineyards and those who survived complained of a smoky flavour in their resultant wine. The wines made from grapes affected

by bush fire are giving off flavours. The cost of planting new vineyards are rising another problem as no one is sure as to when this will re occur in future.

The response of the Australian wine industry has been pretty fast and effective. There is a trend towards shifting of vineyards towards more cooler regions of the country which are suffering from excessive heat and drought. New areas are being identified in even more cooler, southern coastal regions. The land available in some more coastal fringes are better suited for viticulture. Tasmania has emerged as a suitable destination for making good wines. Areas with higher altitude are being identified. The Government of Australia has been in the forefront in helping the wine industry. New instalment and machinery are being provided to instal new irrigation system. There are moves to plant more drought and heat resistant varieties which can yield better quality wine. A better monitoring system for bush and wildfires has been established with help of government authority. The industry is also spreading awareness about drought, and bushfires and winemakers are being educated about how to deal with

This type of ^{natural calamities} ~~calamities~~. Grants have been provided for setting up new vineyards and wineries in more cooler areas and with plenty of ground water supply.

In the future, the Ambalans have to invest heavily in research and planning if they want to overcome such problems. There is a great need for identifying the key areas where these problems can be nipped in the bud. Global warming and drought are natural phenomena and there is a need for the Ambalian wine industry to come together and find an alternative for their chronic problem. Rest, only time will tell how effective their response have been.

Describe how the factors in the vineyard, winery and marketplace influence the style, quality and price of

- a) Condrieu AC
- b) Gigondas AC
- c) White Châteauneuf du Pape AC
- d) Tavel AC

Answers: 335

Passes: 208 (62%)

This was the most popular optional question on the exam paper, chosen by 83% of candidates and answered reasonably well with as many merit grades as pass grades. However, as with most other questions, there were far too many fail (unclassified) grades – even more than those achieving fail. Ideally, the number of candidates achieving such low marks should be the lowest, yet in far too many instances, they account for the largest proportion of the candidates answering the question. This is a phenomenon that has become increasingly prevalent in recent years and is indicative of the fact that too many candidates are rushing into the Diploma programme on passing Advanced Certificate (sometimes with low level pass grades), without fully realising the significant difference in the level of these two qualifications. Whilst it is understandable that any candidate can do poorly on one or two questions, anyone achieving more than one or two fail grades in the Unit 3

theory paper really needs to question whether they are ready for this qualification. Some of the fail (unclassified) marks recorded against this question were extremely low indeed – in single figures. These very low marks were not necessarily the result of writing only a couple of lines of text. One candidate who was given a mark of 11% wrote 1 ½ sides of almost complete nonsense. In general, there were some appalling errors – describing Gigondas as a white wine from the Northern Rhone, Condrieu as a red wine made from Syrah and placing Tavel in Bordeaux.

For each of the four wines, candidates needed to discuss factors in the vineyard, winery and marketplace. Very often, there was very little discussion of winemaking and comments relating to the marketplace were often very superficial. In terms of the vineyard, candidates needed to consider things like climate, weather, topography, choice of grape variety, harvesting, trellising and training etc. In the winery, obviously method of production was the focus, including issues such as processes pre fermentation, choice of fermentation vessel and method of fermentation and processes post fermentation, including ageing where relevant. Candidates who covered the section on the marketplace well, often gave an indication of the level of production, the perceived positioning of the product in the market place and some discussion of whether or not this is justified.

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Describe the style and outline the principle selling points of</i> | |
| <i>a)</i> | <i>Black Tower Rivaner Deutscher Tafelwein Rhein 2008</i> |
| <i>b)</i> | <i>Schloss Johannisberger Erstes Gewächs Riesling 2007</i> |
| <i>c)</i> | <i>Berncastler Doctor Riesling Trockenbeereauslese 2006, Weingut Wwe Dr H Thanisch</i> |
| <i>Answers: 305</i> | <i>Passes: 147 (48%)</i> |

This was a popular question, chosen by 76% of candidates. However, the low pass rate shows that very few of them answered it well. It is likely that this was chosen by the poorer candidates in the exam, hoping that they would scrape through by writing longer tasting notes for the three wines rather than concentrating on the more important aspect of identifying the principle selling points. Even where this section of the question was addressed, it was often misinterpreted to mean “where the wines are sold” (eg supermarkets in the case of the Black Tower or specialist shops for the TBA), which was not what the examiner was looking for. Alternatively, many candidates simply described how the wines were made (particularly the TBA) without linking this in any way to the selling points. Comments relating to Black Tower were often misguided at best, or simply incorrect, with many unable to get past the “old” image of Liebfraumilch, which is no longer relevant in the case of this wine. In general, the detail in the stem of the question was overlooked, for example by candidates who listed the grape varieties for Black Tower as Riesling or other varieties, completely unaware that RIVANER is the variety, not a wine region as many suggested. Similarly, many were ignorant as to what an Erstes Gewächs wine

is or what effect this has in terms of selling points, and very few thought to comment on the significance of the named producers or vineyards.

The following script achieved a fail grade. What there is, is correct, but it is far too short and superficial for a pass grade.

- a) This wine is in the lower quality category of quality wine - table wine and is produced as a mass market brand with wide appeal. The style will be medium-dry with light character and intensity, unoffensive and easy to drink. The wine is at the lower end of the market, to be drunk very young and is typical of many people's views on German wine. The selling points are well known brand name, low price point and easy drinking sweet style.
- b) This is seen as one of the top Rheingian properties. It is an estate in the best area with some of the best vineyards, Erste Gewächs is "first Growth" so strict standards and regulations. This will be dry or off dry, an intense wine, very high quality to benefit from long ageing. Selling points are the famous name of estate, Erste Gewächs designation and Riesling as the most popular and regarded German grape.
- c) This is very high quality, rare, wine from one of the top producers and top vineyards in the Mosel. The TBA style has high Botrytis levels. A very sweet dessert wine with intense character, highly expensive and sought-out. The producer, vineyard site, grape and style are all desirable selling points. A world famous style.

In contrast, the following script is more extensive and answers the question more extensively and is therefore worthy of a pass grade, although the bullet point style is rather lazy.

| | |
|----|--|
| | |
| a. | <p>This is likely to be an off-dry wine, made to a particular "recipe" that is designed to be fruity, immediately appealing and understandable to the general public. It is a large production brand wine. It will be white, youthful off-dry but fresh light and zesty with medium levels of acidity, length, alcohol, body, intensity. Riesling will be fairly neutral in style. This is a wine that can compete with pinot grigio it may not be interesting but it will offend no one.</p> <p>Its biggest selling point is its brand with the brand comes understanding. Consumers find Germany difficult to understand but brand recognition is high, and as far as German wines go Black Tower has the advantage of its own bottle, that is not classic flute shaped (a turn off for too many consumers who remember Liebfraumilch).</p> <p>With the brand comes some level of basic quality and consistency that a consumer can expect rather than an unknown produce.</p> |

b. This is a dry wine that has been made from grapes of at least Spätlese ripeness which in turn means that it will be relatively high in alcohol and full bodied.

It will be intensely flavoured, dry aromatic with high acidity and a steely edge that ought to be balanced by the fruit intensity.

The selling points for this wine are that

i) It is produced by Schloss Johannisberg a historically grand and important estate who are renowned for quality.

ii) It is from grapes grown in a "great" growth vineyard, that have been ripened and fully fermented.

iii) It is the pinnacle of Germany dry Riesling great wine, from a great estate produced from a great vineyard by a great producer.

iv) High quality grape variety.

The wine will be complex and concentrated whilst showing the potential to age should that be required.

c. This is a lusciously sweet, very very expensive wine that is perhaps the very height of Mosel wine production.

The wine is lusciously sweet with some real botrytis character, flavours of petrol but also honeysuckle, honey, apricots and ripe peaches. The wine invariably has high acidity, huge levels of complexity and concentration.

The selling points are numerous.

- i) It is from perhaps the finest vineyard on the Mosel – certainly the most famous.
- ii) It is produced from Germany's highest quality white grape.
- iii) It has been handcrafted from vineyard to bottling.
- iv) It is rare.
- v) It is made by a superb producer.
- vi) It is not produced in every vintage.
- vii) It is at the highest end of the Prädikat Scale.
- viii) The wine is made from individually harvested grapes, through several passes through the vineyards – it has been painstakingly made with no expense spared.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| <p>With reference to the wines of continental Europe, write a paragraph on FIVE of the following:</p> <p>a) Blafränkisch b) Corvina c) Dolcetto d) Mencia e) Petit Verdot f) Tannat</p> | |
| <p>Answers: 325</p> | <p>Passes: 225 (69%)</p> |

The breakdown of marks for this question showed that it was answered both by those who really knew the subject (with a top mark of 90%) and those who clearly did not have a clue (a bottom mark of 11%). The danger of the five part paragraph style question is that there is nowhere to hide if the candidate is unable to answer all five sections or if more than one section is weak. With all five parts carrying equal weighting, it only takes two weak sections for the candidate to be at a real disadvantage and likely to fail.

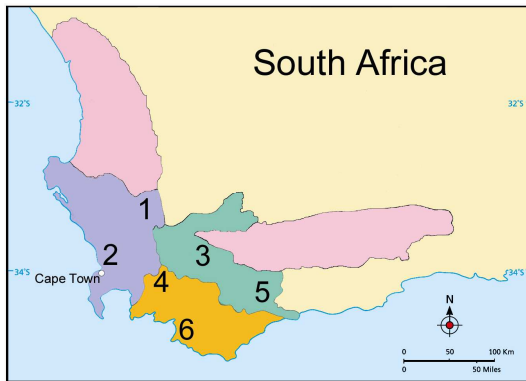
Although the question did not volunteer this information, most candidates were aware that these were all grape varieties and structured their answer accordingly. In general, there was a tendency to write too much about Valpolicella (the wine) rather than Corvina (the grape variety). There is a subtle difference to the focus of the question which required candidates to write primarily about the characteristics of the grapes and then secondly about the wines in which it is used.

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| <p>Assess Portugal's strengths (50% weighting) and weaknesses (50% weighting) as a producer of still light wines.</p> | |
| <p>Answers: 299</p> | <p>Passes: 248 (83%)</p> |

This was an excellent result, and very surprising because Portugal is not generally considered to be an area of the syllabus that candidates are particularly strong on. This was answered very well by the majority, with more merit grades than any other band, and good evidence of commercial awareness in terms of the market for these wines. Those who failed often did so because they wrote too little, and their response lacked detail and conviction as a result.

Using the maps provided, for EACH of the wines listed below, state the number which correctly locates the area of production, briefly describe the wine using the format of a tasting note, and comment briefly on the factors in the vineyard and in the winery that determine the style of the wine.

- a) Walker Bay Pinot Noir
- b) Durbanville Sauvignon Blanc
- c) Mount Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon
- d) Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay



Answers: 144

Passes: 92 (64%)

Despite the good pass rate, this was not a convincing set of scripts. A large number of candidates picked up marks for writing largely “generic” tasting notes based on the grape varieties given without really knowing very much at all about the wines themselves. This was clear from their response to the other sections of the question, either because they were unable to locate the wines on the maps, or clearly relied on guesswork when it came to explaining how factors in the vineyard and winery determine wine style. As with many other questions in this paper, there were some extremely low marks awarded to candidates who really should not be doing this qualification at present.

Unit 4, Spirits of the World

The examination for Units 4, 5 and 6 require good all round knowledge for the candidate to do really well, as the tasting and theory paper carries equal weighting. However, the paragraph format of the theory question still allows those who give good responses in two sections (but may be weak in a third) to pass the paper as a whole, providing their tasting paper achieves high marks.

The approach to this question is no different to that for paragraph questions in the Unit 3 examination, you should aim to get as many facts down as possible. Nevertheless, it is still important to make sure that what is written relates specifically to the question as set. For example, if asked about the production of a particular style of spirit, there is no point describing at length the basic principles of distillation that apply to any style of spirit. This is something examiners comment on time and again.

In terms of the tasting question, there is significant evidence that candidates do not add water to their samples when assessing them. It is vital to evaluate the nose and palate both before and after adding water as the character of spirits can change considerably as a result of being broken down in this manner.

The examination for Unit 4 was run on three separate occasions in the academic year 2009/10, in November, March and June. The overall pass rate for the unit as a whole for all these dates combined was 61% - a very slight drop from 64% in the previous academic year.

The questions and individual pass rates for each of the three examination dates were as follows:

November 2009

| Question 1 – Tequila Reposado, VSOP Cognac, Absolut Citron Vodka | |
|--|-------------------|
| Answers: 228 | Passes: 170 (75%) |

Results for this question were sound but with very few distinction grades. Some candidates lost marks because they did not use the correct version of the Systematic Approach to Tasting. There are three different versions of this which can be downloaded from the WSET website (www.wsetglobal.com), one for spirits, one for still wines and one for sparkling wines, and terminology does differ between them so candidates must make sure they are using the correct version.

The Cognac generated the most accurate tasting notes, although some candidates confused it with Bourbon. The citrus Vodka was often mistaken for Gin - it was not aromatic or complex enough for this, and was actually quite confectioned, even with synthetic notes of icing sugar, sherbet and lemonade.

The following candidate wrote very good notes for all three samples and gained a distinction grade as a result.

SPIRIT No.1 El Jimador Tequila Reposado

Appearance:

Pale lemon-green with legs evident.

Nose:

Medium (+) intensity. Rested. Fresh vegetal aromas of cabbage, pepper, sweet potato and root vegetables. Herbal notes of cut grass and heather, slightly stinky. Smoky and earthy with a touch of brine. Addition of water brings out lemon, lime sherbet and chalky aromas.

Palate:

Dry with integrated alcohol. Medium body with medium flavour intensity. Flavour characteristics of pepper, earthy and spicy with hints of grass, lemon and lime. Slightly salty / briny with a smooth, slightly oily texture. Medium (+) length with a well balanced, complex and clean spicy finish.

Specific identity of spirit:

Tequila Reposado

Assessment of quality:

A good quality spirit showing clear evidence of brief ageing in both appearance and in the development of complex aromas and flavours. It has a reasonable but not intense concentration of flavour. Smooth and balanced, also indicative of quality.

SPIRIT No.2 Courvoisier VSOP

Appearance:

Clear, med intensity of amber with golden lights, fading to a narrow watery rim. Legs evident.

Nose:

Medium (+) intensity. Matured aromas of caramel, dried apple, apricot, sultana, orange peel, vanilla, coffee, toffee, honey, oak and spice with a floral note. Slightly spirity and a hint of rancio. Addition of water gives a waxy, floor polish aroma and accentuates the orange note.

Palate:

Dry with integrated alcohol. Medium bodied with an oily texture and a medium (+) intensity of orange peel, dried fruit, honey, caramel, vanilla, oak. Addition of water makes the texture very viscous and brings out a peppery and orange note. A long, complex, balanced finish but with a slight peppery burn.

Specific identity of spirit:

VSOP Cognac

Assessment of quality:

The complexity of flavours, overall balance and long finish indicate an aged Cognac of good to very good quality. It lacks the concentration, complexity and rancio character of an outstanding Cognac.

SPIRIT No.3 Absolut Citron

Appearance:

Water-white and colourless with legs evident.

Nose:

Medium (+) intensity. Unaged with a distinct, pure lemon aroma, lemon peel, seems sweet and confectioned, sherbet, lemonade and orange notes. Simple and one-dimensional.

Palate:

Dry with smooth alcohol and a medium body. Medium intensity of fresh lemon and lemon peel with lime and orange notes. It has a distinctly oily texture and a medium length with a clean, simple and balanced finish.

Specific identity of spirit:

Lemon flavoured Vodka.

Assessment of quality:

An acceptable quality spirit. Although the flavour is simple and one-dimensional it shows a purity of flavour backed up with a smooth, well balanced palate.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Question 2 – In relation to spirits, write about each of the following: | |
| <p>a) Scotch whisky maturation b) Rum styles c) Production of Plymouth Gin</p> | |
| <i>Answers: 228</i> | <i>Passes: 139 (61%)</i> |

A fairly solid set of results, with a good number of high grades, but this was offset by an even higher number of extremely poor fail (unclassified) grades. The examiner who marked these commented that they were either good or very poor with very little in between. The section on rum was often answered extremely well, on some occasions well enough to move a fairly poor paper into the pass grade band. However, responses on the production of Plymouth Gin tended to be too generic in nature rather than concentrating on how production of this Gin differs from the norm.

March 2010

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Question 1 – Plymouth Gin, Appleton V/X Golden Rum, Janneau Tradition Armagnac | |
| <i>Answers: 270</i> | <i>Passes: 228 (84%)</i> |

This was an excellent pass rate with more candidates gaining merit than any other grade. A fairly large number of candidates mistook the Rum for Whisky. The caramel was far too obvious for this to have been Whisky.

There were the inevitable problems caused by those who did not follow the Systematic Approach for Spirits. This differs considerably from that used for assessing wine, and this is an easy way to lose unnecessary marks. Some candidates also appeared to not understand what was required under “style within the category” for which one mark was allocated. Answers here needed to be precise to get the mark. For example, “Gin” was not sufficient in the case of the first spirit, we were looking specifically for “Plymouth Gin”, which has a distinct style of its own, although examiners would also have accepted London Dry Gin as being similar in style. In the case of the Rum, this needed to be specified as a Golden Rum and for the Armagnac, it was more important to get the quality level correct rather than

identify it as either Armagnac or Cognac. So, whilst examiners would have accepted VS or VSOP Armagnac and also VS Cognac, they did not accept VSOP Cognac as the quality of this spirit did not match this level.

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| <p>Question 2 – In relation to spirits, write about each of the following:</p> <p>a) The cereals used in Whisk(e)y production b) Calvados c) Flavoured Vodkas</p> | |
| <p>Answers: 270</p> | <p>Passes: 202 (75%)</p> |

This was a very good pass rate, with an equal split between pass grades and merit grades.

Sections a) and b) were answered well in most instances, but many candidates struggled to write knowledgeably on flavoured Vodkas, which required far more commercial knowledge and less reliance on memorising facts. There were inevitably those who simply described Vodka production in broad terms rather than limiting their response to the specifics of flavoured Vodkas.

Compare the following two scripts, one receiving a fail grade and the other a distinction.

The fail grade has some valid information, but it is simplistic and superficial whereas the distinction has plenty of good detail and is relevant and knowledgeable.

| |
|--|
| <p>Traditionally, vodkas were often flavoured. The production of a clean, neutral spirit was driven by the need for the flavoured vodka to the reflect only the flavour of the added ingredient.</p> |
| <p>In addition to the international style of clean neutral spirits, a number of flavoured products are now available on the market.</p> |
| <p>Pioneered by the Absolut brand, fruit and savoury vodkas have proved successful in international markets, riding on the fashion for spirits that can be mixed for cocktails.</p> |
| <p>Bison-grass is used to flavour Polish vodka, giving it a vegetal, and herbaceous quality.</p> |

Compare this fail grade script with the following one, which received a distinction grade.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 3. | <u>Flavoured Vodka</u> |
| | <p>with the rise and rise of premium vodkas and the category as a whole, it is no surprise that flavoured vodkas are becoming more common.</p> |
| | <p>Flavoured vodkas are how vodka began - with herbal flavourings. Traditional styles still exist - such as Zubrowka, flavoured with bison grass. Ochotchinye is a traditional 'hunter' vodka flavoured with spices, herbs and a small percentage of sherry, and nuts + other flavourings.</p> |
| | <p>Flavoured vodka can be made by cold compounding. This is the cheapest method - by adding a flavour essence. The flavour does not tend to bind as well to the vodka, so can be a bit dilute + artificial.</p> |
| best method | <p>Maceration of botanicals in the vodka can also occur to add flavour. Or you can redistill the vodka with the flavourings added. In the case of Zubrowka the vodka is run slowly through a bed of the bison grass - and a strand of grass put in the vodka for added flavour.</p> |
| | <p>Absolut have a range of flavoured vodka - citrus, vanilla, berry, pepper etc. These are useful to bartenders in cocktail making.</p> |
| | <p>Vodka is big business these days - with the no 1 spirit being Smirnoff. It is a very trendy spirit so should come as no surprise that Diageo's Cirac is about to launch 2 flavoured</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | vodka - coconut + red berry - that have been produced with input from rapper P-Diddy. This kind of marketing will ensure flavoured vodkas will become an important category in their own right. |
|--|---|

June 2010

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Question 1 – Eau de Vie Poire William, Calvados, Bourbon | |
| <i>Answers: 191</i> | <i>Passes: 107 (56%)</i> |

This was a poor set of results and rather surprising given that these were three very different and very distinctive styles of spirit. The weakest notes were on the Poire William, with a number of candidates confusing this with Tequila, white Rum, Gin or Kirsch. This was surprising as the pear character was the dominant aroma and flavour, particularly after the addition of water. There was also evidence to suggest that candidates find it difficult to assess sweetness on spirits. In fact most spirits are dry or off-dry yet many described some of these as medium sweet. This was not even correct for the Bourbon which was the “sweetest” of the three at off-dry.

As with some previous Unit 4 tasting papers, the emphasis in the concluding section of this paper asked candidates to describe how the method of production accounts for the style of the various spirits. However, a large percentage of candidates failed to understand what was required here and simply stated how the spirit was made without explaining how this affects the style. With four marks available in this section, responses needed to be reasonably detailed and analytical. For example, for the Calvados good candidates commented on practices such as the selection of different types of apple to give the required character of the base material, by referring to the four key characteristics on which apples are selected - sweetness, acidity, sourness and bitterness. Some mentioned fermentation with natural yeasts to give complexity to the spirit or distillation in a pot still for a good expression of the base material and ageing in oak barrels which imparts wood, dried fruit and spice notes along with more tertiary aromas and a phenolic bite from wood tannins.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Question 2 – In relation to spirits, write about each of the following: | |
| a) Continuous still b) Maturation and blending of Cognac c) Tequila styles | |
| <i>Answers: 187</i> | <i>Passes: 111 (59%)</i> |

Although this generated a reasonably good pass rate, there were very few merit or distinction grades.

In general, the section on Tequila styles was fairly good, although a large number of candidates forgot to mention Extra Anejo or simply listed the styles without describing them. The section on the continuous still generated some very confused descriptions of how this works. There were also some very simplistic diagrams. A clear and accurate diagram is extremely useful and often conveys the information with the addition of brief notes better than a long, convoluted description, but hastily drawn scribbles with no detail, omission of key components or inaccuracies do nothing to support weak descriptions. Finally, although most candidates covered the maturation of Cognac well, with almost every candidate listing the ageing requirements of the various styles, they were considerably weaker when it came to discussing blending. The key points here were to consider the various options and the reasons for them.

Unit 5, Sparkling Wines

The examination for Unit 5 was run on three separate occasions in the academic year 2009/10, in November, March and June. The overall pass rate for the unit as a whole for all these dates combined was 64%.

The questions and individual pass rates for each of the three examination dates were as follows:

November 2009

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Question 1 – Prosecco NV, Freixenet Brut Vintage 2004, Sekt 2006 | |
| <i>Answers: 211</i> | <i>Passes: 126 (60%)</i> |

This was a rather disappointing pass rate with very few achieving distinction grades. Although the Prosecco was assessed well in many cases, far too many candidates appeared to detect autolysis on the Sekt that simply was not there.

The Freixenet was often identified as Champagne, which was not an illogical assumption given the obvious autolytic character on this wine. However, it had a rather bitter finish and the lack of freshness and acidity should have discounted this option – it just lacked the vibrancy of Champagne.

As in most tasting questions, it was in the assessment of quality that candidates tended to lose marks. The following candidate wrote very similar assessments for all three wines, which made their notes very unconvincing:

PROSECCO

“An acceptable quality with reasonable intensity but lack of complexity. Length is not long so this wine couldn't merit a higher quality.”

CAVA

“An acceptable quality with reasonable length and complexity. Autolytic character indicated that wine is made with traditional method but the length is not long so can't merit a better quality.”

SEKT

“An acceptable quality wine with reasonable intensity and complexity. Length is not long, can't merit a better quality.”

In contrast, the following candidate gave more accurate assessments of the quality and more detailed reasoning for their choice.

PROSECCO

“Good quality, with a primary fruit driven style which is persistent and very slight sweetness which is balanced by the acidity. A fresh, simple, easy drinking wine which is made to be drunk young and lacks the complexity of better quality.”

CAVA

“Good quality. Fairly simple with autolysis giving a little complexity. Development, intensity and length indicate a better than basic quality wine, but the bitterness on the finish and rather low acidity prevent this achieving a higher rating.”

SEKT

“Very good quality. Well made and structured with clearly defined varietal character. The fruit balances the fresh acidity, giving a good length and clean finish. The hint of kerosene gives some complexity, but the fruit intensity on the palate was a little disappointing.”

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Question 2 – In relation to sparkling wine, write about each of the following: | |
| a) Dom Perignon b) Crémant d’Alsace c) New Zealand sparkling wine | |
| Answers: 209 | Passes: 151 (72%) |

This was a very good result, not just a high pass rate, but also a good spread of merit and distinction grades.

Nevertheless, there were inevitable weaknesses in some scripts. There was a tendency to only write about Dom Perignon (the man), forgetting about the wine itself which was also a significant part of this question. Despite the danger of candidates having to resort to “generic” information on New Zealand sparkling wine, the majority of them were able to give logical responses here, even if they were sometimes short on the specific detail. The key points the examiner was looking for were as follows:

- some indication of the relative “newness” of sparkling wine production here (first produced by Salaks in 1971, but really came to prominence with the launch of Lindauer in 1981)
- mention of the key areas of production and the reasons for these (climate, soil etc)
- discussion of grape varieties (not just Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, but also Sauvignon Blanc and earlier attempts with Muller Thurgau),
- most common method of production (not just traditional) and the significance of reliability of vintages and use (or not) of reserve wines
- examples of key producers.

March 2010

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| Question 1 – Yellowtail Bubbles, Louis Roederer NV, Asti Martini NV | |
| <i>Answers: 248</i> | <i>Passes: 209 (84%)</i> |

This was a very high pass rate with a good spread of results across the three pass grades. Clearly the Asti Martini was an easy option here, and the autolytic and elegant character of the Champagne made this relatively easy to place as well. The majority of candidates were also able to assess the quality of the “cheap” Yellowtail well even though they may not have been able to identify it if asked. However, as this was not required, it really did not matter in this event.

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| Question 2 – In relation to sparkling wine, write about each of the following: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Codorniu b) Clairette de Die Tradition c) Maturation of Champagne | |
| <i>Answers: 246</i> | <i>Passes: 126 (51%)</i> |

Compared to the tasting question, this was a very poor set of scripts, with more fail (unclassified) grades than any other.

There were a number of reasons for this:

- There was widespread confusion on Clairette de Die Tradition, both in terms of the grape used and the method of production.
- An alarming number of candidates had no idea who Codorniu were, with some placing it in the Rhone, describing it as a region in Spain, a Grand Marque Champagne or a Crémant de Limoux, or at best, simply writing about Cava in general terms rather than specifically about the wines produced by Codorniu.
- Maturation of Champagne was good in the majority of cases, but there were still some who wrote in broad terms about Champagne production rather than limiting their comments to the various stages where maturation takes place, such as in the use of reserve wine, lees ageing/autolysis, and maturation both pre- and post-disgorging.

June 2010

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| Question 1 – Vouvray Brut 2005, Bruno Paillard Rose NV, Miru Miru NV (New Zealand) | |
| <i>Answers: 228</i> | <i>Passes: 150 (66%)</i> |

A good set of results, with a good distribution of merit and distinction grades. Most candidates spotted the quality on the Champagne, but a large number mistook the Vouvray for Cava. It is likely that they confused the wet wool character of the Chenin Blanc grape for the rubbery aroma associated with Cava. However, this wine was also floral and had far more subtle autolytic character than a Cava would, and this should have led candidates away from making this error.

As with most of the tasting questions, the assessment of quality is still an area of considerable weakness for many candidates, with comments being brief, simplistic, often just repeating comments made in the tasting note itself, without explaining how or why these indicate quality (or lack of it), or including irrelevant observations relating to the wine’s “readiness for drinking” or provenance. For example, the following candidate wrote the following assessments of quality for the three wines:

Wine 1

“Tank method with Chardonnay grapes, ready to drink, can improve”

Wine 2

“Traditional method, good acidity with medium length, ready to drink, can improve”

Wine 3

“Good acidity balance with rich flavour of fruit, can improve, Chardonnay grapes”

None of these is an assessment of the quality of the wine.

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| <p>Question 2 – In relation to sparkling wine, write about each of the following:</p> <p>a) Champagne Districts b) Cava Grapes c) Prosecco</p> | |
| <p><i>Answers: 226</i></p> | <p><i>Passes: 108 (48%)</i></p> |

This was a very poor result. In general, where candidates failed it was due to lack of detail in their scripts. There is still a considerable percentage of candidates consistently achieving fail (unclassified) grades whose level of knowledge has not progressed beyond Advanced Certificate.

For example, to cover the section of Champagne districts well, candidates needed to include detail on topography, impact of climate on choice of grape variety etc for the five districts of Montagne de Reims, Cote des Blancs, Vallée de la Marne, Aube and Cotes de Sézanne, not just name the first three and state which varieties are grown there. Similarly, they needed to cover the additional grapes used in Cava beyond the main three and Chardonnay, and have a good understanding of what they contribute to the wines. Finally on Prosecco, it was noticeable where students had taken note of the 2009 legislation and the use of the term “Glera” outside of the DOC(a) area.

With the paragraph sections in Units 4, 5 and 6 it is a good idea to think in terms of trigger words or questions. For example, with both the section on Champagne districts and Cava grapes, the logical approach is:

- What are they?
- Where are they? (Champagne districts)
- What are their key characteristic/distinguishing features?
- How do they influence wine style (Cava grapes)

The section on Prosecco would work well using the six factors as the basis for the answer, (grape variety, climate, soil, weather, viticulture, vinification, maturation) along with a description of the wine style.

The following candidate achieved high marks in all three sections:

Section a)

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| <p>Champagne districts stretch over approx 30,000 hectares, currently, and within that are divided up into five regions:</p> <p>Montagne de Reims: the soils in this area are predominately chalk, and there are large amount of Pinot Noir variety is planted here. 9 Grand Cru vineyards are in this area.</p> <p>Valle de la Marne: this area is prone to Spring frosts, and therefore is more extensively planted with the late budding Pinot Meunier. It has 2 Grand Cru vineyards, the soil is also high content of chalk.</p> <p>Cote des Blancs: the east facing slopes of this area are where mainly chardonnay is planted - protected from the risk of spring frost, again chalk is abundant in high quantity in the soils. 6 Grand Cru vineyards are to be found here.</p> <p>Cote des B : this too is mainly planted with Chardonnay grapes, although it does not have any Grand Cru vineyards.</p> <p>The Aube: the final region, which is set slightly separately to the rest. This too does not have any Grand Cru vineyards.</p> |
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Section b)

There are three varieties of indigenous grapes which are allowed, and most commonly found in Cava: Macebeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada, although increasingly, other varieties such as Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are being used.

By law, the Cava grapes must be grown in one of 6 districts (EU law introduced in 1986) these are: Aragon, Basque, Catalonia (which produces 95% of Cava's grapes) Navarra, Rioja and Valencia.

The three indigenous varieties have the following characteristics:

Macebeo - (Known as Vinya in Rioja - where 100% is used in its Cava), this variety likes the limestone soils of the region and produces floral aromas

Xarel-lo - is found at lower altitudes, as is early ripening and prone to frosts. Within the grapes provides distinctive early characters, and are quicker to mature in wines.

Parellada - this grape is planted predominately at higher altitude, the variety provides higher acidity and a finesse to the blend.

The best grapes tend to be grown at higher altitudes, and on limestone soils.

Section c)

Prosecco is the name of the grape ~~and~~ variety and the wine it produces in the Veneto region of North East Italy, where it is native to the area.

A cool, continental climate, the region is influenced by the Alpine areas close by, with cool winters.

The DOCG is Prosecco di Conegliano Valdobbiadene, this is surrounded by the larger DOC Prosecco.

Recent change in legislation now means that grapes outside these delimited areas must be called Glera. There is also an IGT produced - Colli Trevigiani. A sub region also exists, which has an even cooler climate, and has potential for ~~even~~ higher quality - this is called Cartizze.

Prosecco is produced using a variation on the tank method (autoclavi, imitation). Prosecco is fairly neutral in flavour, yet high in acidity and this is important. Grapes are crushed and chilled to preserve aroma, and undergo second fermentation takes place in large tanks, where yeast + sugar added. Ferment is arrested by chilling down to below 0°C. The wine is filtered, and sometimes pasteurised and bottled. Two styles of Prosecco are produced: Frizzante; which is a semi sparkling style, and Spumante - a fully sparkling style. Approx 7 million of Frizzante produced a year, and 20 million Spumante.

Unit 6, Fortified Liqueur Wines

The examination for Unit 6 was run on three separate occasions in the academic year 2009/10, in November, March and June. The overall pass rate for the unit as a whole for all these dates combined was 66%.

The questions and individual pass rates for each of the three examination dates were as follows:

November 2009

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| Question 1 – 10 year old Sercial Madeira, 20 year old Tawny Port, 10 year old Malmsey Madeira | |
| <i>Answers: 198</i> | <i>Passes: 123 (62%)</i> |

Most of those achieving a pass grade, did so with a basic pass. In a number of instances candidates did not read the question carefully enough and therefore missed that these were all from the same country. Even amongst those that did spot this information, there were still some who forgot that Madeira is part of Portugal, so rather than considering that the line-up could contain wines from both, they assumed that all three were Madeiras on the basis of identifying one or two as such. Those who opted for three Madeiras tended to write very similar tastings notes for all three wines, missing the subtle differences between them. There was also a tendency for some candidates to “hedge their bets” by resorting to the use of the term “medium” across the board. This led to some low marks as most of the structural components of these wines were far from “medium”. Similarly, many candidates are imprecise in their assessment of development, referring to “signs of development” or “showing development”. The problem here is that the examiner has to make a judgement on whether this implies that the wine is developing or fully developed, which they are unable to do, so no mark can be awarded.

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| Question 2 – In relation to fortified wine, write about each of the following: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Sherry grape varieties b) Banyuls c) Modernisation in the Douro | |
| <i>Answers: 197</i> | <i>Passes: 112 (57%)</i> |

Results on this question were fairly polarised. There were almost as many achieving distinction as merit (around 15% of candidates for each grade band), but also as many achieving fail (unclassified) as pass (25% of candidates for each grade band). The large number of candidates achieving these very low marks, suggests that many

of them either did not prepare sufficiently for this exam, or simply are not yet ready for a qualification of this level as these were three very mainstream topics.

The sections on Sherry grape varieties and Banyuls were largely factual. For the first, the various varieties needed to be identified followed by discussion of their characteristics both in the vineyard and the winery and what they contribute to the wines in which they are used. The second section would have generated the correct information if candidates had considered the “six factors” (climate, grape variety, soil, vinification, maturation), along with some comments on the various styles and quality levels.

The section on the Douro was also largely factual in terms of developments in the vineyard and the winery, but better candidates also brought a commercial focus to their response, referring to the introduction of new Port styles such as Croft Pink and Warre’s Otima. This commercial awareness is fundamental to success in the WSET Diploma in all units, not just Unit 1.

March 2010

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| Question 1 – Beauges de Venise, 10 year old Tawny Port, Rutherglen Muscat | |
| <i>Answers: 172</i> | <i>Passes: 116 (67%)</i> |

This was actually a disappointing pass rate with most candidates achieving basic pass grades rather than higher grades.

There were a number of reasons for low grades. There was considerable confusion between colour definition for ruby, garnet and tawny. Some candidates also do not read questions carefully enough and in this instance gave the country of origin when they had specifically been asked for the region. A large number also failed to understand **how** maturation affected the quality and style of these wines and some took a very narrow approach, assuming “maturation” only to mean bottle age rather than considering the whole process.

Compare the following explanation from a poor candidate with one from an excellent candidate:

Poor analysis

“Wine of good quality, fortified to arrest fermentation, so retain varietal aromas of Muscat grape”

The first two comments about quality and fortification are not relevant in a question asking how maturation affects quality and style. The latter comment is relevant but very simplistic.

The following candidate was far more explicit and precise:

“Brief storage in inert stainless steel preserves the fruit character of the Muscat grape. Freshness and primary aromas are key to the style of this wine. There is insufficient acidity and structure to mature further as the wine will become dull and cloying”.

This is good because the candidate has not only explained what ageing has taken place and how this affects the style, but has also considered the quality aspect of the question in their second observation.

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| Question 2 – In relation to fortified wine, write about each of the following: | |
| a) Emilio Lustau b) Autovinification c) Madeira grape varieties | |
| <i>Answers: 172</i> | <i>Passes: 97 (56%)</i> |

A number of candidates felt the question on Emilio Lustau was unfair because this producer is not mentioned in the study notes. Examination questions are not dictated by what is covered in either the study notes or the lectures candidates attend. It is the learning outcomes of the qualification specification that determine whether or not a question is “within scope”. One of the key learning outcomes of this unit is demonstrating an understanding of the trade and legal structures of the regions and districts covered by this unit. Trade structures are defined as shippers, co-operatives, groups, associations, Quintas/Bodegas and influential individual companies. Whilst we clearly would not expect candidates to have a knowledge of every producer within this category, we would expect them to have a basic awareness of those who are active on the global market, such as Emilio Lustau.

The best way to approach this type of question is to ask yourself questions, such as “who, what, where, when, how”. This should ensure you cover the key facts the examiner is looking for. For example:

Who are they? – award winning Sherry producer and a driving force behind the battle to improve the image of Sherry

What? – what do they produce? – an extensive range of Sherries in all traditional styles from supermarket own-label to top quality VOS and VORS wines as well as innovative wines such as East India, single cask, single vintage Sherries and Almacenista Sherries

Where? – this could be covered from two angles – where are they based (in Jerez) and where are they active (in the global markets).

When? – not a particularly important aspect of the question, but it could give those candidates with strong commercial knowledge a chance to shine by indicating when they were founded

How? – an important part of this question was Lustau's involvement in the production of Almacenista Sherries, and this certainly needed further discussion, ie what are they and how are they produced?

Any candidate with knowledge of the global market for Sherry should have been able to answer this in basic terms.

The following candidate gave excellent responses in two sections, and although the response on Emilio Lustau was the shortest, it was still sufficient for a sound pass grade, allowing this candidate to achieve a distinction overall

Emilio Lustau

One of the last Sherry producers to be privately owned. Based in Jerez, Spain. They are unusually hard to visit, despite being of interest to the Sherry lover due to their production of Anada (ie single vintage) Sherries. Also unusually for the region, they are Spanish owned, rather than British (or formerly British). They are known to promote their wines as enthusiastically as any other producers, possibly more so given the quality aspect; a recent promotion in the US for example, underlined food and wine matching with the various styles, including recipes. Not one of the oldest Sherry companies, they were founded in the 19th century around the time that the dominance of Port was fading away.

Autovinification

This is the unpowered answer to the question of how to mechanize port must production when choosing not to use human feet in lagares. Developed in Algeria in the mid 20th century for use in table wine production areas, the system – also known as Ducellier – was developed by the port producers for the same reasons, ie that it is unpowered, effective, reliable, comparatively cheap, and a godsend in remote or undeveloped regions where electricity is unreliable, even if available. Port based wines require a fast (<5 days) fermentation before being stopped by brandy addition at around 6% abv. However, to obtain the desired level of colour extraction in this time without extraction of harsh / bitter seed tannins by overextraction due to harsh processing is difficult; hence why human feet have been used for so long. The autovinifier uses a 2 chamber system connected by a pipe. The CO₂ released during fermentation is trapped at the bottom of the system, in the lower chamber, and as it accumulates, the downwards pressure forces the wine into the upper chamber. The diagram below is not accurate, but it gives the general idea. (The diagram's inaccuracy is that it doesn't show the correct return path for the wine.) As the upper chamber fills, it reaches a pre-set level, which opens a valve and returns the wine back below, cascading over the fermenting cap and to all intents and purposes "pumping over" the cap to extract the colour from the skins. Because the pressure is derived from the natural CO₂ production it means that, with the correct valve settings, the system can run 24 hrs without power or intervention, achieving the rapid and efficient extraction required. Its use was pioneered by Taylor's, but its use has spread throughout the region, to the point that it is now used by many producers unless they are making ports which they wish to ferment naturally due to natural yeasts on the skin (encouraged by lagar pressing) rather than inoculating with cultivated yeasts.

(Examiners comment – a basic diagram was included as referred to by the candidate in their script. Unfortunately, the script is too faint to scan and reproduce by this means as others have been, so it is not possible to include the diagram here.)

Madeira grape varieties

These are split amongst hybrids (now technically banned), standard varieties such as Tinta Negra Mole (used for “average” and cooking Madeiras) and the 4 classic noble varieties Sercial, Verdelho, Bual and Malmsey. Malmsey was the “original” variety planted on Madeira by the Portuguese in the 16th century; it is originally a Greek variety from the Peloponnese, named after the Port town Malvasie, from where the name Malvasia (a synonym) is derived too. It is used for the sweetest, richest wines and consequently is planted on the warmest, lowest sites on the southern side of the island. Higher on the same slopes, will be planted Bual (aka Boal), the next sweetest variety, usually ripened to 40-60 g/l residual sugar as opposed to Malmsey’s >60 g/l. on the north side of the island are found Verdelho (25-40 g/l RS) again on the lower slopes as befits the 2nd driest style of all on the cooler side of the island and above it grows Sercial for the driest style of all (<25 g/l RS). Tinta Negra Mole used to be planted across most of the island, and is vinified to any style from dry to rich; it cannot use the names of the true noble varieties. It is used both for standard drinking wines and also for cooking wines; either way, rather than being maderised through armazens de calor heating rooms, or outside, as per the better wines, it is heated in cuba de calor or estufagem systems both of which are more brutal ways of heating the wine more quickly and cost effectively, although the end product is not as exquisite.

June 2010

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| Question 1 – Amontillado Muy Viejo VORS, Vintage Maury 2007, Solera Reserva Pedro Ximenez | |
| <i>Answers: 318</i> | <i>Passes: 251 (79%)</i> |

This was a very good result with 70% of candidates falling within the pass and merit grade bands. With three very different styles of wine chosen for this paper, candidates should have been able to achieve high marks for the descriptions alone, and they should also have been able to give logical responses in the concluding section where they were required to describe how the method of production accounts for the style even if they were not able to identify the wines themselves accurately.

The following candidate did this well in the case of the Maury:

“I think it is a Vin Doux Naturel. It is made from the (black) Grenache grape which explains the ruby colour. The fortification would have been done to interrupt the fermentation part way through leaving a strong sweet wine. The style is fruit driven as VDNs often are, so this would have only had very short maturation and certainly not oxidative maturation so that it retains vibrant colour and primary fruit aromas.”

Contrast this with the following script relating to the same wine, where the candidate also writes about fortification during fermentation, but does not explain how this influences style:

"I think this is Ruby Port. Fortification during fermentation to arrest the yeast turning sugar into alcohol with grape spirit (77% abv). One part aguardente to four part of wine. May be aged up to 3 years. Blend of young wines."

This candidate has simply described how Port is fortified, but this was not what they were asked to do.

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| Question 2 – In relation to fortified wine, write about each of the following: | |
| a) Jerez soil types b) Rutherglen Liqueur Muscat c) Vintage Port | |
| <i>Answers: 317</i> | <i>Passes: 200 (63%)</i> |

This was a reasonably good set of scripts with an equal split between candidates achieving pass and merit. However, what the pass rate does not show, is the number of very poor fails from those candidates achieving fewer than 45%. This is a common story in most units of the Diploma and highlights those candidates who have not progressed sufficiently from Advanced Certificate to succeed at this higher level.

Common errors were writing only about one soil type in Jerez rather than distinguishing between the three the examiner was looking for and writing about Port in general terms rather than limiting their answer to detail specific to VINTAGE Port.