

DiWINEtaste

Wine Culture and Information

International Edition

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Autochthonous Grapes Are the Best

The title of this editorial does not exactly reflect my opinion, or, better to say, not in an absolute and fundamentalist way: it is a "litany" I frequently hear lately. In Italy, of course. I am aware that, for this, I will not be seen as "nice", probably considered irreverent towards my Country and its fruits. Let me clear this: I love the great ampelographic heritage of Italy - here like no other place in the world Mother Nature has been so generous in vineyards - but I do not believe I have to support this above and against everything. I have always been convinced that "in case a wine is good and well made" I do not care about its origin or its grapes, or, at least, not in a "blind" way, as I believe every place of the world is capable of giving absolute masterpieces. After all, difference is a great richness: this is true for everything - first of all in humans - and, nevertheless, for what is being poured on a glass.

I have no intention to feed the endless - and absolutely useless - debate on who or what it is best, not even when it is about autochthonous or international grapes, angels the former, devils the latter. To me, autochthonous or international are simply grapes, small caskets full of sweet nectar capable of making wine with the fundamental contribution of Nature and man. There are no good or bad grapes: they all are equally capable of making wine thanks to that extraordinary interpreter bringing them to the highest expression: territory and its small, but big, qualities. It always makes me smile when I see those wine lovers, most of the times "experts", turning up their noses when they hear about Merlot or Chardonnay. In case they had a crucifix and holy water, they would immediately be transformed into exorcists and yelling "step back, international!" We Italians - sadly - are people with a short memory, we quickly forget about our history and, in particular, the price paid for certain events.

A short memory, so short that what happened in Italy just twenty years ago has been forgotten already, therefore what hap-

pened a century ago is destined to oblivion, in those times when phylloxera was devastating the vineyards of our Country and of Europe. By seeing the desolation of vineyard disappearing forever, there were the so hated international grapes only to give a new wine making hope to many places of Italy. If today it can be considered strange to see in certain areas of Italy - Northern-east, in particular - varieties such as Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, which became very common and part of the territory, we should know their presence is the consequence of the needs of those times. Needs which forced vintners to make a decision: to quit making wine or to start everything over and accept what those times could offer. It should be noticed that the French were the first ones to understand phylloxera could be stopped by replacing the roots of vines with those of American varieties. French grapes therefore became the first ones which could stand to the attacks of the devastating aphid and they spread everywhere in the world.

In case this could make you think I am trying to reevaluate the presence of international varieties in the Italian territory, I say this is absolutely distant from my intentions, as well as being useless and unneeded. I do not like the ones who forget history, or pretend to not remember, only for speculative reasons while being in a bad faith. History is important and facts, in order to understand them fully, must be known from the beginning: their manipulation is the sign of a bad faith and a deplorable immorality. If it is true today they are all trying to boast autochthonous grapes - both for commercial reasons and because they are trendy - we should remember a little more than ten years ago there was a quite different trend, the opposite of what we see today. Vineyards were richly adorned with the famous international grapes - and many even defined them as *ameliorative* - and talking about local grapes, the ones which lived our vineyards since remote times, was considered by many both ridiculous and counterproductive. Indeed, autochthonous varieties were uprooted from

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vineyards in order to replace them with international ones, while denying, easily and with no remorse, grapes and wines of the territory.

When I listen to certain *proclamations of wine holy war*, which praise the rejection of the foreign invader grapes, it always recalls to my mind the same thing. What do the French think about their international Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, as to mention the most common varieties? Who knows whether they too hate them so much, right in France where these varieties are, undoubtedly, autochthonous of those lands? Yes, I know, this is a provocation, but it should help to remind about the fact there is no best or worse, good or evil. Everything is relative and in function of the use or abuse we make of things. Do I therefore deplore the new life and the new interest around Italian autochthonous grapes? This is not even my foggiest idea, as there are endless wines made with Italian autochthonous grapes and capable of giving me satisfaction and emotions. I however think the same about all the other grapes: in case a wine is good and well made, I do not hide myself behind a fence, ideological walls or fundamentalist religions.

I say this because I consider wine a cultural heritage of humanity, made of small, very small local expressions and as small as a vineyard, and each of them having equal dignity. Likewise, I recognize equal dignity to everyone believing in his or her land and working as an interpreter of the vineyard, both of international or autochthonous varieties, because respect is the first and fundamental act, even in case you do not agree on something. Discrimination is an idiot and hateful act: this is true for people as well as for grapes, in particular when a blind prejudice does not allow me to have an open and free mind to listen to someone or something telling a story. Difference is richness, always: this is true for wines, for grapes, producers, territories, vineyards and countries. For this reason, it is right to safeguard the specific characteristics of each territory, including grapes. Starting an ideological war is wrong: it makes your mind small and closed, avoid comparison, an indispensable and useful factor for progress and development. The best one does not exist. The best grape does not exist. Wine does exist: let's make it be good and capable of telling about a place and the passion of the ones who make it, in the expression of a territory and its unrepeatable richness. Including grapes.

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WINE TASTING

The Role of Grapes in Tasting

Everything begins from grape, a journey setting its roots in the soil and territory, therefore ending in the senses of humans. The destiny of every wine is the result of the fate of a small berry

Everything begins with grape, from that small golden or purple red berry having a sweet and sour juice. It may seem to be not that much, but the destiny of every wine is indissolubly associated, harvesting after harvesting, to the fate of those small grape berries. The quality of every wine, for better or for worse, begins from here, from the quality and characteristics of grapes with which is it being produced. Not everything depends on grapes, of course, as there are many factors playing a role in the quality of a wine. Grape is just one of the many and, undoubtedly, it plays a fundamental and irreplaceable role. All the other factors - among the many, environment, micro climate and soil - are elements playing a role in order to reach the same goal: determining wine making and organoleptic qualities and characteristics of grapes. The goal is to favor the best viticultural conditions in order to get the best possible quality.

In the winery, as it is commonly known, there can be made real miracles, by completely changing a wine and its characteristics, however with a bad quality raw matter the job becomes pretty hard. Quality grapes, in case they are properly processed and respected in the winery, will *easily* give quality wines, bad quality grapes will make, in the best case, a mediocre wine. For the sake of truth, also in the best cases it is sometimes possible to get a wine making failure: there is also who is capable of making a mediocre wine from good quality grapes. Quality wine is however the result of a process beginning in vineyard and ending in the glass, determined by the culture and presuppositions for quality used in the cultivation of grapes and in the winery. The goodness of these processes determine the sensorial and organoleptic quality of every wine.

We cannot talk about the best grapes in an absolute way, as the quality of every grape is always relative to the territory in which it is being cultivated and depending on human interventions. On this regard, we can consider, for example, one of the most famous grapes of the world and capable of making wines of endless elegance: Pinot Noir. Hard grape to cultivate and to vinify, Pinot Noir, first of all, needs quite specific environmental and climatic conditions, giving its best wines in non excessively warm areas. Cultivated and vinified in hot and sunny areas, Pinot Noir completely loses its elegant character and becomes flat and round, with ordinary aromas so distant from the typical finesse of this variety. A grape capable of giving great wines in a place, it is not necessarily capable of doing the same in other places.

Every grape has absolutely typical qualities and which tend to come out from the glass no matter the place where it was being cultivated, qualities strongly marking the presence of each specific grape in a wine. These characteristics, affecting every organoleptic aspect of a wine, are however perceived with dif-

ferent intensities and quality according to territory, cultivation and wine making techniques. By still considering Pinot Noir as an example, no matter the place where it has been cultivated in, the grape always expresses to the taste its characteristic acidity as well as showing a pretty high transparency. The intensity of these stimuli change according to the territory, however the typical characteristics of every grape will always be - and in general terms - found in all of their wines. The organoleptic characteristic to be mainly affected by cultivation, territory and environment is the olfactory profile.

The intensity and quality of primary and secondary aromas of a grape are frequently affected by the environmental and climatic conditions of the place where it is being cultivated. Every territory is in fact capable of giving a wine *nuances* and characteristics absolutely unique, a condition which is expressed in every sensorial aspect of a wine and, in particular, in the olfactory profile. For example, let's consider Sauvignon Blanc: its characteristic aromas will be completely lost in excessively hot and sunny places, whereas they will express of all their finesse in cool and mild places. For the sake of completeness, it should be noticed the organoleptic quality of a wine - smell and taste, in particular - are also strongly affected by grape ripeness at the moment of harvesting. Unripe grapes will make wines with a pronounced acidity, whereas ripe ones will give a rounder and smoother taste.

The characteristics of the soil strongly affects the quality of grapes, as well as their coloring property. The composition of the soil - and therefore the rootstock of a vine - directly affects not only the cultivation and biology of the plant, but also wine making and organoleptic qualities of a grape. For example, grapes cultivated in a mainly sandy soil, will give wines with paler color and a high transparency, with a light body. The same variety cultivated, for example, in a soil mainly made of clay, it will give a wine with a more intense color and a lower transparency, as well as a more robust and round body. Every soil has specific qualities, capable - according to its composition - to drain or to hold water as well as organic and mineral substances. Clay has a higher capacity of absorbing water than sand, as well as having a lower draining factor.



Everything begins from the vineyard: the good and bad qualities of a wine depend on the fruits of vine

Besides the care you should take both in vineyard and in winery in order to get quality grapes and, therefore, wines capable of expressing the best characteristics of a variety, we should also consider every grape has specific qualities affecting the sensorial profile of a wine. Every variety has in fact proper qualities which can determine, in good part, the organoleptic characteristics of their wines. From color to taste, every grape claims its identity through wine by exalting, last but not the least, the expression of the territory in which it has been cultivated. These factors, we should not forget it, are however defined according to viticultural and wine making criteria and processes. The qualities of grapes and their sensorial peculiarities can in fact be altered - both in a negative and positive way - in the vineyard as well as in the winery. It will be the honesty and culture of both vintner and wine maker to define this important qualitative and organoleptic factor.

The aspect of a wine is mainly determined by the primary classification of grape variety, a quality expressing different colors and nuances according to each variety. White berried grapes, apparently capable of making wine with the same *white* hue - indeed, it is yellow - make a wide variety of nuances and colors. The chromatic richness could seem wider in red berried grapes, indeed, also white berried grapes are capable of such a range. In red grapes, the coloring property is determined by anthocyanins, polyphenolic substances that, according to quantity, determine both intensity of color and transparency. Transparency in white wines is generally very high, however it will be possible to see chromatic differences depending on the specific qualities of each variety. Color and transparency of each grape - either white or red - can be altered, increased or decreased, by using specific wine making techniques, such as filtering and the use of cask or barrique.

Among the organoleptic aspects of a wine, the one mainly expressing the quality of grapes is the olfactory profile. Also in this case we should notice by means of specific wine making technique it is possible to alter, or even completely change, the olfactory profile of a wine and its grapes. According to an aromatic point of view, grapes are classified into three categories: aromatic grapes, semi aromatic grapes and non aromatic grapes. To the first category uniquely belong the grapes whose wines *directly* express the typical aroma of grape and its juice; to the second those which partially have this characteristic; to the third all the varieties in which this characteristic is not found. On this regard, it should be noticed alcoholic fermentation is fundamental for the expression of grape's aromas. For this reason it is in fact said that "*the aromas of grapes are revealed through fermentation thanks to the job of yeast*".

Yeast can substantially affect the olfactory profile of a grape, this is however an unavoidable characteristic as they are indispensable both for alcoholic fermentation and the aromatic expression of a grape. This is one of the main reasons feeding the endless debate among the ones who favor the use of the so called *selected yeast* and those who favor the exclusive use of *wild yeast*. In every place, every vineyard, there is the development of a specific colony and combination of yeast absolutely unique, a condition being true both for yeast having a positive

effect on fermentation and those having a negative effect. The influence of yeast on the aromatic profile of the grape is also according to variety, as some grape aromas are however found and well perceptible despite the work of yeast. The aromas perceived in the glass are therefore the direct result of grape olfactory profile to which are added the aromatic characteristics of yeast and fermentation aromas.

The taste of wine is determined by grape's organoleptic qualities. Grape juice, tasted as soon as it is freshly made, has a sweet and sour taste, becoming more or less astringent in case of red grapes and which already got this color. Grape juice taste, or better to say, each flavor making it, changes according to variety and ripeness. In ripe grapes the quantity of sugar will be higher than unripe grapes, whereas in unripe grapes we find the very opposite condition. Also at full ripeness, each grape is characterized by an absolutely unique sugar to acid substances ratio. For example, we can consider Merlot and Pinot Noir: the former has a lower quantity of acid substances than the second. This characteristic will directly affect both the gustatory profile of wine and its balance, as well as the potential quantity of alcohol produced at the end of fermentation.

The same consideration is true - as for red berried grapes - for the quantity of polyphenolic substances contained in the skin and responsible for wine astringency. For the sake of clearness, the intensity of astringency in a wine is also determined by the time of maceration of skins in the must. This means a very astringent grape can also make a wine with a moderate astringency in case the maceration time is short. Finally, the quality and nature of aromas in a wine contribute to the overall definition of taste. A wine with a non truly rich and simple olfactory profile, will tend to have an equally simple and non truly complex taste. Grapes, of course, are not sugar and acid substances only: in their composition we also find mineral substances and proteins, both directly affecting the taste of wine and its tactile characteristics. The quality and quantity of these substances are also relative to the type of soil in which the grape was cultivated, this is also proving - once again - the importance of territory, unique and unrepeatable, for the expression of a grape and its wines.

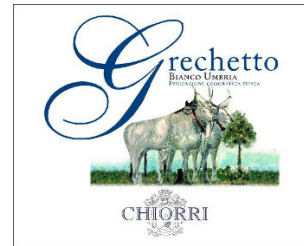


Wines of the Month

Score legend

- ◆ Fair – ◆◆ Pretty Good – ◆◆◆ Good
 ◆◆◆◆ Very Good – ◆◆◆◆◆ Excellent
 ★ Wine that excels in its category
 🍷 Good value wine

Prices are to be considered as indicative. Prices may vary according to the country or the shop where wines are bought



Grechetto 2012 Chiorri (Umbria, Italy)

Grapes: Grechetto

Price: € 4.50

Score: ◆◆◆ 🍷

This Grechetto shows a brilliant straw yellow color and nuances of greenish yellow, very transparent. The nose denotes intense, clean and pleasing aromas that start with hints of apple, hawthorn and pear followed by aromas of broom, plum and hazelnut. The mouth has good correspondence to the nose, a crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness. The finish is persistent with flavors of apple, plum and pear. This Grechetto ages in steel tanks.

Food match: Pasta with meat, Mushroom soups, Stuffed pasta, Sauteed meat, Broiled fish



Colli Perugini Rosso Saliato 2010 Chiorri (Umbria, Italy)

Grapes: Sangiovese (50%), Merlot (30%), Cabernet Sauvignon (20%)

Price: € 6.50

Score: ◆◆◆ ★

Colli Perugini Rosso Saliato shows an intense ruby red color and nuances of ruby red, little transparency. The nose denotes intense, clean, pleasing and refined aromas which start with hints of black cherry, plum and violet followed by aromas of blueberry, vanilla, black currant and raspberry. The mouth has good

correspondence to the nose, a properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness. The finish is persistent with flavors of black cherry, plum and black currant. Colli Perugini Rosso Saliato ages in barrique.

Food match: Roasted meat, Braised and stewed meat, Hard cheese



Kaberlò
Le Manzane (Veneto, Italy)

Grapes: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc (50%), Merlot (50%)

Price: € 8.50

Score: ♦♦♦♦

Kaberlò shows an intense ruby red color and nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency. The nose denotes intense, clean, pleasing and refined aromas which start with hints of black currant, plum and black cherry followed by aromas of blueberry, bell pepper, dried violet, vanilla, tobacco and eucalyptus. The mouth has good correspondence to the nose, a properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness. The finish is persistent with flavors of plum, black currant and black cherry. The finish is persistent with flavors of plum, black currant and black cherry. Kaberlò ages in cement tanks and cask for 18 months.

Food match: Roasted meat, Broiled meat and barbecue, Stewed meat



Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Extra Dry Millesimo 20.10 2011
Le Manzane (Veneto, Italy)

Grapes: Glera

Price: € 12.50

Score: ♦♦♦♦

Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Extra Dry Millesimo 20.10 shows a brilliant greenish yellow color and nuances of greenish yellow, very transparent, fine and persistent perlage. The nose denotes intense, clean, pleasing and refined aromas which start with hints of apple, pineapple and wistaria followed by aromas of hawthorn, peach, pear, chamomile, tangerine and broom. The mouth has good correspondence to the

nose, an effervescent and crisp attack, however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable. The finish is persistent with flavors of apple, peach and pineapple. Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Extra Dry Millesimo 20.10 ferments in closed tank for about 2 months.

Food match: Vegetable and crustacean appetizers, Pasta and risotto with vegetable and crustaceans



Langhe Riesling Herzu 2011
Ettore Germano (Piedmont, Italy)

Grapes: Riesling

Price: € 16.50

Score: ♦♦♦♦★

Langhe Riesling Herzu shows a pale straw yellow color and nuances of greenish yellow, very transparent. The nose reveals intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant aromas which start with hints of pear, pineapple and citrus fruits followed by aromas of apple, broom, peach, hawthorn, mineral, plum and flint. The mouth has good correspondence to the nose, a crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable. The finish is persistent with flavors of pear, pineapple and peach. Langhe Riesling Herzu ages in steel tanks for 6 months.

Food match: Fried fish, Pasta and risotto with crustaceans, Broiled crustaceans



Barolo Riserva Lazzarito 2006
Ettore Germano (Piedmont, Italy)

Grapes: Nebbiolo

Price: € 50.00

Score: ♦♦♦♦♦

Barolo Riserva Lazzarito shows a brilliant ruby red color and nuances of brick red, moderate transparency. The nose reveals intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant aromas which start with hints of cherry, plum and dried violet followed by aromas of

raspberry, dried rose, chocolate, vanilla, licorice, mace, tobacco, undergrowth, leather and menthol. The mouth has very good correspondence to the nose, a tannic attack and pleasing crispness, however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness. The finish is very persistent with long flavors of plum, cherry and raspberry. Barolo Riserva Lazzarito ages for 30 months in cask followed by 24 months of aging in bottle.

Food match: Game, Stewed and braised meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese



Barolo Bricat 2007
Manzone Giovanni (Piedmont, Italy)

Grapes: Nebbiolo

Price: € 42.00

Score: ◆◆◆◆☆

Barolo Bricat shows a brilliant ruby red color and nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency. The nose denotes intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant aromas which start with hints of plum, cherry and plum followed by aromas of raspberry, tobacco, vanilla, rose, chocolate, iris, mace, cinnamon and menthol. The mouth has good correspondence to the nose, a tannic attack and pleasing crispness, however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness. The finish is persistent with flavors of plum, cherry and raspberry. Barolo Bricat ages for 36 months in cask.

Food match: Game, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese



Barolo Riserva Le Gramolere 2005
Manzone Giovanni (Piedmont, Italy)

Grapes: Nebbiolo

Price: € 66.00

Score: ◆◆◆◆◆

Barolo Riserva Le Gramolere shows a brilliant ruby red color and nuances of brick red, moderate transparency. The nose reveals intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant aromas which start with hints of cherry, prune and dried violet followed by aromas of raspberry jam, dried rose, vanilla, chocolate, tobacco, cinnamon, leather, licorice, clover, mace and menthol. The mouth has

excellent correspondence to the nose, a tannic attack and pleasing crispness, however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness. The finish is very persistent with long flavors of cherry, prune and raspberry jam. Barolo Riserva Le Gramolere ages for 26 months in cask.

Food match: Game, Stewed and braised meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese

EVENTS

News

In this column are published news and information about events concerning the world of wine and food. Whoever is interested in publishing this kind of information can send us a mail to the address Events@DiWineTaste.com.



NOT JUST WINE

Aquavitae

Review of Grappa, Distillates and Brandy

Distillates are rated according to DiWineTaste's evaluation method. Please see score legend in the "Wines of the Month" section.



Brandy Oro dei Carati
Nannoni (Tuscany, Italy)

Raw matter: Vini del Chianti

Price: € 50.00 - 70cl

Score: ◆◆◆◆◆

This brandy shows an intense golden yellow color, limpid and crystalline. The nose reveals intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant aromas of prune, chocolate, hazelnut, honey, dried fig,

violet, sandal wood and vanilla with almost imperceptible alcohol pungency. In the mouth has intense flavors with perceptible alcohol pungency which tends to dissolve rapidly, excellent correspondence to the nose, pleasing roundness, balanced sweetness. The finish is very persistent with long flavors of chocolate, prune, honey and hazelnut. Brandy Oro dei Carati is produced by blending different distillates having an aging time from three to sixteen years in oak barrels.



Wine Parade

The best 15 wines according to DiWineTaste's readers. To express your best three wines send us an E-mail at WineParade@DiWineTaste.com or fill in the form available at our WEB site.

Rank		Wine, Producer
1	↔	San Leonardo 2006, Tenuta San Leonardo
2	↗	Trento Brut Riserva Methius 2006, Dorigati
3	↘	Avvoltore 2009, Moris Farms
4	↗	Camartina 2008, Querciabella
5	↘	Trento Talento Brut Riserva 2007, Letrari
6	↗	Brunello di Montalcino 2007, Donatella Cinelli Colombini
7	↗	Confini 2007, Lis Neris
8	↗	Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore Podium 2010, Garofoli
9	↘	Franciacorta Pas Dosé Récemment Dégorgé 2006, Cavalleri
10	↗	Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Capitel Monte Olmi 2007, Tedeschi
11	↗	Offida Rosso Il Grifone 2006, Tenuta Cocci Grifoni
12	↗	Villa Gresti 2006, Tenuta San Leonardo
13	↗	Brunello di Montalcino Vigna Loreto 2007, Mastrojanni
14	↘	Sagrantino di Montefalco Collepiano 2007, Arnaldo Caprai
15	☆	Langhe Riesling Herzu 2011, Ettore Germano

Legend: ↗ up ↘ down ↔ stable ☆ new entry