

GRAPE PRESS

Winter 2019

The Quarterly Newsletter of the VIRGINIA VINEYARDS ASSOCIATION

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See You in February!



Chris Garsson

REGISTRATION IS OPEN: The VVA Winter Technical Meeting & Trade Show will be held Feb. 19-21 at the Charlottesville Omni. Plan to attend for an in-depth look at varietal breeding and new wine grape varietals, pest disease management updates, the annual wine reception, and much more. **To register and for more info, click here.**

Board Seats Open

Two seats on the VVA Board are up for election this winter: secretary and an at-large position. If you are interested in learning more about serving with the VVA to help grow our industry, please contact us at info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org by Dec. 20, 2019.

Nominate a Grower

The VVA is soliciting nominations for our annual Grower of the Year Award, which honors an individual whose commitment to and service of Virginia grape growing has helped to continue to push our industry forward and inspire new growers. Please email nominations to info@virginiavineyardsassociation.org or mail to PO Box 168, Waterford, VA 20197 by Jan. 15, 2020.

President's Corner

Preparing Vineyards For Change

By Nate Walsh
Walsh Family Wine

Like most of agriculture, the world of winegrowing is aware of and reacting to the changing climate, reflected in many places: the growth of plantings in England, in experiments with new varieties in traditional regions like Bordeaux, and in adjustments to altitudes and latitudes considered "plantable" in places like Chile and Argentina, for example.

Anybody, regardless of region, who expects to have a thriving winegrowing business 30 years from now needs to be aware of the expected changes and planning for them when applicable. Farming for quality is immensely nuanced and delicate, and that's excluding these altering variables.

Knowledge of what to expect from a changing climate should be motivating us to take a broad, wide-lensed perspective of our

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What Grape Varieties Should I Plant?

Va. Tech Viticulturist Emphasizes Knowing the Market and Researching Options

By Tony Wolf
Viticulturist, Virginia Tech

A question that we are asked by both neophytes and seasoned growers is, "What varieties should I plant/grow?"

A winery owner from the Shenandoah Valley, for example, recently mentioned that he had a local landowner interested in establishing a vineyard and supplying grapes

for that winery, or others, as supply and demand allowed. Varieties such as Albariño, Grüner Veltliner, Chenin blanc and more common Cabernet franc and Chardonnay were mentioned as possibilities.

My response to the winery owner's query was one of caution. Both quality and volume of Virginia grapes were generally up in 2019, and it's no secret that some of this crop struggled to find a home. Efforts are

underway to accurately gauge the volume of grapes sold in 2019, and to determine the need for additional tonnage in both the short and longer term.

The two most recent industry strategic plans put a heavy emphasis on increasing both fruit quality and the volume of Virginia-grown grapes. Unfortunately, we don't have a

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Registration Open for the 2020 VVA Winter Technical

The VVA Winter Technical Meeting & Trade Show will be held Feb. 19-21 at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville. This year's annual meeting is switching from Thursday-Saturday to Wednesday-Friday. Here's a look at some of the highlights:

- ▶ Expanded Beginning Grape Production Workshop on Wednesday;
- ▶ Wednesday afternoon session with Dr. Mizuho Nita, Virginia Tech, on Integrated Disease Management;
- ▶ Industry Trends in Virginia;
- ▶ Pesticide recertification;
- ▶ Research updates, including spotted lanternfly;
- ▶ New wine grape variety evaluations and tasting;
- ▶ Thursday Evening Wine Reception Showcase featuring members' wines;
- ▶ Winemakers Research Exchange research;
- ▶ Presentation of the VVA Grower of the Year Award.

For more details and to register or to print a registration form, **click here**. The full agenda can be **found here**.

Rooms are available at the Omni Hotel. **Follow this link** to reserve online or call the front desk directly at 434-971-5500 and reserve under "The Virginia Vineyards Association's Annual Meeting" to get the discounted rate.

President's Corner

PRESIDENT, from page 1

vineyards, our varietals, and our plans for the next thirty years. As climate shifts, we should be prepared for these new variables to winegrowing in Virginia.

One facet we shouldn't presume to have settled upon is the matching up of varietal to site/climate. For a varietal to "do well" in any region, it has to be economical in the vineyard, and make wine of interest that can be sold.

Thanks to a handful of trailblazers, in Virginia we've landed on a great lineup of varietals that do very well throughout the state, some that produce wines of real distinction.

But as the Commonwealth warms, this synchronization will change.

Sauvignon Blanc has always been one of the mainstay wines at my winery. Arguably, we are already pushing our luck with relatively thin-skinned fruit that ripens (quickly!) during the hot, humid days of late August.

As the summers warm, and as rain comes in more concentrated spurts, can I expect to produce clean clusters of Sauv Blanc? Will

it retain the acidity and finesse that it does today? I'm not so sure. At what point, then, do we start to make changes?

At our 2020 Winter Technical Meeting in February, we will focus an entire day on current efforts and research in varietal breeding and new wine grape varietals. Faculty from the University of Maryland, Cornell, and Italy's Vivai Cooperativi Rauscedo will discuss new work underway with wine grape breeding, novel variety research, and new wine grape crosses. The day will include tastings of new varieties.

Additionally, we will have panels focused on the marketing of new varietals and the current grape market in Virginia, as all of these are interconnected.

The rationale, though, is that we have to keep searching, and we need to be as prepared as possible for the growing conditions of 2050.

New plantings and new vineyard sites are wonderful blank canvasses that we should be painting on as thoughtfully and intelligently as possible.

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▶ NORTHERN VA: "... It's nice to finally be able to say out loud that this was a great vintage!"

By Dean Triplett
Greenstone Vineyard

The older I get, the more superstitious I become.

Throughout this past growing season, I was asked on multiple occasions how the year was going. My answer usually started with, "Well, so far..."

Now that harvest is over, it's nice to finally be able to say out loud that this was a great vintage! And after last year's rough season it was desperately needed!

Hot weather with little to no rain throughout August and September made for a near perfect veraison and harvest. A perfect season would have seen slightly cooler temperatures throughout the summer, and especially during veraison, but I'll take a year like this one anytime. All the growers I've talked to have basically said the same thing. Excellent quality, large quantities in almost all varieties and vineyards, plus an early harvest made for an outstanding year.

We had our first harvest of our earliest variety, Muscat Ottenel, on Aug. 18. By comparison, we picked the MO on Aug. 23 in both 2018 and 2017. The final harvest in my vineyard was the Petit Verdot on Oct. 1.

I had larger-than-normal quantities of everything except my Merlot. I was expecting 4 tons from one acre, but picked just shy of 3½ tons. Quality of flavors and condition of fruit was very good, however. And since all my other varieties were of equal quality and larger-than-anticipated yields, I can't complain one bit.

On Oct. 25, I was fortunate to attend the Loudoun Wine Awards celebration and spoke with a number of the region's growers and winemakers. At that date, a few winemakers still had fruit hanging on the vines, but the vast majority were done with harvest. I'd say there was a palpable sense of relief on everyone's part that the season had gone so well.

I was able to taste several of the wines at the event and I was very impressed with the 2018 entries that received awards. Not surprisingly, they were all either white or rosé. But considering the difficulty of that vintage, there were a number of excellent wines and a lot to be proud of.

A trend I've seen in the last couple of years in my region, and around the state as well, is the number of winemakers choosing to experiment with sparkling wine production. While I have to admit that I'm not the greatest fan of bubbly, I seem to be in the minority of the wine-consuming public.

From a grape-growing and winemaking perspective, I certainly see the allure. Since the fruit is typically harvested at a lower brix and pH as well as with less intense flavor profiles, it makes sense that this style of wine would have a place in a winery's portfolio, given our often rainy and unpredictable weather in late summer.

As with most things new, and given that sparkling wines require additional tasks, there's a certain amount of trial and error in wine cellars. But the winemakers I know that are working with this style of wine seem to be having a good amount of success. They're getting nice reviews from the public and selling

their wines at a premium. It will be interesting to see if this is just a fad or if it grows in appeal.

At the same time, I think we're seeing more wineries intentionally making rosé as they would a quality white wine as opposed to an afterthought in the red wine process. Currently, the public seems to be consuming rosé production as soon as it becomes available.

I'll also be interested in seeing if the current appeal of rosé remains strong. These two wine styles, I think, will be very good for Virginia growers long term.

Nov. 9 brought an end to the growing season here at my place with a solid low of 27 degrees F. Now that we can relax and breathe a bit since the vines have gone dormant, it's time to look forward to next year's plans.

In my vineyard, I'm in the process of ripping out my Traminette and replacing it with Albarino and Valvin Muscat. To facilitate this move, I've had my crew carry out an operation that I hope will kill my Traminette.

I don't normally try and kill vines, I usually just get unlucky! But in this case we've taken a page from the Penn State Extension book and used a technique that is called hack and squirt that they recommend for the control of the Tree of Heaven plant. I believe Virginia Tech is now recommending this technique in areas that are dealing with this host plant of the spotted lanternfly.

What you do is make, either with a hatchet or in our case a battery-powered reciprocating saw, a series of horizontal cuts an inch to an inch-and-a-half deep into the trunk of the vine a couple of feet above the graft union. A minimum of two cuts is needed, with each cut at least an inch apart from the others. My guys made three cuts on each side of every vine trunk. Into these cuts you spray a concentrated herbicide solution making sure to fill the cuts. In our case we used a concentrated glyphosate mix in a small bucket and applied it with a cheap glass cleaning sponge on the end of a wand, always wearing appropriate safety gear of course.

This technique seems to work well. My only concern is that we applied it to the vines later after harvest than I would have liked. The more time the herbicide can be translocated through the vines, the more effective it will be.

As with so much of what we do in the vineyard, timing is important. But getting a crew out right after harvest to begin this operation just didn't fit into the logistics. So I'm hopeful that the vines had enough time to uptake enough herbicide to do the trick.

This will be the first time in my life that I'll be out in the vines this winter hoping to find dead buds! In the spirit of the Holiday Season, here's to a great 2019 and may the winter and spring of 2020 be kind to us all!

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► **CENTRAL VA.:** “... It sure doesn’t hurt to have a really nice year come our way ...”

By Grayson Poats
Valley Road Vineyards

I think we can all agree that 2019 turned out to be a very good year for Virginia vineyards. That was certainly the case here in the central region where we enjoyed abundant sunshine, minimal rains during veraison, and no hurricanes. Amen to that!

Bill Tonkins, Vineyard Manager of Veritas Vineyard & Winery and former VVA President, was understandably lavish in his praise, saying 2019 was “one of the best — amazing weather, amazing quality.” After the many challenges of 2018 I can only say that we deserved it.

It is not my experience that those who manage vineyards in Virginia are a particularly pessimistic bunch, but it sure doesn’t hurt to have a really nice year come our way to boost our determination and optimism for whatever 2020 has in store.

Paul Summers, who has been managing vines for 20 years and currently has seven acres under his care at Knight’s Gambit in Albemarle County, told me he found that 2019 gave him an opportunity to view things from a different perspective. It was more akin to growing grapes in California or another region where, like this year, there was “no disease pressure and we were able to let the fruit hang until it was ready.”

Heady stuff. A couple of more years like '19 and I’ll have to toss aside my old standby that I use when asked what it’s like to grow grapes in Virginia: “Any fool can grow grapes in California, it takes a special kind of fool to grow grapes in Virginia.”

Riaan Rossouw at Lovington Winery in Nelson County was equally as enthusiastic about the year, calling it, “a beautiful vintage,” and adding, “the wines should be a good reflection of the vintage.”

In talking to other growers about the past year, I was curious about lessons learned from such a year. What can be learned from a good year — or can lessons only be learned from the not-so-good years, like 2018?

For myself, the lesson that I had to relearn in 2019 was not to mistake sugar ripeness for complete ripeness.

With all the warmth and sunshine we had here in the central part of the state, it was very tempting to go out and pick the fruit when the brix numbers got to that level that we have come to think of as optimal and get the fruit into the winery before some atmospheric disasters should come our way.

I almost did just that on a couple of

“For myself, the lesson that I had to relearn in 2019 was not to mistake sugar ripeness for complete ripeness.”

occasions this year before taking yet another look at the crop — the skins and especially the seeds — and deciding that a bit more time to let the phenolic ripeness “catch up” would be a better idea.

I’m glad I did, as the pH levels were staying in check and another five to seven days on the vine got the crop right where I wanted it to be.

By that time, the brix accumulation had slowed, so I didn’t find myself in the situation that Jake Busching had warned me about — the dark flip side of letting fruit hang to

achieve phenolic ripeness. You can let the fruit hang too long and accumulate such high brix numbers that the wines become high-alcohol bombs.

Jake saw this happen in 2010 to many growers who were excited to be achieving high brix numbers, but found that the resulting wines were out of balance with high alcohol that the phenolic ripeness couldn’t match.

It just goes to show us that too much of a good thing can be just that — too much — and that careful attention must be paid to your vineyard and knowing its history as you approach harvest in the good years as well as the bad.

Other folks offered up their own “lessons learned.”

Paul at Knight’s Gambit said that he learned to be thankful — thankful for the soils, the weather in Central Virginia and the knowledge that has been built up and disseminated through the state by the likes of Tony Wolf, Gabriele Rausse, Chris Hill and many others.

I couldn’t agree more.



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What Grape Varieties Should I Plant?

VARIETIES, from page 1

good census on what the actual and potential crop capacity is for the state; the survey for these data in 2018 yielded less than a 50 percent industry response rate. Thus, without having good data on where we're at, it's difficult to define where we need to go, at least acreage-wise.

As an aside, one segment of the Virginia Vineyards Association's upcoming Winter Technical Meeting (Feb. 19-21, 2020) will comprise a panel discussion on what the industry's market trends are. A similar discussion occurred at the recent Wineries Association meeting. Between the current census of 2019 grape acreage and production, and industry discussions on supply/demand trends, we hope to resolve a more focused picture of additional grape needs.

My advice to the Shenandoah Valley winery owner was to recommend to his client to hold off any *speculative* plantings until we had a better picture of grape demand.

His response was reasoned and interesting: even if the state as a whole experiences a surplus of fruit, should that general supply/demand picture drive a more local market that is based on a region such as the Shenandoah Valley? And while not mentioned, what about the more specific supply/demand equation for a specific AVA, such as the Shenandoah Valley AVA?

It's a fair question, but the same rationale for increased plantings at the state level should also be considered at the local level: If there's a defined and sustainable market for increased plantings and grapes, it makes sense to plant, as long as the site-region is conducive to growing the varieties in demand.

We've always recommended that potential new growers firmly understand the market for grapes before they invest in vineyard establishment. If the potential vineyardist is planning to sell grapes to existing wineries, the grower should have some form of commitment from those potential buyers, regardless of where they're located.

With respect to specific varieties, there are strengths and weaknesses with any variety. We evaluated Grüner Veltliner at Winchester in our first variety planting in the late eighties and early nineties. Very high crop potential, nice wines, and easier to get ripe fruit than with other aromatic whites such as Riesling, but still had a tendency for fruit rot prior to optimum ripeness.

Chenin blanc? Would probably do well in a year like 2019; otherwise high tendency to rot

before ripening.

Albariño? Nice wines — there are good examples already being produced in Virginia — but it tends to be low-yielding. On average (2018 was an exception), the Shenandoah Valley still has a higher probability of potentially damaging winter low temperatures than do points east of the Blue Ridge. Cabernet franc or Petit Verdot, for example, might fare better than Cabernet Sauvignon in many Shenandoah Valley locations.

There is also interest in exploring new varieties — those that are truly “new” as in recently developed in breeding programs, and those that have been around for some time, but just not evaluated under our growing conditions.

In the latter case, Jancis Robinson describes nearly 1,400 wine grape varieties in her 2012 *Wine Grapes*, some of which are ancient and some of which have been released from breeding programs in the past 30 years. Some might do exceptionally well in Virginia.

New releases from breeding programs are another option. Wine grape breeding and testing efforts have been hampered to some extent by consumer fixation on recognizable, varietally labeled wines.

Contrast the situation with wine grape varieties to the trends of new table grape varieties over the past five to 10 years, where novel flavors, texture, berry shape and size, shelf-life and, of course, seedlessness are important traits that are actively sought, phenotyped, and marketed by table grape breeders.

But wine industry expansion into new geographic areas, changing climate, and grower interest in pursuing more sustainable approaches to disease management have helped drive an interest in new wine grape varieties, which is still being pursued largely by publicly funded research institutions or

consortia as opposed to private breeding companies.

We are beginning another variety planting at Winchester with the first plantings scheduled for spring 2020. This replicated variety planting will comprise about 20 selections and will, by necessity, be established over several years.

Most of the selections and varieties will be largely derived from the *Vitis vinifera* genome. As such, some will be hybrids of *V. vinifera* and other *Vitis* species, but largely (e.g., >85%) *vinifera*. My interests are to exploit those varieties that have increased tolerance to common diseases in Virginia, particularly mildews, late-season fruit rots, and Pierce's Disease.

I'm interested in new varieties from abroad, such as the Italian Vivai Cooperativi Rauscedo (VCR) varieties, as well as some from U.S. breeding programs such as the University of California PD-resistant varieties, several of which were discussed and poured at the ASEV/ES meeting in Charlottesville in 2017.

Obtaining new varieties, especially those that have not been brought into the U.S. yet, is a time-consuming process, and positive results are not guaranteed.

In addition to purported disease resistance, novel varieties to the state must be adapted to our heat and humidity/rainfall, withstand winter low temperature stress, and produce better-than-average wine quality, all of which can be evaluated over time. There are also logistical hurdles such as obtaining small quantities of novel, grafted varieties for formal evaluation.

The contemporary Virginia wine industry has a colorful history of variety exploration. The diversity of what we grow — and market wines of — should position us favorably to continue that industry exploration of novel varieties.

The VVA Wants to Showcase Your Vineyard

If you'd like to see your vineyard showcased on the VVA website, **virginia-vineyardsassociation.org**, send us a photo of your vines, your grapes or your harvest. Email photos to **cgarsson@gmail.com** along with details about the photo and who gets the credit for taking it (please be sure you have the rights to have the photo published).



WINEMAKERS RESEARCH EXCHANGE

Why Sugar Per Berry Matters

By Joy Ting

Research Enologist and Coordinator,
Winemakers Research Exchange

“The timing of the grape harvest determines the maximum wine quality potential thereafter” (Zoecklein, 2001)¹

The trouble is, how do you know when to call the pick? Several measures of fruit maturity are commonly used in Virginia vineyards, but none is a perfect indicator of ripeness¹⁻⁴. Sugar content, as measured by degrees Brix (°Bx), is one of the most commonly used metrics.

It is easy to measure, fairly uniform across the population of grapes, and can be an indicator of the primary metabolism of the plant². Though sugar accumulation is not always correlated to the production of flavor and aroma compounds², and that correlation is weaker in warm regions (like Virginia) than cooler regions¹, the accumulation of sugar does provide a glimpse into the physiological state of the vine and its interaction with the environment⁵.

However, measuring Brix alone can be misleading due to the dynamics of sugar and water accumulation in the grape berry. This is even more difficult in Virginia, when periodic rain events during harvest make it difficult to know if a stall in Brix accumulation is due to dilution or the end of sugar production.

This year, in a series of trials looking at ripeness measurements in grape berries, the Winemakers Research Exchange tracked Brix and berry weight in several vineyard trials and used this data to calculate sugar per berry.

The rationale for tracking sugar per berry rather than just Brix lies in the fact that sugar is transported from the leaves to the grape dissolved in water, so as sugar loading occurs during ripening, the grape berry is also getting larger. At some point, the vine stops loading sugar into the grape, which also means less water flow into the grape.

The grape berry can also lose water through transpiration. In this way, when sugar loading has ceased, any increase in Brix is no longer due to ripening, but rather dehydration.

Physiological ripeness, then, can be defined as that point when the grape has reached its maximum sugar per berry⁵.

All that is needed to calculate sugar per berry is °Brix and berry weight,

measurements you are likely already taking. If you keep in mind that the °Brix is equal to the total soluble solids in 100 g of juice, and sugar makes up 90-95% of those solids⁶, you can estimate the concentration of sugar per berry as follows:

$$(\text{°Bx} / 100) * \text{grams/berry} = \text{sugar per berry (g/berry)}$$

So, if you have a 100-berry sample that weighs 112 grams and measures 22°Bx,

$$(22\text{°Bx}/100) * 1.12 = 0.246 \text{ g sugar per berry}$$

Practically, if you decide to incorporate this measurement into your protocol, it is best to take a representative sample of at least 100 berries and weigh them on a scale that is accurate to at least 0.1 grams. Plotting the results of weekly samples over time (with more frequent sampling close to harvest) is needed to determine the change in sugar per berry during ripening.

An example of the usefulness of this measurement can be seen in Table 1 which shows ripening data for Chardonnay at the Castalia Vineyard. When looking at samples obtained on Aug. 17 and Aug. 22, it appears there is very little sugar accumulation. However, when sugar per berry is taken into account, it is apparent that sugar is still being produced. The increase in sugar is just being offset by the increased size of the grape berry.

The same change in Brix is seen between Aug. 22 and Sept. 5 as was seen the previous week, but in this case, the increase in sugar per berry is much less, indicating that sugar loading has slowed down.

From this point onward, sugar per berry is still rising, however the rate is slow. It is expected that, after an initial period of rapid accumulation, sugar per berry will plateau to less than 3 mg/berry/day, at which time the grapes have reached physiological maturity⁷.

In this example, sugar loading prior to Aug 22 exceeded this rate, and was near this rate thereafter. Harvesting at the end of sugar loading is good for rosé, fresh red wines, and pleasant aromatic white wines.⁷

Another useful application of estimating sugar per berry is found in the example of Castalia Petit Verdot (Table 2). Here, Brix alone would indicate that the vine was loading sugar into these berries throughout the sampling period. However, after Sept. 7, the berry weight and sugar per berry are both decreasing, indicating the vine is no

Table 1: Vineyard sampling data for Chardonnay at Castalia Vineyard. Data provided by Emily Pelton of Veritas Vineyard & Winery.

Date	Aug. 17	Aug. 22	Sept. 5	Sept. 10
Brix	22	22.2	22.4	22.4
pH	3.4	3.44	3.52	3.57
TA	7.1	6.5	5.9	5.65
Weight/ berry (g)	1.13	1.21	1.3	1.36
Sugar per berry	0.2486	0.2686	0.2912	0.3046

Table 2: Vineyard sampling data for Petit Verdot at Castalia Vineyard. Data provided by Emily Pelton of Veritas.

Date	Sept. 4	Sept. 7	Sept. 11	Sept. 18
Brix	22.6	23	23.4	24.2
pH	3.28	3.57	3.58	3.51
TA	7.04	6.3	5.54	5.2
Weight/ berry (g)	1.13	1.21	1.04	1.01
Sugar per berry	0.25538	0.2783	0.24336	0.2442

longer depositing sugar into grape berries. Instead, berries may in fact be metabolizing or exporting sugar and sugar per berry is decreasing. These vines have exceeded physiological ripeness.

In red grapes, phenolic ripeness is often reached after physiological ripeness⁷, (See Figure 1 from Deloire, 2011, on the next page), but the timing of the end of sugar loading is still informative. It is thought that the amount of time from the end of sugar loading can be used to determine the evolution of aroma and flavor compounds as well as tannins. These changes mark the transformation of grapes from those that would result in fresh young red wines to those useful for more structured, age-worthy red wines.

With this in mind, sugar loading can be used in conjunction with other parameters to pick for a desired wine style. A balanced red wine is thought to come from grapes picked one to five weeks after the cessation of sugar loading, with the difference in duration largely due to the intended style of the wine.

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Why Sugar Per Berry Matters

SUGAR, from page 6

For fresh, young reds, the grapes would be picked one to two weeks later, to allow vegetal elements to decrease and desirable flavor metabolites to be formed.

For more structured reds, a longer wait is needed to allow for the evolution of tannin reactivity⁷. Regardless of the desired wine style, measuring sugar per berry provides a starting point for the “maturation” clock.

Estimation of sugar per berry is especially important for Virginia wine growers as it provides a means to interpret changes in Brix when rain has occurred. One would expect a rain event to lead to an increase of water flow into the berry, causing dilution and lack of transpiration from the berry⁶. This may stall

See SUGAR on page 8

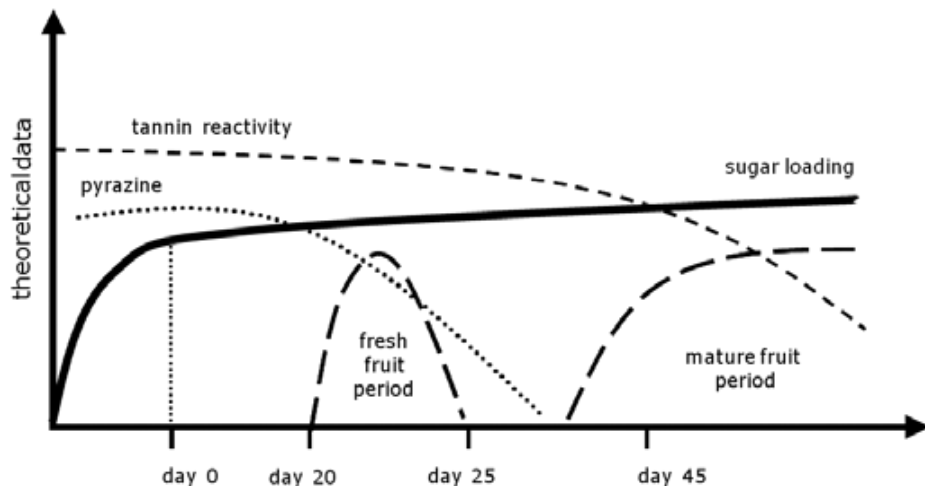


FIGURE 1, from Deloire, 2011: The Berry Aromatic Sequence (B.A.S.): Sugar loading and style of wine. Example of relationships between the berry sugar loading curve and the possible related style of wine, for Cabernet Sauvignon. After "day 0," three successive main periods have been determined: a fresh fruit period, a "neutral" period and a mature fruit period. In terms of harvesting dates, these periods have been determined according to the number of days after "day 0," which corresponds to the sugar loading "plateau," and not directly to a calendar date. This introduces the concept of "physiological clock."

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General Assembly Set for Active Session

James S. Turpin, *Lobbyist,*
Virginia Wineries Association

Virginians went to the polls on Nov. 5 and drastically changed the makeup of the Virginia General Assembly. For the first time since the 1990s, Democrats now control both chambers of the General Assembly along with all three statewide offices.

The margin in the State Senate is now 21 Democrats and 19 Republicans, after a net gain of two seats for the Democrats.

The House of Delegates saw a more drastic change. Democrats now hold 55 seats while Republicans have 45. This is a net gain of 6 for the Democrats.

Following the election, both parties selected their respective leadership. In the Senate, Sen. Richard Saslaw (D-Fairfax) will become majority leader, a post he has held before. Senator Tommy Norment (R-James City), the current majority leader, will become minority leader when the General Assembly reconvenes in January.

The changes in the House were historic. Democrats selected Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (D-Fairfax County) as Speaker — the first woman and the first member of the Jewish faith ever to serve in that position.

Del. Charniele Herring (D-Alexandria) was chosen as Majority Leader. She is the first African American to serve in that role. Del. Rip Sullivan (D-Arlington) is the new Caucus Chair.

On the Republican side, Speaker Kirk Cox, who represents the southern Richmond suburb of Colonial Heights and parts of nearby Chesterfield County, decided against seeking

a new leadership post but remains a delegate. Majority Leader Todd Gilbert, whose district includes Page and Shenandoah counties, plus parts of Rockingham and Warren counties, will become Minority Leader in the new legislative session.

These changes set the tone for what promises to be a very active session for the Virginia wine industry dealing with both ABC and business-related issues.

Since the end of the 2019 legislative session, Virginia ABC's efforts have been aimed at streamlining and improving the existing license structure. The goals were to:

- ▶ consolidate licenses.
- ▶ explore creation of a marketplace license.
- ▶ analyze fees collected and determine whether to restructure to align with resources necessary to administer, monitor, and enforce licenses.
- ▶ receive stakeholder feedback.

The result was a proposal that will accomplish the following:

- ▶ all licenses will be set forth to align with the three-tier system — similar licenses have been consolidated into a single license.
- ▶ manufacturing, wholesale, and retail license fees will be set forth in a separate section easily located and determined for the license type a user may desire.
- ▶ current license types reduced by more than 50 percent.
- ▶ no current licensee will forfeit any existing privilege.
- ▶ a license may grant privileges that a licensee may determine not to use.
- ▶ a new marketplace license is created

and existing “non retail” uses will merge to this license (for example: day spa, meal assembly kitchen, etc.).

▶ a new fee structure, allowing ABC to adjust license fees based on the consumer price index (CPI) every three years.

At the same time, a number of ABC-related issues that were brought up in 2019 are likely to again be considered. These include the definition of agritourism activities, the creation of a license for agritourism resorts, and application of farm winery privileges to other craft beverage producers.

On the viticulture side, the major issue that will be before the General Assembly will address the Phase III Water Improvement Program for the Chesapeake Bay. This will expand the program statewide. The proposal also expands the requirements for nutrient management plans.

In addition, last year's efforts to expand state regulation of certain pesticides is likely to return. This would make Virginia only the third state to undertake such an expansion.

Finally, the new General Assembly majorities will be seriously considering a wide variety of general business issues including repeal of the right to work law, increasing the minimum wage, paid family and medical leave, a tax on plastic bags, and increased regulation of outdoor signage structure, to name a few.

The General Assembly reconvenes on Jan. 7 and will be in session for 60 days until March 7. The Virginia Wineries Association and the Virginia Vineyards Association, through the Legislative Collective, will be actively working to represent your interest in Richmond.

Sugar Per Berry

SUGAR, from page 7

the apparent accumulation of sugar as measured by Brix, however the sugar per berry should not be changed. If the vine is still actively loading sugar, one would expect the sugar per berry to hold steady or even increase despite the rain.

Incorporation of sugar per berry into your sampling data allows longer term interpretation and analysis of vineyard performance as well. Examination of sugar loading dynamics across vineyards and vintages can give insight to imbalances in the vine or blockages to ripening, as well as the potential of each block for the production of grapes destined for a particular wine style. For example, low Brix at the end of sugar loading may indicate an imbalance in the vine such as overcropping, heat stress, radiation deficit, or excess vigor⁵. Water stress, either too much or too little, may cause an end of sugar

loading⁵.

This one simple calculation, taken from data most growers are already measuring, can be a powerful tool when interpreting the physiological functioning of the vines and determining optimal timing of the grape harvest.

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