

BUT WHY EXHIBIT?

By C. B. Lucas

MANY winemakers find that competing in shows is one of the most interesting aspects of their craft, and those who have not yet entered their wines in a national competition are missing a rewarding experience

Why does one show wine? Even the exhibitor who takes every opportunity to compete with his fellows will probably be hesitant in replying to this question. He will remember the occasion when he left the preparation of his bottles until almost too late and was carefully siphoning his vintage~ until the small hours of the morning before the Show; then later, made a quick check of the Schedule, to find that he had used the wrong type of bottle. The next Show, of course, he had his exhibits prepared in plenty of time beforehand-with the result that his entries had a slight sediment on reaching the showbench and were rapidly passed over by the judges.

The winemaker has no serious hopes of financial gain from the prizes he wins; he will expect to be out of pocket, and he will have spent considerable time on the selection and preparation of his wines. So why does he do so?

The exhibitor in a wine show finds a particular fascination from showing in competition with rival winemakers from all over the country. He knows that, whatever his successes or failures in previous shows, as he enters the show after the judging, nothing is certain. He may have been extremely lucky-and he would regard this as the right word- in winning a first prize in two shows, but find that the same wine received no award at a smaller one. The comparative newcomer to winemaking has as much chance of winning a first prize as the more experienced winemaker, and "beating the expert" 's one of the rewards.

The best approach for the beginner is to consider the judge's point of view. In about two hours, he may have to select six prizes in order from a class containing perhaps one hundred bottles of wine. He is, therefore, unlikely to linger long over a bottle which is hazy, or has a sediment.

Before looking at the class, he will have instructed his steward to place on one side those entries which do not conform to the schedule in type or size of bottle, in correct labelling and filling.

At the 'Bournemouth Show last year, several exhibitors, pointing to a few bottles in one class which had not been opened for judging, asked how wine could possibly be judged without tasting.

The answer was provided by inverting the bottle.

Immediately, a number of "tadpoles," as the judge called them, came swimming down through the wine. Another point which lost many exhibitors points at this Show was that they had syrupe their wine at some late stage. The syruring was evident because the liquids had not fully mixed, and on inverting the bottle, the two could be seen.

The showroom will be one of the main attractions of the Conference this year at Harrow, and many lively discussions will be in progress. A prize winner in one class will take great pride in explaining every detail of the preparation of the winning exhibit, almost from the day he planted the seed that grew into the tree ... An equally jubilant prize winner in a nearby class, will be even more proud of the fact that to win the prize he took absolutely no trouble whatever: "Just took a bottle off the shelf, no idea what's in it" !!

One of the unwritten rules of showing is that the best never reaches the show-bench! It is not necessary to stand long near a prize-winning exhibit before someone comes along and announces to all who will listen that he has some much better than that-at home. His friends will agree, and they all depart, smugly. Let us hope that you will not be this kind of winemaker this year.

A popular feature of the show will be that the judges will comment on the exhibits both from the lecture platform and in the Show itself. This is very instructive for all exhibitors. Most judges have a lively sense of humour, and they will have a ready stock of answers for the unwary who might ask, "What do you think the unusual flavour of this wine is?" There are no showman's tricks in showing wine. If you have a wine which pleases you and your friends, and is brilliant in appearance, and clean in flavour and bouquet, then a wellbottled sample deserves a place on the show-bench at Harrow in June. You may have just the flavour that the judge is looking for. Why not enter, and find out?