

# DISCOVER AMERICAN WINES

By ROBERT SCHARFF

American wines have come of age, especially premium-quality wines. And club managers in the market for fine wines will be pleasantly surprised at what can be found in our "back yard"

**A** MERICANS now consume over 200 million gallons of wine a year. Not only are they drinking more wines, they are showing an increasing preference for premium-quality American wines. These premium wines and Champagnes are the types country club patrons are inclined to order.

America, because of Prohibition, dropped out of the world of wines for 13 years. When she returned, she was greeted with a welcome tintured, as might be expected, with skepticism.

Adding to the skepticism was the tendency of people to compare some American agricultural products to their foreign counterparts, which had their births hundreds of years before the founding of the United States. American grapes, wine, beer and cheese, for example, have long been regarded as "imitations." The American product was good in a way, but was unacceptable to a large segment of people who had come to regard the foreign product as the ultimate in taste, flavor and, of course, style.

America is one of the greatest natural grape growing areas in the world. Many species of grapes grow throughout the broad expanse of fertile land from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Canada to the Gulf, but American wine is not, nor can it ever be, produced like some particular wine in a foreign country.

Wines are individuals and are



Illustrated by Art Sudduth

SUDDUTH

inseparable from the climates and soils that give them their character. For example, a wine can be of a type which has long since become generic, such as Port wine. It can be, however, different in its characteristics because of the varieties of grapes used and the process of manufacture followed by its producer. Not all Port produced in America has the same taste, flavor and bouquet. Similarly, American Port is not the same as Port produced in Portugal (even the brands of producers in that country do not have exactly the same characteristics). This analogy holds true of other generic types of wine, such as Sherry, Sauterne, Burgundy and Champagne. In other words, wine growers of the United States produce distinct individual wines which other regions here or in Europe cannot reproduce. New York State wineries do not imitate wines of Europe or even of California, but produce wines "that were never known before."

The young American wine industry has long ago outpaced its foreign parents (Americans drink native wines at a ratio of about 15 to 1 to imported wines), but American wines continue to be compared to what are considered to be perfect models and all similar wines are still considered imitations. Glances of disdain and astonishment are still being directed down the long noses of self-styled wine authorities toward delicious American wines that have fine parentage and characteristics that would shame many foreign wines long considered the ultimate of centuries of wine growing.

Criticism is directed at the manner in which wine has been pro-

duced in America for the past hundred years. Its production is centralized in wineries instead of in hundreds of thousands of grape growers' homes throughout the country, as is the case in many European wine-growing areas. True, American wineries broke tradition, but how else could the industry progress as far as it has in this young country? Skilled production results in uniform quality which depends on each winemaker's policy underlying the product he wishes to make or the market he is trying to attain. In other words, the myth that all imported wines are vastly superior to American wines is false. Premium-quality wines of Europe and the United States both have their enthusiastic supporters.

Incidentally, most French grapes are grown on American rootstock. *Vitis riparia*, the wild grape commonly seen in northern sections, is very resistant to the grape phylloxera, a small insect which feeds on the roots of the grapevines. It is the rootstock which was first sent to France and used to reconstitute the French vineyards after they had been wiped out by the phylloxera in the period from 1860 to 1885. Thus, there is a little bit of America even in French "imported" wines.

In the last few years, American vintners have shown greater determination to have their wines accepted on their own merits. For example, many of them are no longer using the generic names.

Actually, the period of naming American wines by European types is drawing to a close and certainly in the field of the fine wines, it is virtually over. In their places,

are names such as Pinot Chardonnay, Baco Noir, Catawba, Sauvignon Blanc and Johannisberg Riesling. These are the names of the grape varieties represented in the world's finest wines. On bottles of American wines, these names tell the buyer the grape from which the preponderant wine is used in the blend. Or, as is more often the case, the grape from which 100 per cent of the wine is used.

It does, of course, impose obligations on the buyer. He must know a few of these grape and wine names, unfamiliar as they may be, if he is to get the best. And that he is not hidebound in his wine buying as some have supposed is evident from the statistics which show a steady trend toward familiarity with these labels.

Although dedication to qualify first and profits later is not universal enough in America to be called a rule (Is it in any wine growing country?), there is evidence enough that the quality urge has made itself felt in a very positive way in the market place, and not only in the fine wines. In brief, the less expensive American wines are better, for the price, than they have ever been.

Specifically, a gallon of American dinner wine at, say \$4 a gallon, will, when poured into screw-capped whiskey bottles for convenience and in innocent contravention of "Federal law forbids re-use of this bottle," yield five fifth-bottles of wine at 80 cents a fifth, or four quart bottles at one dollar a quart. This is still a good deal more than *vin ordinaire* costs in France, but it is also better than

(Continued on page 68)

## LAWSUIT

*(Continued from page 39)*

create a monopoly in the retail sales of golf equipment.

"Golf City filed the suit" according to its attorney Henry Klein, "because the owner, James Orange, is being eliminated from competition. Golf City is in the business of exclusively dealing in golf equipment, but it is unable to compete with the pro shops."

The attorney said that the PGA was included in the suit as a defendant because the law provides "anyone who benefits is liable."

In his ruling, Judge Comiskey declared in a memorandum of reasons for denying the motions:

"The court is convinced that the object of the conspiracy and its accomplishment are sufficiently alleged in the complaint so as not to be subject to any infirmity. The question which then arises is whether the plaintiff has alleged sufficient facts, details, or circumstances constituting the conspiracy itself.

"The defendants argue that these allegations are nothing more than bare legal conclusions and do not meet the requirements of pleadings set forth" in cases cited.

"It may well be that this contention has merit, but the court is of the opinion that determination of this vital issue at this time would not be the best course to take in this proceeding."

The Federal judge asserted he understood Golf City intends to file an amended complaint and suggested "the plaintiff should allege his full case now so that the motions to dismiss can be considered once and for all rather than in several phases.

*"Therefore, without, in any way intending to rule on the merits of the motions to dismiss, the court directs counsel for the plaintiff to proceed with his proposed amendment to the complaint after which these motions will be set down for re-argument in the light of the amended complaint and will be ruled upon at that time."*

At press time, Golf City had not filed its amended complaint. However, once this is done, the defendants would again have the opportunity to file for dismissal. □

## AMERICAN WINES

*(Continued from page 45)*

the wine average Frenchman drinks daily.

In the field of high-quality wines, or "premium wines," American wines compare favorably with nearly all the Clarets of the Bordeaux district, as well as with many of the better white Burgundies. American wines come less close to the great red Burgundies, the Sauternes (though not to the dryer Graves), and is far from equaling the superior whites of Germany; the Moselles, the Rheingaus or the wines of the Rheinpfalz.

There are few, if any, American wines comparable to the better vintages of the Loir—the Vouvrays, the Anjous, the Pouilly-Fumés—or the finer Alsations or the greats of the Rhône Valley. It may be doubtful at this stage, whether or not the American public is ready for such an array of vinous complexities, even if they were available. But many Ameri-

can wines have no import equivalents what so ever.

Wine sales in America are big business, and a growing one, too. In 1969 alone Americans spent well over one billion dollars for American wines, representing an ever-increasing trend and substantial increase over 1968. The opportunity for increasing wine sales in on-premise establishments is almost unlimited, because people are now spending about eight times as much for wines to consume at home as they do for wines to consume in the restaurant. Thus, it's more than patriotism for the club manager to know about American wines—it just makes good sense. □

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## FORMULA

*(Continued from page 53)*

or July at the rate of five pounds per thousand square feet. The 26 acres of fairways can be easily fertilized in one eight-hour day.

With a feeding program that requires minimum applications using minimum man-hours, Yoder and his two-man crew can manage the mowing, the preventive and curative fungicidal program and the other cultural practices. Few applications of herbicides are necessary because the healthy dense turf restricts the development of noxious weeds. A periodic insect and grub control program is followed as required.

The annual rainfall in Somerset averages 35 to 45 inches. Thus, Somerset does not need a regular irrigation system. This makes a program of proper liming, feeding and mowing even more important, because the turfgrass must at all times be healthy enough to survive the drought period as well as

the other normal hazards. Among these normal hazards is a golfing membership of 250 that puts 100 golfers on the course each day during weekends and holidays. This adds up to a traffic of 200 18-hole golfers on each tee, green and fairway of this course. Yoder with his easy-going, pleasant smile comments, "Over the years I've learned that I can measure the satisfaction of my golfers by the quality of my turfgrass."

Today, highly respected by professionals as well as his own club members, Yoder's course at Somerset was considered in 1969 by professional Chuck Scally of Pittsburgh and winner of the 1969 Somerset Pro-Member Tournament, to be one of the best manicured in the Tri-State area.

Part of the credit for Somerset's outstanding course, however, should go to the cooperation between Yoder and Howard Miller which enabled the program to begin. □