

Guild of Sommeliers Certified Sommelier (US and Canada) Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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SAMPLE

Questions

- 1. Which region is NOT part of the Columbia Gorge AVA?**
 - A. Oregon**
 - B. Washington**
 - C. Napa Valley**
 - D. California**
- 2. Which varietal is often blended with Shiraz to produce Rhône-style wines?**
 - A. Chardonnay**
 - B. Grenache**
 - C. Sauvignon Blanc**
 - D. Cabernet Sauvignon**
- 3. What is Ruby Cabernet a crossing of?**
 - A. Carignan and Grenache**
 - B. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot**
 - C. Carignan and Cabernet Sauvignon**
 - D. Pinot Noir and Zinfandel**
- 4. Which AVA holds the title as the largest appellation in Washington state?**
 - A. Yakima Valley AVA**
 - B. Columbia Valley AVA**
 - C. Red Mountain AVA**
 - D. Horse Heaven Hills**
- 5. According to federal regulations, what percentage of grapes must be from the stated variety?**
 - A. 70%**
 - B. 75%**
 - C. 80%**
 - D. 85%**

- 6. What is the required percentage of grapes that must come from Ontario or British Columbia to label as VQA?**
- A. 85%**
 - B. 95%**
 - C. 100%**
 - D. 90%**
- 7. What percentage of all American wine is produced by California?**
- A. 80%**
 - B. 85%**
 - C. 90%**
 - D. 95%**
- 8. What is one of the AVAs of New York State?**
- A. Applegate Valley**
 - B. Long Island**
 - C. Willamette Valley**
 - D. Columbia Gorge**
- 9. What does the term 'dry' mean when describing wine?**
- A. Low to no residual sugar remaining after fermentation**
 - B. High alcohol content in the wine**
 - C. Wine that has been aged in oak barrels**
 - D. A wine with a full-bodied flavor**
- 10. In what region can the grape Vidal, used for making Icewine, be found?**
- A. Okanagan Valley**
 - B. Niagara Peninsula**
 - C. Sonoma Valley**
 - D. Finger Lakes**

Answers

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1. C
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. B
6. C
7. C
8. B
9. A
10. B

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Explanations

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1. Which region is NOT part of the Columbia Gorge AVA?

- A. Oregon**
- B. Washington**
- C. Napa Valley**
- D. California**

The Columbia Gorge AVA (American Viticultural Area) is a designated wine-growing region that spans the border between Oregon and Washington. This AVA is known for its diverse climatic and geographic features, which contribute to a wide variety of wine styles. The important point is that the Columbia Gorge AVA is strictly located within these two states. Napa Valley, located in California, is a well-known wine region that produces a significant amount of high-quality wines, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. Since Napa Valley is not situated within the boundaries of the Columbia Gorge AVA, it is correctly identified as the region that does not belong to this specific AVA. The other options—Oregon and Washington—are both parts of the Columbia Gorge AVA, which solidifies the understanding that Napa Valley is the outlier in this context.

2. Which varietal is often blended with Shiraz to produce Rhône-style wines?

- A. Chardonnay**
- B. Grenache**
- C. Sauvignon Blanc**
- D. Cabernet Sauvignon**

Grenache is commonly blended with Shiraz (also known as Syrah) to create Rhône-style wines. This blending practice is particularly prevalent in regions like the Southern Rhône Valley, where both varietals thrive. The combination of Shiraz and Grenache results in wines that balance the bold, spicy, and sometimes smoky characteristics of Shiraz with the fruit-forward, juicy, and sometimes herbal notes of Grenache. The interplay of these two grapes enhances the complexity of the final wine, contributing to both richness and structure. The other varietals listed, while they may complement certain wines in different contexts, do not typically form the foundation of Rhône-style blends alongside Shiraz. Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are primarily white grape varietals and not involved in red wine blends, while Cabernet Sauvignon tends to be utilized in different styles and blends, particularly in Bordeaux-style wines rather than traditional Rhône-style compositions.

3. What is Ruby Cabernet a crossing of?

- A. Carignan and Grenache
- B. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot
- C. Carignan and Cabernet Sauvignon**
- D. Pinot Noir and Zinfandel

Ruby Cabernet is indeed a crossing of Carignan and Cabernet Sauvignon. This varietal was developed in the 1970s with the intention of creating a grape that could retain the fruity characteristics of Carignan while gaining the structure and aging potential typical of Cabernet Sauvignon. The blend of these two grape varieties provides a wine that often exhibits a balance of fruit-forward flavors combined with the tannic backbone associated with Cabernets, which contributes to aging potential and complexity. This crossing was particularly aimed at producing a variety suitable for California's climate and agricultural conditions, making it resilient while still appealing to contemporary wine preferences. The identification of Ruby Cabernet this way is significant for winemakers, as it informs them about the expected attributes in terms of flavor profile and vinification practices, as well as how it might perform in different terroirs. Understanding these relationships is a key component of wine education and sommelier training.

4. Which AVA holds the title as the largest appellation in Washington state?

- A. Yakima Valley AVA
- B. Columbia Valley AVA**
- C. Red Mountain AVA
- D. Horse Heaven Hills

The Columbia Valley AVA is recognized as the largest appellation in Washington state, covering approximately 11 million acres. This vast area includes several sub-AVAs, making it a significant region for grape growing and winemaking. The diversity in climate and geography allows for a wide range of grape varieties to thrive, contributing to the region's reputation for high-quality wines. The size of the Columbia Valley is essential as it encompasses varied microclimates and soil types, which can influence the characteristics of the wines produced there. The region's reputation for large-scale production and its ability to produce both commercial and premium wines plays a key role in Washington's overall wine industry. This contrasts with the other options, which are either smaller sub-regions or specific vineyards within the larger Columbia Valley.

5. According to federal regulations, what percentage of grapes must be from the stated variety?

- A. 70%
- B. 75%**
- C. 80%
- D. 85%

In the United States, federal regulations dictate that for a wine to be labeled with a specific grape variety, at least 75% of the grapes used in that wine must be from the stated variety. This requirement ensures that consumers can have a reasonable expectation regarding the primary characteristic and flavor profile of the wine they are purchasing. This percentage reflects a balance between maintaining authenticity in labeling while allowing some flexibility for winemakers to blend in smaller amounts of other varieties, which can enhance the wine's complexity without the proposed variety losing its presence. In contrast, many regions around the world have different laws, but in the U.S., the 75% rule is uniform across the board for varietal labeling.

6. What is the required percentage of grapes that must come from Ontario or British Columbia to label as VQA?

- A. 85%
- B. 95%
- C. 100%**
- D. 90%

To label a wine as VQA (Vintners Quality Alliance) in Canada, it is essential that 100% of the grapes used in the production of that wine originate from the designated region specified on the label, whether it be from Ontario or British Columbia. This stringent requirement ensures that the wine reflects the unique terroir and characteristics of the region it claims to represent. The VQA system is designed to protect the integrity of Canadian wines and to guarantee quality standards. As a result, producers must adhere to these regulations to maintain the VQA designation and uphold consumer trust in the authenticity and quality of their products. The requirement for 100% of the grapes being locally sourced is a hallmark of the VQA certification, distinguishing it from other designations that may allow blending with grapes from outside the specified region.

7. What percentage of all American wine is produced by California?

- A. 80%**
- B. 85%**
- C. 90%**
- D. 95%**

California is a major player in the American wine industry, producing an impressive percentage of the total wine output in the United States. As of the latest data, California accounts for approximately 90% of all American wine production. This dominance can be attributed to the state's diverse climate, varietal range, and the presence of renowned wine regions such as Napa Valley, Sonoma County, and Paso Robles, among others. The significant concentration of vineyards and wineries in California contributes to its large share of the total wine production, making it the leading state in terms of volume. The other options mention lower percentages, which do not accurately reflect California's extensive role in the national wine landscape. This understanding of California's contributions helps to illustrate not only the state's importance within the industry but also the variety of wines that consumers can find originating from this key region.

8. What is one of the AVAs of New York State?

- A. Applegate Valley**
- B. Long Island**
- C. Willamette Valley**
- D. Columbia Gorge**

Long Island is indeed an established American Viticultural Area (AVA) in New York State, recognized for its unique climate, geography, and the types of grape varieties it can successfully cultivate. This AVA encompasses several important regions known for producing high-quality wines, including both reds and whites. The maritime climate of Long Island, shaped by its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, helps moderate temperatures and provides ideal conditions for grape growing, supporting varieties such as Merlot, Chardonnay, and Cabernet Franc. The other options listed are not associated with New York State. Applegate Valley, Willamette Valley, and Columbia Gorge are all AVAs located in Oregon and Washington, respectively. Understanding this distinction is essential for anyone studying the wine regions of the United States, particularly in recognizing the geographical and climatic factors that contribute to wine production in different states.

9. What does the term 'dry' mean when describing wine?

A. Low to no residual sugar remaining after fermentation

B. High alcohol content in the wine

C. Wine that has been aged in oak barrels

D. A wine with a full-bodied flavor

The term 'dry' when describing wine primarily refers to the presence of residual sugar after fermentation. A wine is considered dry if it has low to no residual sugar, meaning that most of the sugars from the grapes have been converted into alcohol during the fermentation process. This results in a wine that is less sweet and allows for other characteristics, such as acidity and tannin, to be more prominent. Higher levels of residual sugar would classify a wine as sweet rather than dry. This distinction is crucial for wine tasting and pairing, as dry wines often pair better with certain foods and can offer a different sensory experience compared to sweet wines. Understanding the dryness of a wine helps consumers make informed choices based on their taste preferences and the occasion for which they are selecting the wine.

10. In what region can the grape Vidal, used for making Icewine, be found?

A. Okanagan Valley

B. Niagara Peninsula

C. Sonoma Valley

D. Finger Lakes

The grape Vidal, which is known for its role in producing Icewine, is predominantly found in the Niagara Peninsula. This region is renowned for its cool climate and unique microclimates that create ideal conditions for the production of Icewine. The cold temperatures necessary for the freeze-thaw cycles can lead to a concentrated flavor profile in the grapes, making them exceptionally expressive when harvested for Icewine. Vidal is a hybrid grape that thrives in regions where winters can be cold enough to properly freeze the grapes on the vine, thereby allowing for the creation of the sweet, rich style of Icewine that is characteristic of the Niagara Peninsula. The area's long autumns also contribute to the development of complex sugars and flavors in the fruit. While other regions listed, such as the Okanagan Valley and Finger Lakes, do produce Icewine and cultivate Vidal to a certain extent, the Niagara Peninsula is particularly recognized for its production and has the most well-established reputation in this niche of winemaking. Sonoma Valley is not typically associated with Icewine production, as the climate and grape varieties there do not align as closely with the needs of Vidal grapes for this particular style of wine.