Why not a wine drive?

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Many beginners must wonder at the skill of the National Wine Judge and envy his ability to distinguish and measure the individual characteristics which make up a properly balanced wine. But wine is made to be drunk and to be enjoyed and to do this there is no real need to analyse it in detail: the beginner is as well able as the expert to say whether he likes a wine or not.

With this in mind the Wine Drive described below was devised by and has been an annual event for the last three years with the Richmond Guild of Winemakers.

The Drive sets out to place eight wines in order of merit and experience has shown clearly that the best wines do indeed come to the top. The Rules are simple, everyone can take part and the whole affair is enormous fun and a great "mixer".

The basic idea

Everyone tastes every wine and every wine is compared with every other wine. There is no complicated scoring. At each step two wines are compared and a judgment is made as to which is the better regardless of colour, dryness, sweetness or alcoholic content.
(*We would suggest that it would be even more useful if colour and type of wine to be entered were specified.—Editor*)

A convenient number of bottles is eight, two being compared at each of four tables in each Round. The number of combinations of 8 bottles taken two at a time is 28, so that with 4 tables there will be 7 rounds. Allowing, say, 10 minutes for each round and a twenty minute period of final discussion the whole thing should be over in about an hour and a half.

Two of the eight bottles can usefully be a good quality and a poor quality commercial wine (decanted of course into plain bottles). These two wine then act as a kind of calibration of the scale of the final results and would be expected to occupy high and low places respectively.

How it works

Seated at each of four tables numbered one to four clockwise in a square, with plenty of space between, are two Sponsor Groups (the Leader, usually the provider of the wine, wearing a label showing the letter corresponding to the wine being sponsored) with their respective wines. Other members of the Group may also wear labels. The wine bottles are labelled A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H, and at the start bottles A and B are on Table one, C and D on Table two, E and F on Table three and G and H on Table four.

The Sponsor Group are identified throughout with a particular bottle of wine. They remain with the bottle (except during the actual tasting sessions) and move with their bottle from table to table as a Group during the whole event.

The Master of Ceremonies, who should have the ability of controlling clearly and precisely the movements of a wine circle after an hour or so of merriment, stands by two Charts. These Charts must be large and clearly visible and readable to all. Chart A gives details of the moves for each round while Chart B gives the *Running* Scores. The M.C. should have means, say a small hand bell, of giving a signal for each move in the contest. The Round in progress must be prominently flagged on the Charts at each stage.

Scoring

Each table, at each tasting, makes a collective majority judgment on the total *relative* merits of the two wines. A total of three points *must* be awarded and no half points are permissible. A distinction must be made between two nearly equal wines be they both good or both bad and two points awarded to the best and 1 point to the other. If, however, one wine is outstandingly good compared with the other it may be given three points and the other nil. Conversely a very poor wine may be given nil and the other three points.

The Running Score (Chart B) should be up-dated after each round and the *cumulative total* entered so that the emergence of the best wines is seen by all during the tasting.

Operation

The circulation of bottles for tasting is anti-clockwise. The circulation of Sponsor Groups with their bottles for changing tables is clockwise from table to table, i.e. for Tasting from Table one to Table four, from two to one, from three to two and from four to three, and for Sponsor Circulation from Table one to Table two, from two to three, from three to four and from four to one.

The scenario goes like this (see Chart A):

Conclusion and discussion

M.C. enters judged order of bottles on Score Sheet (Chart B) and asks each Sponsor Group Leader, who will normally be the maker of the wine, in turn to give details of the wine.

Finally, there is usually plenty of discussion and exchange of information, and the noise level has invariably risen in remarkable fashion.

If you want a lively and informative evening, try a wine drive. Far better than whist!

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CHART A
CIRCULATION OF BOTTLES & SPONSORS

ROUND	TABLE			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
1	A B	C D	E F	G H
2	A H	B C	D E	F G
3	A F	H C B	D E	G
4	A G	F C	H D B	E
5	A E	G C	F D H	B
6	E H	A C	G D	F B
7	H F	E C A	D G	B

CHART B
RUNNING SCORE

Round	BOTTLE							
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
Order								
Sponsor								
Remarks								

The scenario goes like this (see Chart A):

Round 1

Start

At Table	1	2	3	4
are Sponsors with Bottles	A B	C D	E F	G H
Bottles move anti-clockwise	C D	E F	G H	A B

Taste

Compare wines and decide on points.

After five to ten minutes M.C. asks spokesman at each table to give score which M.C. immediately enters in large figures visible to all on Running Score Chart B.

Bottles move clockwise returning to Sponsor Groups.

Sponsors and bottles move clockwise to next table for start of next Round as follows (see Chart A):

Bottle B with Sponsors moves from Table 1 to Table 2
,, D ,, ,, ,, ,, ,, 2 ,, ,, 3
,, F ,, ,, ,, ,, ,, 3 ,, ,, 4
,, H ,, ,, ,, ,, ,, 4 ,, ,, 1

Position now is:

Round 2

Start

At Table	1	2	3	4
are Sponsors with Bottles	A H	B C	D E	F G

Proceed as for Round 1 until tasting etc. is completed, scores recorded and bottles back with Sponsors.

Now move on to Rounds 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 moving in accordance with Chart A.