HOW WE RATE **WINES** *(and other things)*

Unfavorable Rating ← → | Theoritical threshold of acceptability | Actual threshold of acceptability | Favorable Rating → | Perfection →

100 POINT SCALES

REAL WORLD MODEL - US HIGH SCHOOL GRADING

In theory an F is failing but if you're trying to use your grades for getting into a College or University less than a B average won't help much.

50 – 60 – 70 – 80 – 90 – 100

F (Failing) | D (Below Average) | C (Average) | B (Above Average) | A (Excellent)

ROBERT PARKER/ WINE SPECTATOR The 100 point system was introduced by Robert Parker's ***Wine Advocate*** in 1978. Very much like its real world model, 60 or above is acceptable in theory but in reality a rating under 80 can make a wine unsellable. As imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the ***Wine Spectator*** adopted Parker's system and helped make the 100 point system huge.

50 – 60 – 70 – 80 – 90 – 95 – 100

A wine deemed to be unacceptable. | A below average wine containing noticeable deficiencies. . . | An average wine with little distinction . . . | A barely above average to very good wine. . . | An outstanding wine . . . | An extraordinary wine . .

WINE ENTHUSIAST Coming along 10 years later than the Wine Advocate, its 100 point scale was calibrated to accept the new reality that far fewer wines had inherent flaws and that there were too many good wines to rate to dwell on merely average (sub-80) wines.

80 – 83 – 87 – 90 – 94 – 98 – 100

Not reviewed | Acceptable | Good | Very Good | Excellent | Superb | Classic

20 POINT SCALES

REAL WORLD MODEL - FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION

The French have successfully resisted many Anglo customs, including grade inflation, which means you can still pass with a 10/20.

10 – 12 – 14 – 16 – 18 – 20

Fail | Passable | Assez Bien | Bien | Très Bien | Exceptionnel

UC DAVIS Developed in the 1950's by Dr. Maynard Amerine, points are given for the following categories: Appearance (2), Color (2), Aroma & Bouquet (4), Volatile Acidity (2), Total Acidity (2), Sugar (1), Body (1), Flavor (1), Astringency (1), and General Quality (2). Although it is still used, its criteria is now widely considered obsolete as it comes from a time when making defect free wine was the primary concern. One widely voiced criticism is that a fairy ordinary wine can easily score 17 points.

9 – 13 – 17 – 20

Wines below commercial acceptability | Standard wines with neither outstanding character or defect | Standard wines with neither outstanding character or defect | Wines of outstanding characteristics, no defects

JANCIS ROBINSON Before becoming a Master of Wine, she studied Mathematics at Oxford but has never been completely comfortable with the relationship of wine and numbers. Not denying the usefulness of such systems, she likes the 5 star scale of Broadbent and ***Decanter*** but feels the 20 point scale allows more precision. Also note that her scale criteria is - in contrast to the Davis system - hedonistic and subject to the same grade inflation as most of the others. Out of politeness, perhaps?

12 – 13 – 14 – 15 – 16 – 17 – 18 – 19 – 20

Unbalanced or faulty | Deadly dull or borderline unbalanced | Average but distiguished | Superior | A cut above superior | A Humdinger | Truly exceptional

5 STAR SCALES

REAL WORLD MODEL - HOTEL STAR RATINGS 5 Star scales have been used for over 100 years to rate hotels but the criteria can differ greatly depending on the country and the reviewer. The system shown here has been used since 1958 by Mobil Travel Guides to rate American hotels.

★ Clean, convenient establishment with limited services | ★★ Comfortable establishment with expanded services and amenities | ★★★ Well-appointed establishment, with full services and amenities | ★★★★ Outstanding-worth a special trip | ★★★★★ One of the best in the country

MICHAEL BROADBENT He's been tasting professionally for over 50 years using the 5 star scale. For purposes of this chart, and accounting for British reserve his "Good" translates to "Very Good" in other parts of the world.

NO STARS Poor | ★ Not very good, but not bad | ★★ Moderately Good | ★★★ Good | ★★★★ Very good | ★★★★★ Outstanding

DECANTER The main British wine mag uses Broadbent's system but in practice they rarely publish any ratings below 3 stars. In other words "Quite Good" or less is a polite way of saying "Rubbish."

★☆☆☆☆ Acceptable | ★★☆☆☆ Quite Good | ★★★☆☆ Recommended | ★★★★☆ Highly Recommended | ★★★★★ Decanter Award

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher don't use stars but their system can be considered a five star scale. "Delicious!" is very rarely used (~0.1% of the time) much like 100 in the 100 point scales.

Yech | **OK** | **Good** | **Very Good** | **Delicious** | **Delicious!**

4 STAR SCALES

NEW YORK TIMES The New York Times uses a four star scale that seems to have began with newspaper movie reviews. Mediocrity isn't big in New York so the ratings skip right over the merely "Good" going from "Passable" to "Very good". The San Francisco Chronicle adopted a similar 4 star system earlier this year.

NO STARS Pass it by | ★ Passable | ★★ Very Good | ★★★ Excellent | ★★★★ Extraordinary

3 STAR SCALES

REAL WORLD MODEL - MICHELIN RESTAURANT GUIDES

Just getting one star is a big deal - if wines were rated like this, there would be very few rated.

✽ A very good restaurant in its category | ✽✽ Excellent cooking, worth a detour | ✽✽✽ Exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey

GAMBERO ROSSO The major Italian wine publisher awards "Tre Bicchieri" (three wineglasses) like Michelin Stars but the equivalent scores out of 100 that they provide seem too low. Hasn't anyone told them that under 80/100 spells doom for any winemaker?

🍷 Above average to good in its category, equivalent to 70-79/100 | 🍷🍷 Very good to excellent in its category, equivalent to 80-89/100 | 🍷🍷🍷 Excellent in its category, equivalent to 90-99/100

WINE X MAGAZINE "Our recommendation system has absolutely nothing to do with numbers". They don't really have anything to do with the Michelin 3 star scale either but it only seems natural that their highest ranking is triple-X.

X Recommended (Gets it Done) | **XX** Highly Recommended (Killer Kine) | **XXX** Exceptionally Cool

SIGNIFICANT RATING SYSTEMS NOT ADOPTED BY THE WINE WORLD

BOND RATING SCALES If Robert Parker had chose a bond rating scale like this one by Standard and Poors as his model, his influence may not have been what it is today.

D CC CCC- CCC CCC+ B- B B+ BB- BB BB+ BBB- BBB BBB+ A- A A+ AA- AA AA+ AAA

Junk | Speculative Grade | Investment Grade

INTERNET 5 STAR RATINGS This system developed by Amazon.com for book and product ratings has become prevalent throughout the internet. However, giving two stars to something you don't like doesn't seem like an improvement to the existing 5 star wine rating scales.

★☆☆☆☆ I hate it | ★★☆☆☆ I don't like it | ★★★☆☆ It's OK | ★★★★☆ I like it | ★★★★★ I love it

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