

# Sample Essay and Outline for AWC

## Sample Essay Question

As you prepare to go on to sommelier certification, this is an example of what will be expected at this level before the sommelier certification where this question would require substantial more depth. The essays should consist of no less than: a clear introduction followed by the main statements/thesis and a proper conclusion in the 700-900-word range.

Compare and contrast Valpolicella DOC and Amarone della Valpolicella DOC. Consider in your response issues of history, location and geography, soil, grape variety, viticulture, vinification, and wine style.

## Writing the Essay

After developing a brief outline, you will conclude that while Valpolicella and Amarone are derived from the same vineyards and therefore share soils, climate, viticultural techniques and grape varieties, they differ in their vinification. A statement regarding this will be your thesis.

We provide two essay samples for this question. The first speaks to all of the required elements of the question and would, therefore, receive full marks: ten points out of a possible ten. Essays which receive full marks demonstrate clear comprehension of the issue and display that comprehension in a logical, coherent way. The second is missing several required elements and would receive only six points out of a possible ten.

You should notice that at the sommelier certification, we will expect students to possess far deeper knowledge of some of the variations and issues affecting the relationship between the DOCs if this questions was posed.

## Essay (10 Point)

Though Valpolicella and Amarone della Valpolicella are derived from the same geographical area, the wines are radically different in style. Amarone is in fact a DOC applied to the stylistic variation introduced

7904 NW 83<sup>rd</sup> St., Tamarac, FL, 33321, USA

Direct International Office: (888-692-7158)

E-mail: [info@internationalsommelier.com](mailto:info@internationalsommelier.com) · Website: [www.internationalsommelier.com](http://www.internationalsommelier.com)

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube all @ISGSommelier

International Sommelier Guild Ltd.

by the familiar Italian *appassimento* process—the process of partially drying grapes prior to fermentation. Wines produced using the *appassimento* process are known as *passito* wines, and the style is common in many Italian regions. Despite its relative youth in the international marketplace—it was first marketed by Bolla in the 1950s—Amarone is likely Italy’s best known example of the style. Amarone is, quite specifically, the dry-fermented variation (as distinguished from the sweet Recioto della Valpolicella or the medium sweet Amandorlato), and the derivation of the name, from Italian *Amaro* or ‘bitter,’ suggests much about the wine’s ultimate flavor profile.

The Veneto’s Valpolicella DOC is at once one of Italy’s simplest and most diverse. This may seem a contradiction, but one of the things that distinguishes this DOC is its multifaceted approach to vinification. Though the raw materials are similar for Valpolicella and Amarone, the finished products are radically different. Those raw materials are the holy trinity of Venetian black grapes—Corvina, Rondinella, and Molinara—grown either on the traditional high-trained *pergola* or more modern post and wire trellises. Though there is a large supporting cast, including grapes like Dindarella and Negrara, and even permitted Internationals (at 5 %), Corvina remains the most prominent of the Veneto’s varieties. Corvina, which typically appears at anywhere from 40-70 % of the blend is prized for its floral and cherry aromatics and the thick skin that contributes stability during the drying process. Small-berried Rondinella is also a popular drying grape because it typically dries faster than Corvina, and thereby reduces risk to the producer.

The stylistic diversity of the region is potentially a source of confusion, and it is not without a certain political component that complicates matters even further. Valpolicella DOC (like its neighbor Soave) is one of the DOCs whose boundaries were redrawn in the 1960s, primarily to accommodate the commercial needs of large scale Italian producers. The original growing area sits on a series of ridges and mountain valleys in the 4 valleys of Garganago, Fumane, Marano, and Negrar, which today represent the Classico zone; after 1968, however, the DOC was extended into the plains or *pianura* below. This effectively doubled the available land and added much alluvial land to the more prized volcanic basalt (locally known as *toar*), tufa, and calcareous clays of the

7904 NW 83<sup>rd</sup> St., Tamarac, FL, 33321, USA

Direct International Office: (888-692-7158)

E-mail: [info@internationalsommelier.com](mailto:info@internationalsommelier.com) · Website: [www.internationalsommelier.com](http://www.internationalsommelier.com)

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube all @ISGSommelier

International Sommelier Guild Ltd.

Classico zone.

In some ways, the stylistic differences between Amarone and Valpolicella *normale* are mirrored here. Valpolicella is the high volume basic wine of the area, typically produced from the earliest harvested fruit and made in a bright, light to medium-bodied style. Some producers have had success with carbonic maceration to lift the fruit and reduce the characteristically high acidity of the wine, and this seems to emphasize the divide between basic Valpolicella and Amarone. Valpolicella is the cheap and cheerful Beaujolais of Italy; what Beaujolais is to the French bistro, Valpolicella is to the Italian *trattoria*. This is not to say, of course, that there aren't serious Valpolicellas sitting alongside the basic ones I've described. But they are the exceptions, not the norm.

A partial solution to the issue of Valpolicella's lightness and use of second best fruit, has been the development of the Ripasso method in which a fully fermented Valpolicella is passed over the lees of an Amarone fermentation. This re-passing inspires a small fermentation and allows the light Valpolicella to extract flavor and body from the Amarone lees.

What distinguishes Amarone here is that it is invariably serious. The expense and the technology required to produce Amarone compel a relatively high price tag, and higher price tags invariably come attached to higher consumer expectations. The *appassimento* process involves the manual harvest of perfect bunches of fruit and, because the goal of the process is to concentrate sugars in the grapes, most producers will typically leave grapes on the vine longer in order to begin the process with higher sugar levels and reduce drying time (and their own risk). Grapes are transported to special warehouses where they are laid out on straw or bamboo mats, or, more often today, stacked in wood or plastic boxes. In the past, producers typically relied on the prevailing winds to provide the air flow through their facilities (air flow is essential to reduce rot development and speed evaporation), but today most facilities are equipped with fans and even dehumidifiers. In the early stages of the process, producers check the bunches regularly for the development of rot—though when the rot is noble, some producers are quite willing to allow it into the wine. This, indeed, along with grape variety, length of

7904 NW 83<sup>rd</sup> St., Tamarac, FL, 33321, USA

Direct International Office: (888-692-7158)

E-mail: [info@internationalsommelier.com](mailto:info@internationalsommelier.com) · Website: [www.internationalsommelier.com](http://www.internationalsommelier.com)

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube all @ISGSommelier

International Sommelier Guild Ltd.

*appassimento*, and post-fermentation maturation, is one of the factors which distinguishes one Amarone from the next.

### How will the Essay be Graded?

- accurate description of *appassimento* process with mention of *passito* and correct spelling (2 points)
- accurate listing of three primary grape varieties, at least one secondary, and the primary role of the major grapes (2 points)
- demonstrated understanding of the commercial history of Amarone as well as historical issues related to the Valpolicella DOC (1 point)
- accurate description of Valpolicella's location, soils, climate, viticulture (1 point)
- description of qualitative issues in Amarone production (rot, length of *appassimento*, maturation) (1 point)
- accurate description of Ripasso process (1 point)
- Valpolicella wine style (1 point)
- Amarone wine style (1 point)

### Essay (6 Point)

Though Valpolicella and Amarone della Valpolicella are derived from the same geographical area, the wines are radically different in style. Amarone is in fact a DOC applied to the stylistic variation introduced by the familiar Italian *apasimento* process—the process of partially drying grapes prior to fermentation. Wines produced using the *apasimento* process are known as *pasito* wines, and the style is common in many Italian regions.

The Veneto's Valpolicella DOC is at once one of Italy's simplest and most diverse. This may seem a contradiction, but one of the things that distinguishes this DOC is its multifaceted approach to vinification. Though the raw materials are similar for Valpolicella and Amarone, the finished products are radically different. Those raw materials are the holy trinity of Venetian black grapes—Corvina, Rondinella, and Molinara. Valpolicella is the high volume basic wine of the area, typically produced from the earliest harvested fruit and made in a bright, light to medium-bodied style.

What distinguishes Amarone here is that the expense and the

7904 NW 83<sup>rd</sup> St., Tamarac, FL, 33321, USA

Direct International Office: (888-692-7158)

E-mail: [info@internationalsommelier.com](mailto:info@internationalsommelier.com) · Website: [www.internationalsommelier.com](http://www.internationalsommelier.com)

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube all @ISGSommelier

International Sommelier Guild Ltd.

technology required to produce Amarone compel a relatively high price tag, and higher price tags invariably come attached to higher consumer expectations. The *apasimento* process involves the manual harvest of perfect bunches of fruit and, because the goal of the process is to concentrate sugars in the grapes, most producers will typically leave grapes on the vine longer in order to begin the process with higher sugar levels and reduce drying time (and their own risk). Grapes are transported to special warehouses where they are laid out on straw or bamboo mats, or, more often today, stacked in wood or plastic boxes. In the past, producers typically relied on the prevailing winds to provide the air flow through their facilities (air flow is essential to reduce rot development and speed evaporation), but today most facilities are equipped with fans and even dehumidifiers. In the early stages of the process, producers check the bunches regularly for the development of rot—though when the rot is noble, some producers are quite willing to allow it into the wine. This, indeed, along with grape variety, length of *apasimento*, and post-fermentation maturation, is one of the factors which distinguishes one Amarone from the next.

### **How will the Essay be Graded?**

- accurate description of *appassimento* process with mention of *passito* (1 point; point deducted for spelling)
- accurate listing of three primary grape varieties (1 point)
- description of qualitative issues in Amarone production (rot, length of *appassimento*, maturation) (1 point)
- Valpolicella wine style (1 point)
- Amarone wine style (1 point)

7904 NW 83<sup>rd</sup> St., Tamarac, FL, 33321, USA

Direct International Office: (888-692-7158)

E-mail: [info@internationalsommelier.com](mailto:info@internationalsommelier.com) · Website: [www.internationalsommelier.com](http://www.internationalsommelier.com)

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube all @ISGSommelier

International Sommelier Guild Ltd.