

# The Guild of Wine Depreciators (GOWD)

A humorous look at the only TRUE 100-point system!

Tim Hanni, MW

Years ago, during a restaurant roundtable discussion in the Napa Valley, the topic of the 100-point rating system reared its head. A lively and increasingly heated debate ensued about the value of the system, its relevance, and its reliability. It became increasingly obviously the issue was not going to be resolved anytime soon when someone at the table declared, "Let's make a better system!"

Woohoo, what a great idea! Needless to say, there was a great deal of wine imbibing going on and many valid points (or so it seemed at the time) were bantered about. Someone suggested we needed to clarify the intention of our new system. It was pointed out that using a 100-point scale was not really wine *appreciation*, since appreciation is a comparative estimation of value or enjoyment. In fact the use of a 100-point scale was actually a *depreciative* process: comparing a wine against an imaginary 100-point scale and deducting points for any failure to measure up. Thus was born the Guild of Wine Depreciators or GOWD for short.

Traditionally, wine depreciation has been practiced, if not properly identified as depreciation, using various point scales. Over time these scales have increased in breadth from 7 points (U.C. Davis) to the 20-point system I started and which was popular when I first began depreciating wine. Now we are all the way up to the one hundred-point scale (OHPS) popularized by Robert Parker and employed by *Wine Spectator* and practically everyone else. The process is nearly the same for each: a perfect wine is envisioned and then other wines are depreciated (points are deducted) for failure to meet the standards of the perfect wine. Not enough complexity? Deduct. Too much oak? Deduct. Alcohol not high enough? Deduct. Not enough new French oak? We all know the drill.



Cartoon by Bob Johnson

An inherent problem with the OHPS is that it is really only a 50-point scale. No wine can score less than 50 points by this method. The complete depreciation of every facet of a wine can result in a score that will still be above 50 and I know of no wine ever depreciated to less than 50 points by the prevailing OHPS critics. What would it take to score a 42? What about if it killed someone (although people might give bonus points depending on who it killed)? The OHPS used today leaves 50 completely good points that completely go to waste. GOWD is not pleased by this. If we have 100 GOWD-given points, then we need to use them all!

*Continued...*

The conversion from the OHPS 100-point system to the GOWD system is quite easy. There are two sections for the GOWD 100-point scale: 50 points for depreciating the wine and 50 points for depreciating the experience. Simply put, a wine that scored 83 points on the OHPS would be equal to 33 points (83 minus 50). The extra 50 points are then used to depreciate the experience you had while consuming the wine! What fun!

Consider some of these factors and then depreciate accordingly:

- Who picked up the check? Really expensive wine is always vastly more enjoyable, smoother, and more delicious to me when someone else pays.
- Did you like the people you were with? Criticizing people is even more popular than criticizing wine!
- Did you have it by yourself and not like yourself at that particular time or, possibly, not like the fact that you were alone with your wonderful bottle? Deduct, deduct, deduct.
- How was the food? Was there enough food? Was the food the right color and size for the wine? Did the wine stand up to the food?
- Was the music or sound level in the restaurant appropriate?

Now you can begin to see how much more useful the GOWD system is. Here are some notes from my personal experiences to help you familiarize yourself with the format:

### **1945 Mouton Rothschild**

Score: 50 total points by GOWD system (50 for wine, 0 for experience)

Tasted at Chez ChiChi restaurant in New York

#### **Wine notes:** (50 points)

The '45 Mouton itself was a religious experience; full, deep, perfect state of maturity. Concentrated, powerful, and exotic. WOW! As good as it gets.

#### **Experience:** (0 points)

- Ordered by my guest at dinner, a buyer who was a complete you-know-what. I

tried to recommend the \$25 Syrah but he insisted and hinted that I might have my kneecaps damaged if I refused to order the Mouton. Jeez.

- I was selling; he was buying, meaning that I was stuck with the bill. A really big bill.
- I really would have preferred being home with my family.
- Food was great but this was New York and did I mention the really big bill, not to mention the person I was with was an...

Okay – so you get the picture. Great wine; lousy experience. Here is another example that is actually mostly (somewhat) true:

### **Beringer White Zinfandel**

Score: 85 points by the GOWD system (35 points for the wine, 50 bonus points for the experience).

*Tasted in my hot tub after band practice when I lived in a little house in the vineyards in Rutherford, CA. The singer agreed to come over to my place for a relaxing hot tub and told me she loved White Zinfandel and drinking it made her do crazy things*

**Wine notes:** 35 points for getting the job done and who the hell cares what it tasted like! I remember that my date LOVED it! It was lightly pink and so was I.

**Experience:** We are now married and have two great kids. She remains the love of my life and I adore her.

I am often asked, "What would qualify as a perfect 100 rating on the GOWD system?" Maybe if she had brought along a bottle of 1945 Mouton Rothschild and said, "This stuff tastes awful - you can have this all by yourself and I will have the White Zin."

Tim Hanni MW

[tim@timhanni.com](mailto:tim@timhanni.com)

[www.timhanni.com](http://www.timhanni.com)

707-337-0327