

September 2008 Tasting – Contemporary Hybrids

The September Rochester AWS tasting topic was Contemporary Hybrids. There were 46 in attendance, including three special guests. Dave Peterson is general manager of Swedish Hill, Goose Watch, and Penguin Bay Wineries, Swedish Hill having won New York Winery of the Year and the Governor's Cup this year. Herm and Wilma Young are owners of the newest winery in the area, Young Sommer Winery in Williamson. Chairperson Jan Klapetzky explained that a hybrid grape was a genetic cross between two dissimilar parent grapes. Hybrids can occur naturally such as the Catawba and the Cabernet Sauvignon grape or artificially such as the Vidal or Cayuga White grapes. Jan outlined the history of hybrids through the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries in the US and in France. Steve Lerch followed with a very interesting talk on current hybridization efforts at the Geneva Experiment Station. Vines from tens of thousands of hybridized plants are monitored for productivity and disease resistance and narrowed down to a select few which are evaluated for small scale computerized wine production. Gary Cox and Nick Schiavetti then resurrected Socrates and Bacchus to elucidate the rationale of blending (you had to be there).

The committee presented eleven wines representing hybrids introduced in the last 40 years.

E	Cayuga White	Young Sommer (NY)
1	Melody (2007)	Goose Watch (NY)
2	06 La Crescent	Champlain Valley Vineyard (VT)
3	Cloud Mountain	Lincoln Peak (VT)
4	Traminette	Goose Watch (NY)
5	Traminette	Jan's
6	Noiret	Presque Isle (PA)
7	Corot Noir	Deer Run (NY)
8	St. Croix	Champlain Valley Vineyard (VT)
9	Noiret-Vincent-Cab	Jan's
10	Maroon Four	Penguin Bay (NY)

The standard voting for favorite wines of the evening put Jan's blend as #1, the Presque Isle Noiret as #2, while tied for third place were the Goose Watch Traminette, Penguin Bay Maroon Four, and Young Sommer Cayuga White.