



Winemakers' Federation of Australia

For the Industry by the Industry

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November 2005

WINEMAKERS' FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

Generic Wine Terminology – Moving Forward

Introduction

Borrowing from a current Winemakers' Federation of Australia Fortified Wine paper, the introduction below best summarises the current situation the Australian wine industry faces with regard to the usage and phasing out of current generic wine terminology.

“The Agreement between Australia and the European Community on Trade in Wine, and Protocol (Wine Agreement) entered into force on 1 March 1994. This agreement simplified entry requirements for Australian wine into the European Union but left a number of issues unresolved. These issues were supposed to have been completed by 31 December 1997, but negotiations were slow.

One area of particular interest to many members in the wine industry is Article 8 of the agreement which requires Australian producers to cease using certain geographic indications in any market to describe or present wine. This was agreed in 1994, with only the phase-out dates remaining unresolved.

The following terms are expected to have their phase-out dates negotiated this year - Burgundy, Chablis, Champagne, Graves, Manzanilla, Marsala, Moselle, Port, Sauternes, Sherry, White Burgundy, Amontillado, Auslese, Claret, Fino, Oloroso, Spatlese, Hermitage and Lambrusco.

The agreement has now been finalised and after a phase-out period, these terms will not be able to be used to describe or present a wine originating from Australia. This will also apply to trademarks or brand names incorporating these terms.

The question that arises with phasing out of generic terms is what to call the wine?”¹

This agreement will have its greatest impact on the generic soft pack market which at present employs many of these terms to describe the wine contents of the package. As an industry, it is advantageous to consumers, trade and producers alike if a consistent approach can be adopted whereby any confusion relating to the phase out and transition can be minimised.

If correctly managed, this period of change should not be an imposition to the industry, rather an opportunity to revitalise the category through increased consumer communication.

¹ WFA DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER 21/4/04. Fortified Names and Terminology: The New Direction

Previous Changes

An example of a successful transition is the case of 'Champagne' where the industry as a whole adopted 'sparkling wine' as the new descriptor for this wine style when forced to phase out the usage of the previously used 'Champagne'.

The soft pack market has proven in the past that it can also effectively manage change. In late 1998, early 1999 the industry successfully began phasing out the generic soft pack term 'Riesling' and replaced it with what is now the widely accepted descriptor 'Fresh Dry White'.

Terminology to be Phased Out

This paper will specifically consider naming alternatives for the following terminology:

- Chablis
- Moselle
- Claret
- Red Burgundy
- White Burgundy
- Red Lambrusco
- White Lambrusco

Whilst the list is not exhaustive, it does cover off the majority of generic terms currently used on soft pack. Any suggestions for other terms you wish to be considered are welcomed.

History

From the 1998 rounds of discussion, the following suggestions were tabled as alternatives:

Current	Proposed
Riesling	Fresh Dry White
Chablis	Crisp Dry White
Moselle	Soft Fruity White
Claret	Traditional Dry Red
Red Burgundy	Smooth or Soft Dry Red
White Burgundy	Smooth or Soft Dry White

Some of the above terms have already begun to be voluntarily phased out by some suppliers in which case consideration must be given to incorporating their current packaging solutions.

Classification System

In order to adopt a consistent approach to this process, it is suggested that some form of a classification system be adopted. At the most basic level, wines can easily be segregated into two categories:

- Red wine
- White wine

From this basis an effective way of further classification is to consider both style descriptors and sweetness descriptors.

Style Descriptors

Style descriptors can be employed to further aid in the classification process. These terms should be easy to say and remember while still accurately portraying the wine style.

Examples here might include:

- Crisp
- Classic
- Fresh
- Fruity
- Traditional
- Soft
- Rich
- Smooth

Sweetness Descriptors

It is suggested that the industry agree on common residual sugar levels contained in the wine as a means of further classification. Proposed residual sugar levels:

- Dry Below 15 grams per litre
- Medium Dry 16-39 grams per litre
- Sweet 40+ grams per litre

Suggested Naming Alternatives

Following the above classification system a matrix can be developed which begins to address the phase out issue. It can be seen that the majority of these terms are in accordance with the suggestions put forward in the 1998 round of discussions.

Current Name	Style(s)	Sweetness	Proposed Name(s)
Chablis	Crisp	Dry	Crisp Dry White,
Moselle*	Soft, Fruity	Medium Dry	Soft Fruity White
Claret	Traditional	Dry	Traditional Dry Red
Red Burgundy	Smooth	Dry	Smooth Dry Red
White Burgundy	Smooth	Dry	Smooth Dry White
Red Lambrusco**	Soft	Sweet	Soft Sweet Red, Dolce Rosso
White Lambrusco**	Soft	Sweet	Soft Sweet White, Dolce Bianco

*Moselle

Feedback has suggested that some producers have already undertaken steps to replace the term Moselle with Soft Fruity White, whilst this does not strictly fit within the prescribed classification model above with relation to the sweetness descriptor.

****Lambrusco – A Special Situation**

Aside from Lambrusco, all other generic terms mentioned so far are predominantly associated with soft pack. Lambrusco, in particular Red Lambrusco, permeates across both glass and soft pack. Due to the size and nature of this market it may be appropriate to consider alternative terminology.

The literal English translation of the Italian word 'dolce' is 'soft/sweet' while the English words 'red' and 'white' respectively translate in Italian to 'rosso' and 'bianco'. In order to retain some of its traditional cues while also falling in line with the above classification system Red and White Lambrusco could therefore be renamed as:

- Australian Dolce Rosso
- Australian Dolce Bianco

These suggested terms have been put forward to the Australian Wine & Brandy Corporation who has responded (Brian Dalby per Steve Guy, 15/9/2004) as follows:

“Steve away till 20/9 but has advised that ok to use the terms here and overseas but you have to accept possibility that the EU or Italy could at any time reject or legally contest such use.”

Given that only a small amount of Australian Lambrusco is exported to the EU it is unlikely that the adoption of the above terms would pose any problems and require further changes.

Transition Period

Once new naming terminology is agreed upon, it is recommended that as an industry the use of geographical indicators be phased out during a three step transitional period.

The first step would see the introduction on packaging of new agreed upon terminology with the current name remaining the prominent descriptor. As a second step, the two names would continue to appear on pack with the new terminology promoted as the primary descriptor and the phase out name relegated as a sub descriptor primarily for consumer reference. The third and final step would see the complete removal of old terminology leaving new terminology as a stand alone descriptor. This process is better explained through the use of an example such as the soft pack generic 'Riesling' situation from a few years ago:

- Original: **Riesling**
- Step 1: **Riesling**, Fresh Dry White
- Step 2: **Fresh Dry White**, Riesling
- Step 3: **Fresh Dry White**

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the industry action these suggestions as soon as is practicably possible so as to maximise the transition period before legally having to phase out all references to these terms.