

LIVE FROM MI CAB FRANC CHALLENGE

Please refresh periodically for updates. Pictures: Bottles ready to taste. Patrick Fegan of Chicago Wine School. Importer Jean-Jacques Fertal.

5:35 PM Live from Kalamazoo's Park Club. All six judges are here -- 22 Cab Francs ready to taste!

5:42 PM Judges just told that a total of just 85 acres of Cab Franc are planted in the state. They think the first CF grapes were not planted until 1990 or 1991.

5:45 PM First flight going in front of the judges -- six wines

5:57 PM Judges tabulating the scores on the first flight of wines. They will pick the top two wines from each flight to go into the final round -- a third if judging is close.

6:02 PM No questions or serious debate in this flight; Wines 1 and 3 clear winners. Both will both go into final round. First flight glasses being removed.

6:16 PM Now onto second flight -- 5 wines. Organizer Terry Stingley says that each of the wines being tasted tonight is 100% Cab Franc, no blending. Why am I dubious?

6:25 PM Scoring separately with no discussion, five of six judges picked the same wine in this flight as the best. That's pretty impressive. Second place wine also a clear winner. The judges are real pros, and things are going very smoothly.

6:29 PM Flight three now being served; six wines. Dianna Stampfler from Promote Michigan just sat down next to me at the media table and is trying to get online.

6:33 PM Just replaced one corked wine with a fresh bottle.

6:43 PM Judges' scoring all over the lot on this flight, and no one is all that fond of any of them except the first-place finisher. Sent the second-place wine into the finals with a distinct lack of enthusiasm.

6:50 PM Final preliminary flight being served; five wines. Swirl, sniff, sip, spit. Repeat.

7:02 PM Now scoring final preliminary flight. Some slight confusion getting scores recorded. Again, a clear first place and not much enthusiasm for any other.

7:08 PM Short break in the action while the final flight gets poured. Eight wines, the top two from each of the four preliminary flights. Been joined at the media table by Shannon Casey who's tweeting @michbythebottle.

7:10 PM Debate breaks out on whether to judge final flight on current drinkability or ultimate quality. They decide for current. I disagree -- but I'm not judging today. That's a serious issue here, because so many of the wines from this vintage are really tannic and backward.

7:15 PM YUM! Media table just got perfectly broiled baby lamb chops from the Park Club. Too bad the judges can't try them yet -- would ruin their palates! They're now tasting the eight finalists.

7:35 PM Indecision strikes!! Panel narrows eight finalists down to five wines; can't go any further. Will retaste all five. Short delay.

7:40 PM Discussion with a couple of the judges over methoxypropane (SP! -- green bell pepper flavors) in Cabernet Franc. Others find it much less objectionable than I do. To me, it's deficient grape-growing -- failure to get them fully ripe. Several judges say it's a natural component, to be expected in the grape.

7:55 PM Now ranking final five wines.

8:05 PM WINNERS -- not yet announced here! #3 -- Brys Estate; #2 -- 2 Lads Reserve; #1 Brys Estate Artisan Series