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QUALITY
CLASSIFICATION

Cannabis Resin

BY FRENCHY CANNOLI

As cannabis is slowly decriminalized the world over, and the use of medicinal and adult-use products expands, we are going to need a universal classification system to grade product quality. Historically, the few Hashish producing countries never made more than half-a-dozen grades of resin, and the quality gap between the grades was so obvious that the simplest grading system was adequate for commerce. Today the amazing diversity of Cannabis strains is reflected in the quality of the large variety of resin available which makes the development of a universally agreed upon classification system that much more important. We need a system that would transcribe professional knowledge into a numerical grade that could be understood and used by connoisseurs, as well as by the less knowledgeable consumer the world over as an educational and reference tool.

A system that can define the various dimensions and parameters of resin quality is mandatory to the future of our trade.

Looking for an existing source to base a model on, I naturally referred to the wine industry for a scoring system that could be replicated to our specific needs. The famous wine specialist Robert Parker's 100 points system¹ was a good fit:

| Description | Points | Explanation |
|--------------------------|--------|--|
| All wines base points | 50 | Minimum score all wines |
| General color/appearance | 5 | Up to 5 points |
| Aroma and bouquet | 15 | Up to 15 points depending on the intensity level, dimension of the aroma and bouquet, and cleanliness of the wine. |
| Flavor and finish | 20 | Up to 20 points. Covers intensity of flavor, balance, cleanliness, depth and length on the palate. |
| Overall quality | 10 | Up to 10 points includes potential for further evolution and improvement through aging |
| Maximum score | 100 | Denotes highest quality possible |

In general, the amount of alcohol is secondary to quality in the eyes of a wine connoisseur. The nose and taste buds are the main judges of excellence, and aging has more value than appearance.

Robert Parker's and other similar scoring systems are popular with consumers who trust the expert's objectivity, but the expert's evaluation too often changes between tastings and

tasters so that the accuracy of these scores are nonetheless subjective.

An adaptation of a hundred point scoring system for Cannabis resin would have to take into consideration five main quality criteria (see chart below).

This scoring structure takes into consideration the five most important aspects of resin quality. The evaluation of the melt and the quantity of the resin formed in the trichomes, as well as the

amount of cannabinoids and terpenes produced by the plant should come from laboratory tests to provide a solid objective foundation to the scores. But the evaluation of smoking cannabis concentrates, like drinking wine, cannot be captured by scientific analysis alone. We need a way to evaluate the human experience.

HOW DO PEOPLE PERCEIVE QUALITY IN CANNABIS RESIN?

It is not a simple question. This would be no easy task when focused on a single demographic group and is much more complicated when the research needs to encompass not only growers and consumers of all types but all intermediaries as well, including commercial buyers, distributors, dispensaries owners, bud-tenders, magazine writers and critics, publicists, patients and so on. The list has to be extensive and as diversified as possible to have any value. A research project to answer this question would need vast resources and knowledge to pull it together, and I quickly came to the conclusion it would be an impossible project to tackle by myself.

During my investigations, I came across an amazing paper, "The Intrinsic Dimensions of Wine Quality: An Exploratory Investigation" by Stephen Charters and Dr. Simone Pettigrew, based on their research exploring the perception of wine quality by over a hundred participants from diverse demographic and geographical regions of Australia to evaluate "how consumers and wine professionals understand wine quality as a global concept and to identify the intrinsic dimensions of wine quality."²

| Quality Criteria | Points | Explanation |
|---|--------|--|
| 1. The Melt - amount of resin formed in the trichomes | 30 | Up to 30 points |
| 2. The Cannabinoid content - width of spectrum and quantity/potency | 25 | Up to 25 points |
| 3. The Terpenes content - width of spectrum and quantity | 25 | Up to 25 points |
| 4. Stability of the resin structure | 15 | Up to 15 points |
| 5. Appearance – un-pressed and pressed | 5 | Includes potential for further evolution and improvement through aging |
| Maximum score | 100 | Denotes highest quality possible |

THE INTRINSIC DIMENSIONS OF WINE QUALITY: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The **nose** or **bouquet/aroma** of a specific wine is the smell of the wine in a glass. It is the olfactory essence of the experience to come. The cannabis resin aroma should be valued as a dimension of quality. It is an under-appreciated and often passed-over first dimension of

quality.

The **taste** is the first major element of the gustatory dimension and applies to cannabis resin as well.

The **smoothness** of the wine was an important element for all participants despite some ambivalence between the connoisseurs and novices concerning the terminology. The smoothness of cannabis resin should also be an element in our scoring system.

The **body** is closely related to smoothness. The term describes the sensation in the mouth, beyond the initial smoothness, as the taste buds explore

the complexity of the wine, its texture and depth of flavors. The body of the smoke and the complexity of the terpene profile preserved in the cannabis resin need to be taken into consideration as well.

Drinkability was an important element of quality for most participants; if you want more, it has to be good. The same should apply to cannabis resin.

The **balance** of a wine expresses finesse and elegance but above all it holds a perfect harmony of all the components. The balance of a complex terpene profile is an important factor of appreciation as well when smoking so we should consider including it in our scoring.

The **concentration** identifies the intensity of flavors and how long it lingers in the mouth after swallowing the wine. The concentration of terpenes exploding in your mouth and the duration of "yumminess" after exhalation again has to be considered as an important factor of quality.

The **complexity** of a wine is associated to quality but also to the feeling accompanying the experience, the more complex the wine the more intense the feeling and so it is with a complex resin terpene profile.

Interest is the expression of the unique personality of a product and applies to both wine or cannabis resin.

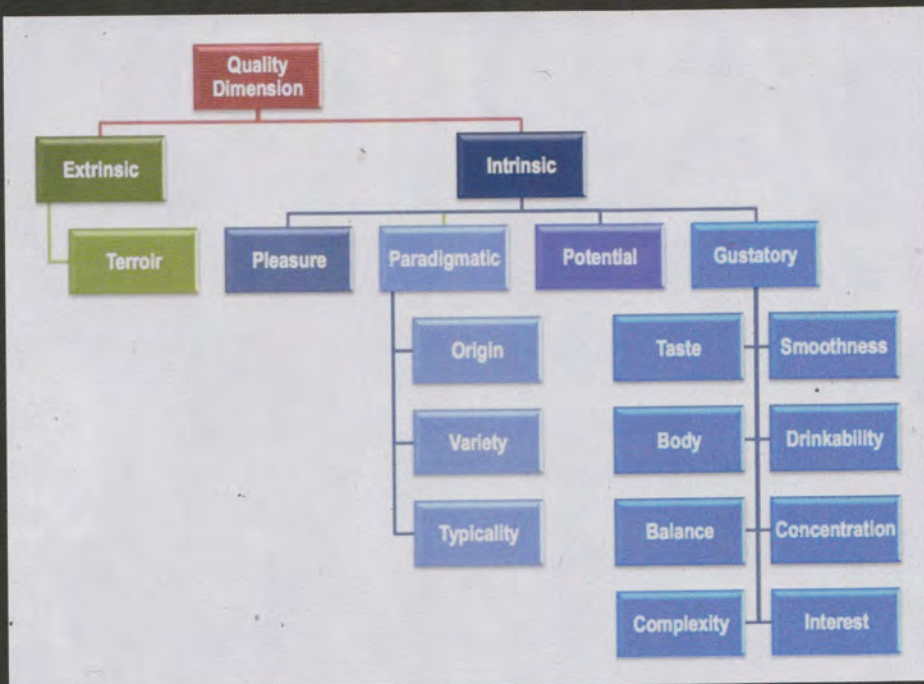
The **paradigmatic** dimensions of wine, **origin**, **variety** and **typicality** relate to the terroir³, the varietal⁴ purity and the blending methodology.

I believe that ultimately we will be able to judge resin quality to such a depth; the quality of a terroir truly defines the final product, the genetic purity and breeding methodology also enhance quality. These core elements of quality have to be studied in-depth. Cannabis resin is the expression of these elements in the same way as wine.

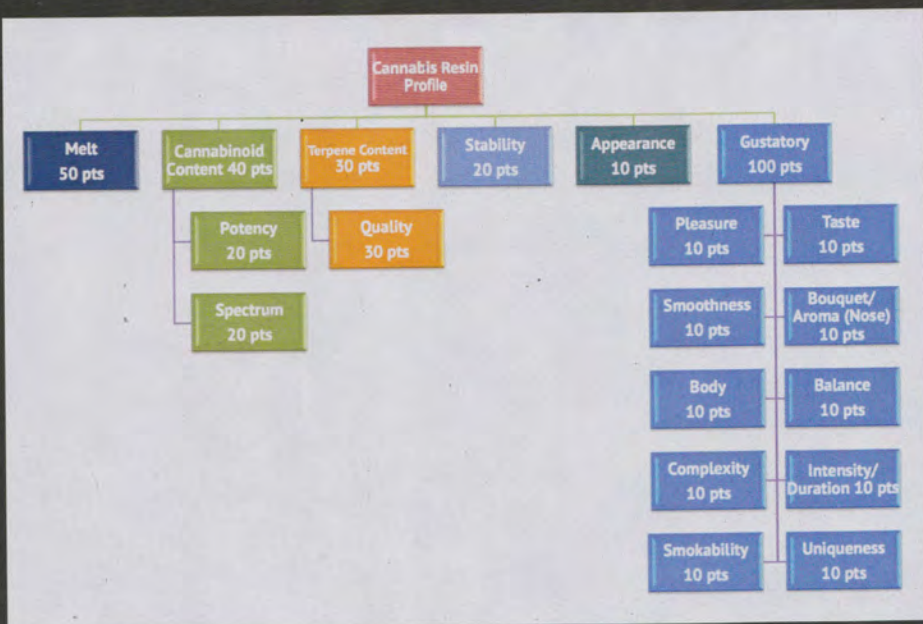
The **potential** of a great wine often lies in the future; the ability to age is an important dimension of wine quality. The potential to age is also a characteristic of cannabis resin but we will need to study the aging process in-depth before we can apply the concept to our resin quality scoring system.

The **pleasure** offered by the experience unanimously defines one intrinsic dimension of wine quality and applies most certainly to cannabis resin. There is a direct relation between the dimension of immediate sensorial pleasure, and the gustatory dimension, which provides a more analytical approach to validate the initial sense of pleasure by identifying all the diverse aspects of the gustatory experience and the pleasure they brought initially.

THE INTRINSIC DIMENSIONS OF WINE QUALITY



THE DIMENSIONS OF CANNABIS RESIN QUALITY



SCORING THE DIMENSIONS OF CANNABIS RESIN QUALITY

In my proposed scoring system, the amount of resin formed in the trichomes or melt, the full characteristics of the cannabinoids and terpenes, as well as the appearance and stability of the resin are main elements of quality and could be sufficient to our scoring endeavor, but the human factor is critical to capture the level of expertise and depth we need this scoring system to offer.

The cannabinoid content for example, needs to be scored on potency and width of spectrum to appreciate its full value; on the other hand in the evaluation of the terpenes, I would suggest we only base this on content since the spectrum quality assessment is an inherent part of the gustatory experience and is evaluated separately and in detail.

This hybrid scoring system of 250 points is complex and is definitely pushing the boundary but I believe that it is necessary at this point in time for our industry; we are on the threshold of legalization in California and we need to be able to rely on a scoring system that can evaluate precisely every aspect of resin quality and specify the reasons

behind the final score in the most detailed and informative manner.

References

1. Robert Parker <https://www.erobertparker.com/info/legend.asp>
2. *The Intrinsic Dimensions of Wine Quality: An Exploratory Investigation* By Stephen Charters and Dr. Simone Pettigrew, Edith Cowan University 100 Joodalup Drive Joodalup WA 6027 Australia. <http://academyofwinebusiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/File-017.pdf>
3. *The combination of factors including soil, climate, and sunlight that gives wine grapes their distinctive character.* <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/terroir>
4. *Grape varieties*



I'd love to get your thoughts and input on my proposed scoring structure. To this end I have set up a special page on my website with a comments section. Thanks in advance for your input. www.frenchycannoli.com/cannabis-scoring/ Also, I have created a video on the same topic and posted it to my YouTube page. You can see it here: www.YouTube.com/c/FrenchyCannoli

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- Photography by Kim Sallaway -