

The Salt Lake Tribune

The problem with points Rating wine not an exact science

By Zev Rovine
October 10, 2007

I think we all do it: walk down the wine aisle and scan for wines over 90 points that cost under \$12. We pass over wines that get 85 points and we look at the 98-point wines and wonder if they can really be that good. The problem is that a wine cannot be defined so simply.

The whole point system can be attributed to Robert M. Parker Jr., also known by some as the "emperor of wine." The Parker points go from 50 to 100 and they are given on the basis of certain merits that a wine carries, such as color, aroma, flavor and a wine's ability to age. Parker's point system has had such an effect on the sales of particular wines that he has, without a doubt, become the most powerful man in wine.

American wine magazines, such as Wine Spectator and Wine Enthusiast, have all followed suit and now it seems like a wine is nothing but a compilation of its points. All of these magazines, however, provide tasting notes along with points that are far more revealing and descriptive.

The problem with the system is twofold. First, a wine is not as one-dimensional as a point rating suggests. You are far better off reading a wine's description and deciding for yourself whether or not the wine fits your palate. Second, the palates of people who like a specific kind of wine determine the points.

Usually they prefer wines that are heavy-bodied, highly alcoholic and bombastic. I have found that most

100-point wines are huge and powerful and lack the elegance and nuance that I personally love.

It is also fascinating to me that so often different ratings vary up to five points. Rating a wine is not an exact science, but instead a vague assessment by a subjective palate. Take the time and read the descriptions. You will often find that you will end up with a wine better suited for you.

Wines I love, regardless of points

2003 REJADORADA NOVELLUM TORO (\$23). A deep cherry color gives this wine a somewhat ominous look. Ripe fruit and clove spice dominate the nose while the palate is full, round and as big as can be. A great buy.

2006 DR KONSTANTIN FRANK DRY RIESLING (\$18). From the Finger Lakes region of New York, this bright and acidic wine has almost no sugar and shows beautiful character of mineral, fruit and flowers.

2005 CHIARLO BARBERA D'ASTI (\$14). Medium-bodied, this wine is speckled with spice of pepper and clove and has a nice underlying character of ripe fruit.

