



COURT OF
MASTER
SOMMELIERS
Americas

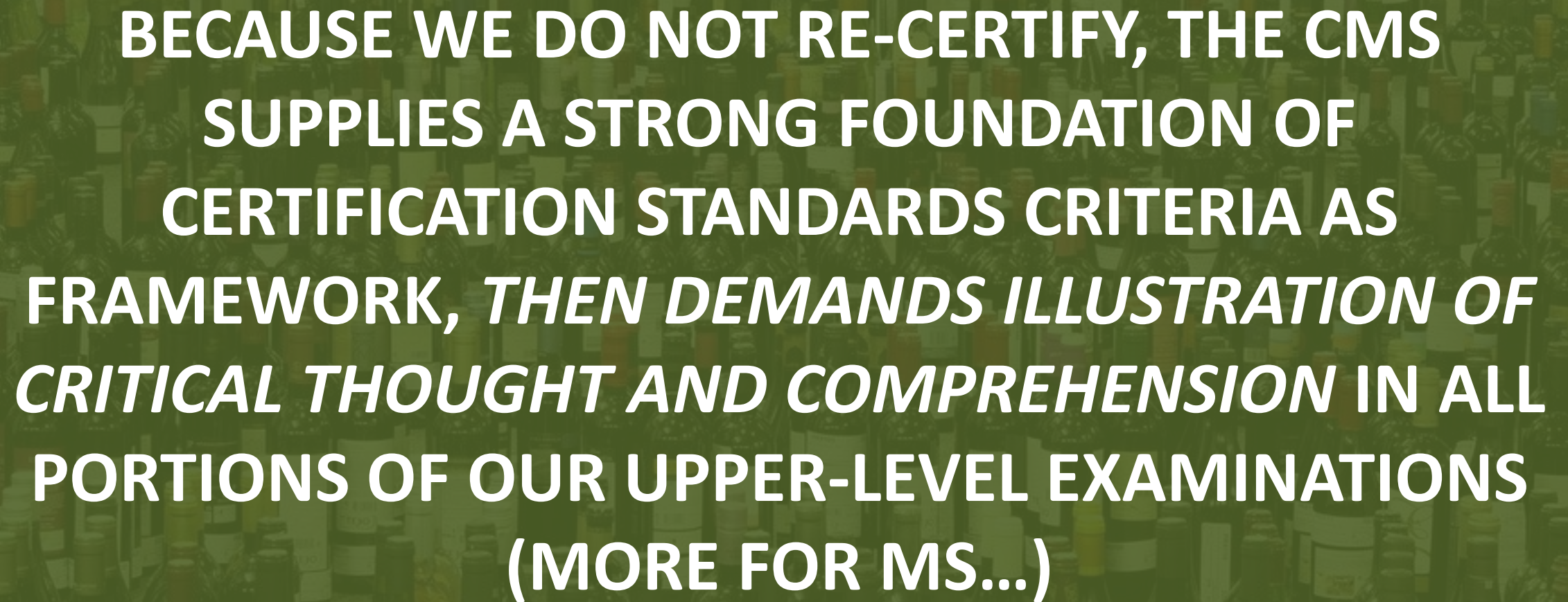
WHAT MAKES A WINE CLASSIC?

Shayn Bjornholm, MS
Examination Director, CMS-A

Mentoring Session – December 2024



WHY DOESN'T THE CMS JUST
TELL US? 😊



**BECAUSE WE DO NOT RE-CERTIFY, THE CMS
SUPPLIES A STRONG FOUNDATION OF
CERTIFICATION STANDARDS CRITERIA AS
FRAMEWORK, *THEN DEMANDS ILLUSTRATION OF
CRITICAL THOUGHT AND COMPREHENSION* IN ALL
PORTIONS OF OUR UPPER-LEVEL EXAMINATIONS
(MORE FOR MS...)**



**THE DEDUCTIVE TASTING PORTION DEMANDS YOU
BE ABLE TO MAKE YOUR OWN LIST OF CLASSIC
WINES BEYOND WHAT WE HAVE PUBLISHED**



**BY FORCING YOU TO DO SO IN PREPARATION FOR
OUR UPPER-LEVEL EXAMS, WE ARM YOU WITH
SKILL OF APPLYING THESE CONSIDERATIONS FOR
THE REST OF YOUR CAREER. AS CLASSIC WINES
EVOLVE (OFTEN QUICKLY), YOU REMAIN ABLE TO
DISCERN HALLMARKS & MAINTAIN
UNDERSTANDING OF REFERENCE POINT WINES**



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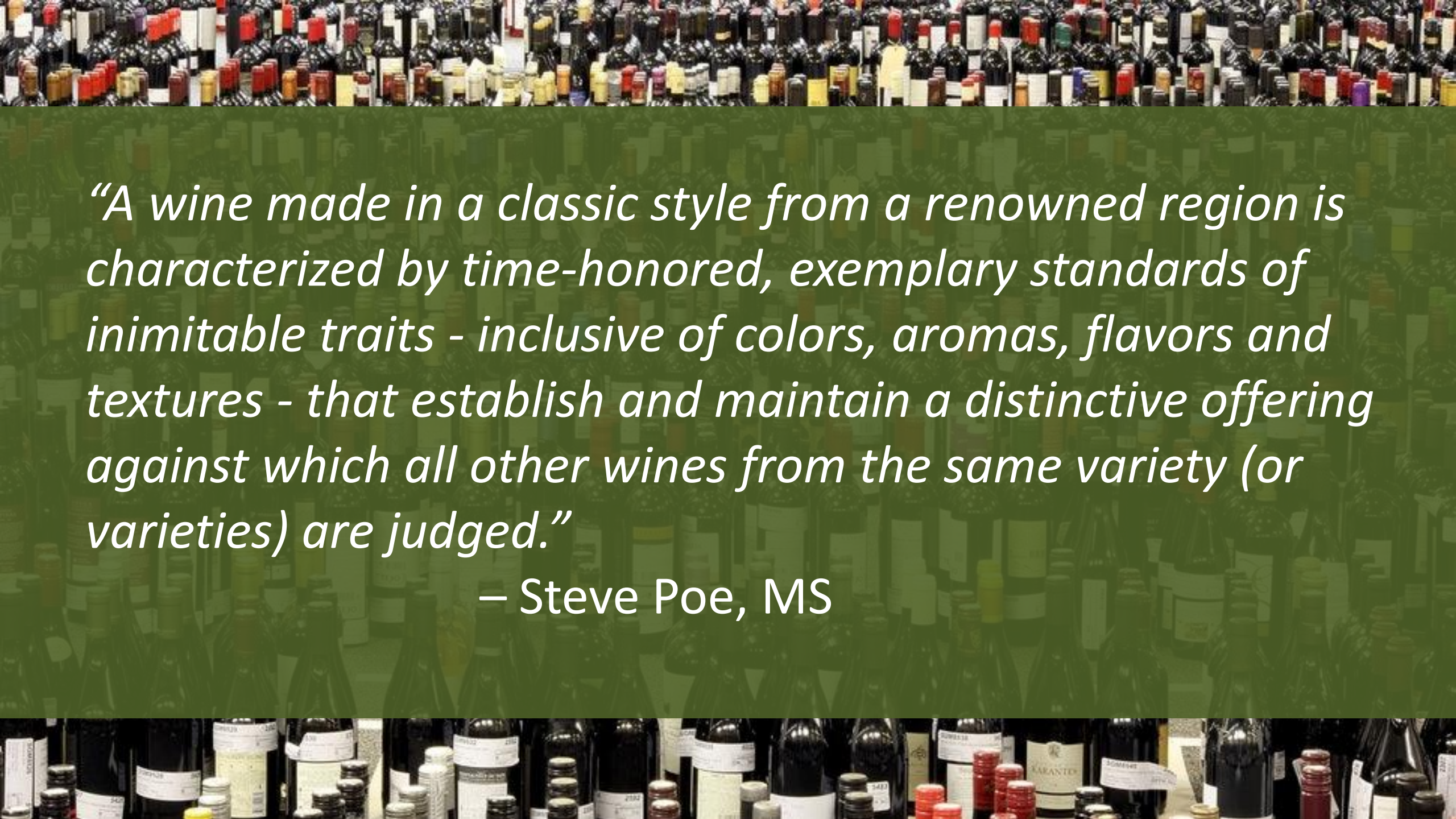
1 Criteria

2 Established: Original v. Modern

3 Stuck in the Middle...

4 New and Future

5 Exam Flight Construction



“A wine made in a classic style from a renowned region is characterized by time-honored, exemplary standards of inimitable traits - inclusive of colors, aromas, flavors and textures - that establish and maintain a distinctive offering against which all other wines from the same variety (or varieties) are judged.”

– Steve Poe, MS



“Even with the stylistic differences from one producer to the other, a taster should be able to identify key aromatic and structural clues that lead them to the grape or blend of grapes and a region.”

- Max Kast, MS





“Taste a range of producers in every region - if you only taste López de Heredia, you’re not learning how to identify Rioja, you’re learning how to identify López de Heredia.”

- Mia Van de Water, MS



COURT OF MASTER SOMMELIERS, AMERICAS ADVANCED SOMMELIER - LEVEL WINES
LIST OF EXAMINABLE GRAPE VARIETIES & REGIONS
<p>The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas recognizes the vast array of quality wine regions, grape varieties, and styles throughout the world. Our Deductive Tasting examinations are designed to test a candidate's ability to accurately describe and name wines without prior knowledge of their identity; please see the <i>Deductive Tasting Format</i>. The following is a list of Advanced Sommelier-level wines, which constitute the majority of the six (6) wines poured at both Advanced and Master Sommelier Tasting examination flights. While this list is subject to change as the wine world evolves, we only test to wines which we define as "classic"; please see the <i>What Makes A Wine Classic</i> checklist.</p> <p>* Note: Other wines or alcoholic beverages are tested to in other exam sections for purposes beyond Deductive Tasting.</p>
HOW TO USE THIS LIST OF EXAMINABLE GRAPE VARIETIES AND REGIONS
<p>Grape Variety & Country of Origin</p> <p>Within a stated Grape Variety, there is a Country of Origin - often with its major region of note. These country of origins/major regions should be differentiated for study. You must choose one as part of your Final Conclusion in an exam.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Listed with the Chardonnay grape variety are the countries of France, The United States, and Australia. Chardonnay from each of these countries must be studied individually. In an exam, always remember to name the country of origin in your final conclusion. <i>Example:</i> This is a Chardonnay from France.....</p>
<p>Country of Origin and Sub-Regions</p> <p>To the right of the stated Country of Origin, there are Sub-Region[s] in bold denoted by a " * " - . These sub-regions should be differentiated for study. You must choose one as part of your Final Conclusion in an exam.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Looking again at Chardonnay, this time more specifically at Chardonnay from Burgundy, France, there are three sub-regions listed - Chablis, Côte de Beaune, and Mâconnais. Each of these sub-regions must be studied individually. In an exam, the sub-region must be chosen and mentioned in your final conclusion. <i>Example:</i> This is a Chardonnay, from France, from Burgundy, from the Côte de Beaune.....</p>
<p>More on Sub-Regions</p> <p>Multiple Sub-Regions separated by a " / " - are to be treated as interchangeable versions for study and examination credit. You must choose one sub-region for your Final Conclusion in an exam.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Listed with the Chardonnay grape variety in the USA-California category are Carneros / Napa Valley / Russian River Valley / Sonoma Coast / Sonoma Valley. All of these sub-regions can be studied together and would be graded equally as part of your final conclusion in an exam. So, if you conclude the wine is from Russian River Valley and its actually is from Napa Valley, you will still get credit. You must mention one of these sub-regions in your Final Conclusion. <i>Example:</i> This is a Chardonnay, from the United States, from California, from Napa Valley.....</p>
<p>Appellations and Official Classifications</p> <p>To the right of the stated Sub-Region[s], there may be Appellation[s] and/or Official Classification[s] in italics. Appellations or classifications separated by a comma should be differentiated for study. You must choose one as part of your Final Conclusion in an exam.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Back to the Chardonnay example from Burgundy, France, next to the sub-regions of Chablis, Côte de Beaune, and Mâconnais, you will see the appellations and classifications to focus on within that sub-region. As an example with the Côte de Beaune, the focus would be on the Major Village AOPs for study. Within those AOPs the classifications of study would be the Village, Premier Cru and Grand Cru wines. In an exam, both of these must be mentioned. <i>Example:</i> This is a Chardonnay, from France, from Burgundy, from the Côte de Beaune, from Chassagne-Montrachet, Premier Cru.....</p>
<p>More on Appellations and Classifications</p> <p>Multiple Appellation[s] and/or Classification[s] separated by a " / " - are to be treated as interchangeable versions for study and examination credit. You must choose one for your final conclusion in an exam.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Listed with the Chénin Blanc grape variety from the Loire Valley of France, are Montlouis and Vouvray Demi-Sec. These wines are considered interchangeable for exam purposes - you do not need to be able to differentiate between the two. NOTE: Vouvray joins Savennières Sec, as a separate "region" for its classification; it is important to study the differences between Demi-Sec and Sec. In an exam, you will need to choose one appellation for your final conclusion. <i>Example:</i> This is a Chénin Blanc, from France, from the Loire Valley, from Vouvray, Vouvray Demi-Sec.....</p>
<p>Wine Style</p> <p>To the right of the Official Classification[s], there may be underlined categories such as Dry or Oaked. These are general guidelines to help focus your studies and are dependent upon Appellation[s] and/or Official Classification[s].</p>

CRITERIA

As you investigate a wide world of wines (and ALL beverages), some questions to ask...

IS ITS FLAVOR PROFILE UNIQUE AND DISTINCTIVE?

1

GRAPE VARIETY

2

SPECIFIC TO ONE REGION

3

SOLE COMBINATION OF
CHARACTERISTICS



“Impeccable quality is essential.”
– Madeline Triffon, MS



DOES IT HAVE AN ESTABLISHED QUALITY LEVEL?

1

WITHIN GRAPE VARIETY

2

WITHIN CATEGORY

3

WITHIN GASTRONOMY
WORLD



“Wines can become classic in a relatively short time based on market preferences. Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, Argentine Malbec and Torrontés, Aussie Shiraz have all risen from non-existent to classic in a few decades.”

- Wayne Belding, MS





“The character of the wine must come from either historic regions or modern regions that are highly relevant within the market.”

- James Bube, MS



DOES IT HAVE GLOBAL MARKET PRESENCE?

1

CONSUMERS &
PROFESSIONALS

2

HISTORY & LORE

3

ICONIC PRODUCERS



DEDUCTIVE TASTING QUALIFICATIONS



QUESTION	Y	N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Grape Variety/Blend of Grape Varieties have a unique combination of visual, olfactory and structural characteristics? 		
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IF THE WINE YOU ARE STUDYING OR TASTING
DOESN'T CHECK 'YES' FOR ALL OF THOSE BOXES,
IT DOESN'T QUALIFY FOR OUR DEDUCTIVE
TASTING EXAMINATION





SOME ESTABLISHED WINES LACK ONE OR TWO OF
THE DEDUCTIVE TASTING PARAMETERS FOR
CLASSIC...BUT STILL HAVE GREAT MERIT FOR
SERVICE, THEORY AND/OR BUSINESS OF THE
SOMMELIER





ESTABLISHED

Long-established region with a
plethora of producers and a
strong identity



A close-up, artistic photograph of several wine glasses. One glass in the foreground is filled with a deep red wine. Another glass to the right is partially filled with a lighter, golden-colored liquid. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. A semi-transparent dark green rectangular box is centered over the image, containing white text.

ORIGINAL VS. MODERN

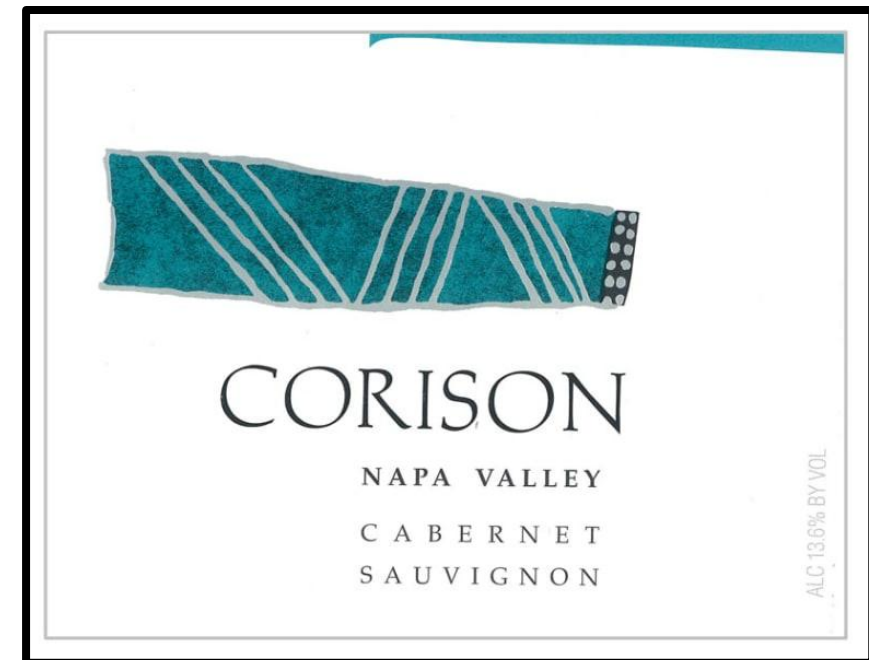
Some long-established regions have developed an additional, equally vital stylistic interpretation.

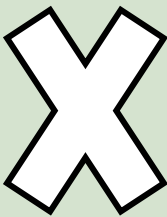
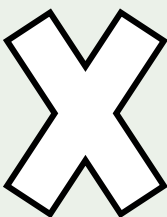


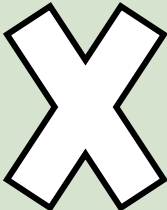
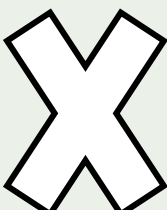


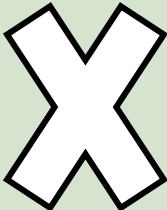
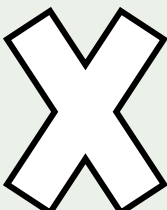
O.G. Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon: Corison

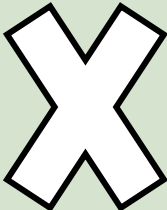
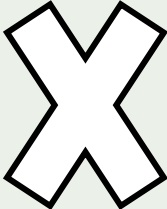
- Pyrazines
- Moderate Plus Alcohol & Astringent Tannins
- Fruit Just Ripe
- Oak Not As Forward

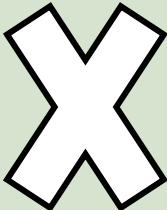
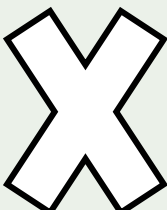


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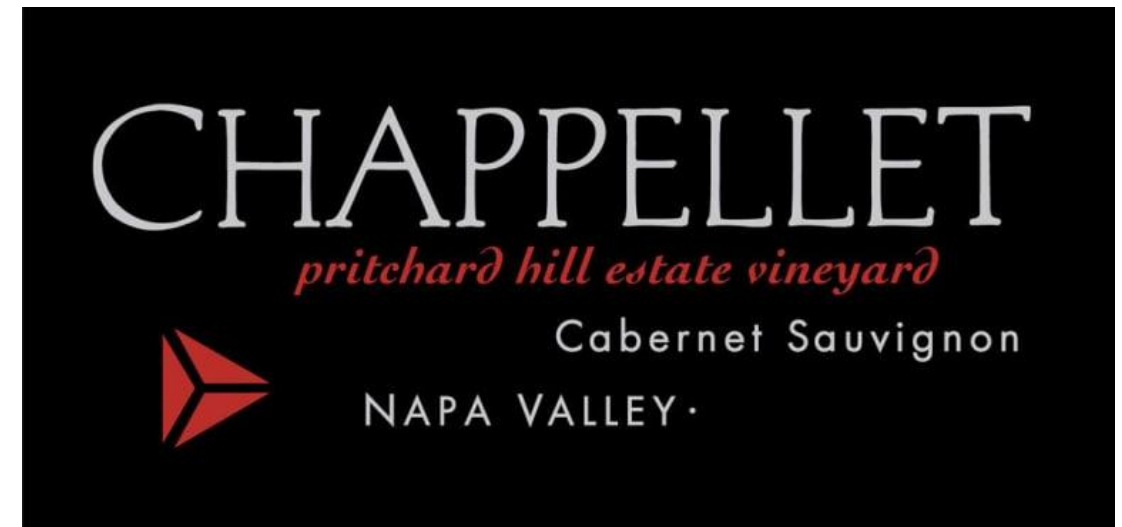
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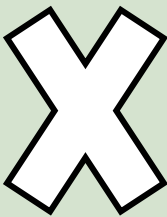
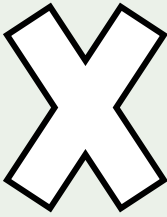
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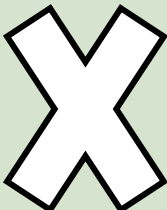
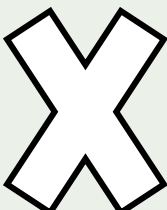


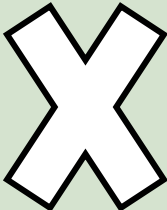
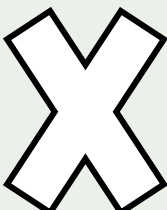
Modern Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon: Chappellet “Pritchard Hill”

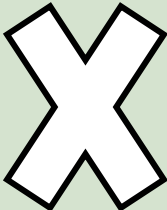
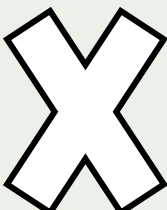
- Pyrazines More Subtle
- High Alcohol & Rounder Tannins
- Fruit Overripe/Liqueur-like
- Oak More Forward

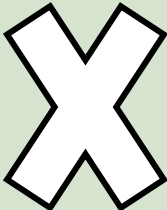
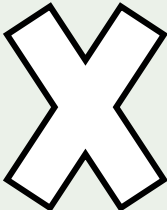


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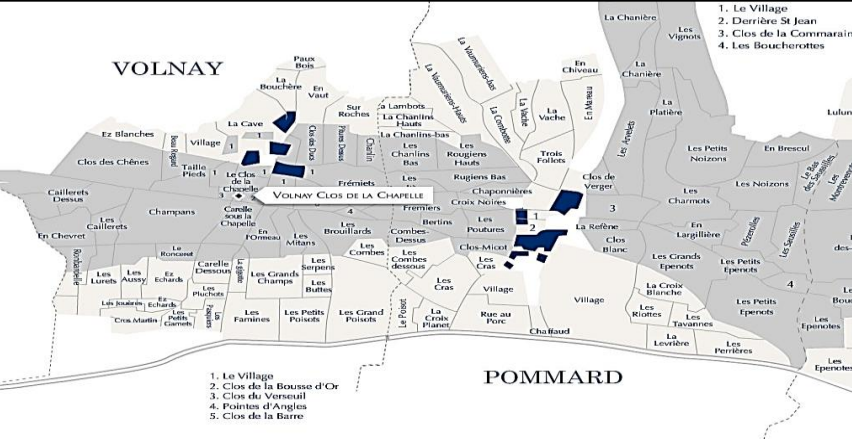
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A close-up, artistic photograph of several wine glasses. In the foreground, a glass filled with red wine is visible. Behind it, another glass is partially filled with a lighter-colored wine. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. A semi-transparent green rectangle is overlaid in the center, containing the title and text.

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

Some regions classically blur
the line of Old v. New World.
Some wines are simply atypical...

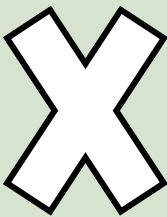
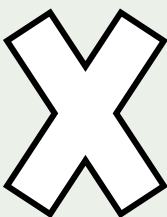


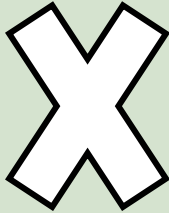
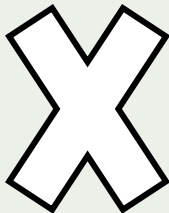


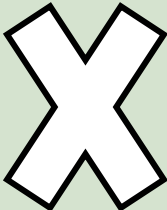
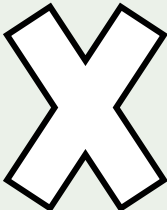
Pumped Up Red Burgundy:

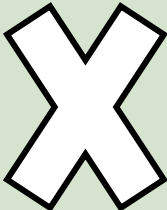
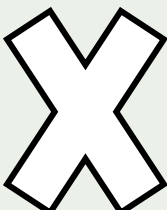
- Warm Vintage = Riper Fruit
- Medium Plus Alcohol
- Oak More Forward
- Too Youthful for Earth To Show

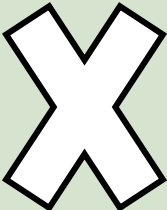
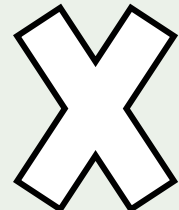


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A close-up, artistic photograph of several wine glasses. One glass in the foreground is filled with a deep red wine. The background shows the stems and bowls of other glasses, some containing lighter-colored liquids. The lighting is soft, creating highlights on the glass surfaces.

NEWLY ESTABLISHED

Some regions hit a tipping point
and become classic

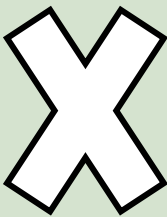
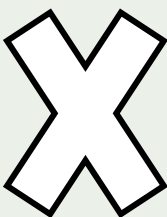


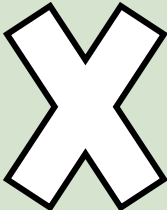
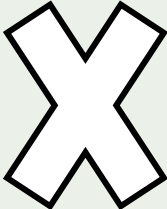


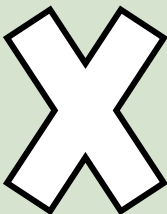
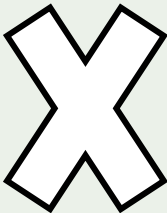
Etna Rosso DOC:

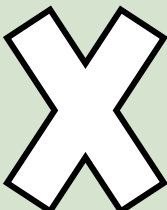
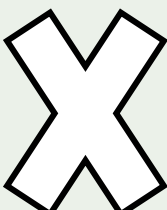
- Nerello Mascalese is like no other
- Looks like Pinot, Acts like Nebbiolo/Sangiovese in Structure
- Warm Climate “Italian”
- High quality potential

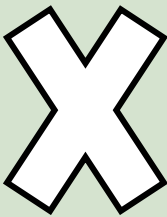
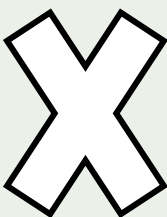


QUESTION	Y	N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Grape Variety/Blend of Grape Varieties have a unique combination of visual, olfactory and structural characteristics? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the Region's wines amongst the most renowned expressions for this Grape Variety/Blend of Grape Varieties in the world? 		

QUESTION	Y	N
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the Region have a unique set of Growing Circumstances for this Grape Variety apparent in its wine's flavors?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the Region have established Winemaking methods for this Grape Variety apparent in its wine's flavors?		

QUESTION	Y	N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Region's wine exhibit unique and similar characteristics in all but the most idiosyncratic vintages? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Region's wine have an established history and connection to place? 		

QUESTION	Y	N
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Does the Region have a quorum of Iconic Producers whose wines exhibit unique and similar characteristics regardless of stylistic differences?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Does the Region's wine have an Established Global Presence?		

QUESTION	Y	N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can the Specific Wine I am tasting right now illustrate all of these qualifications? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can the Region or Type of wine be shown in a fair, consistent manner within the structure of our Deductive Tasting examination? 		

A close-up, artistic photograph of several wine glasses. One glass in the foreground is filled with a deep red wine. Another glass to the left is partially filled with a lighter-colored wine. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. A semi-transparent dark green rectangular box is centered over the image, containing white text.

ON THE RADAR

Some regions seem to be approaching the tipping point to become Classic and suitable for Deductive Tasting

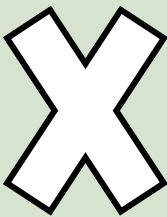
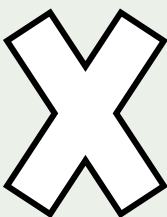


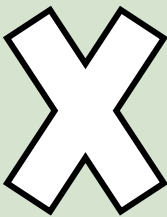
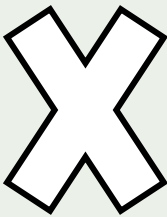


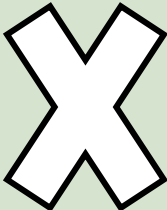
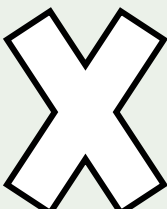
Rueda “Verdejo” DO:

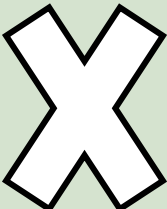
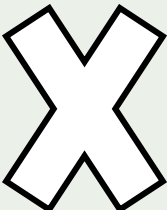
- Verdejo is unique
- Combo Tart/Ripe Fruits
- Dried Herbs & Pyrazines
- Dusty Flavors Yet Crisp Texture

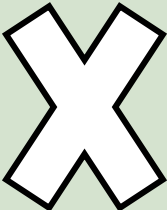
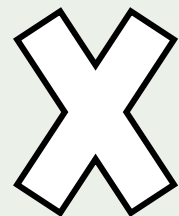


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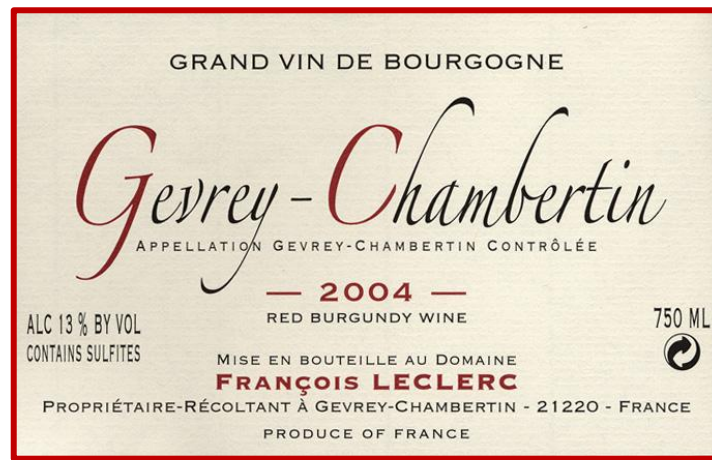
Go forth! Use this criteria to investigate the hospitality beverage world for yourselves. Create your own list of Classic Wines (and Beverages...and Cocktails...and Food Pairings). This is your ticket to owning your sommelier knowledge TO understand CMS certification!





Advanced v. Master Sommelier Flight Difficulty Level Considerations





Master Sommelier-Level Ability Wines:

- Published & Unpublished Classics
- Newly established
- Aged wines – white & red
- Sweet wines – table & fortified
- Subtler versions of long established



CMS Process

Setting Tasting Flights





Thank You

@MasterSommelierUS