

DiWINEtaste

Wine Culture and Information

International Edition

www.DiWineTaste.com

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Welcome!

Wine is having, at last, a new and extraordinary moment, it is finally getting back to the important cultural role that belonged to it in the past years and there is a renewed and intelligent interest for it among consumers. In the past decades, wine was unjustly considered as a marginal product of the cultures and traditions of those countries that historically produced it, and as a minor product of those countries, belonging to the so called "New World", that started producing wine few decades ago, investing in viticulture and getting results of absolute value. Wine has been considered, also because of the mediocre quality of the majority of the production of the past years, a beverage for connoisseurs and for the ones that, enlightened by true passion, were looking for "good bottles".

Producer's determination and will, the drastic and necessary change of viticultural production that finally had quality prevailing over quantity and, last but not the least, we cannot ignore or hide this aspect, the huge economical and commercial interests of the wine world, contributed to set a new path and a new era for this millenarian beverage. Nowadays, wine is considered as a hedonistic beverage, it has changed its role from food-beverage to a magnificent and essential element of good eating and of well living; talking about wine is now a sort of acceptable and trendy fashion and not a drunkards' subject; knowing wine and being able to properly choose it, is now considered a remarkable sign of culture.

The world of wine is certainly vast, knowing its many aspects is not easy, both for the thousands of types available on the market that constantly force the wine lover to pleasantly get updated, and for the lack of culture, even the most basic and fundamental one. The richness and the vastness of the wine subject can be cause of confusion among consumers and they usually end up to be conditioned, not having other choice, by what they hear or see about wine, without caring about forming a personal culture that would allow them to choose according their real taste and preference; they trust others' opinions and advices or, even worse, the opinion of the ones who want some products to be bought or preferred over others. Advertisement's persuasion effect is usually essential for a product's success, wine is no exception, of course.

Forming a personal culture is a matter of choice and, last but not the least, a matter of will, time and right opportunities. Making the decision of learning or knowing something requires a conscious choice: the will to undertake a journey, even hard, that will not surely lead to absolute knowledge, surely utopian, but will probably make things clearer and allow having a better, even though relative, confidence about the subject. It surely is a worthy and remarkable result.

Our publication does not claim to be a "lighthouse" in the

middle of the wine ocean, it rather wants to be considered as a tool for increasing wine and food culture and information and it is dedicated to the ones who want to know more. Our goal is to be and to stay independent: we want to talk about wine and of its many aspects thus allowing our readers to get a progressive and better culture and knowledge in order to let them choose instead of being chosen. We want to talk about the wine subject in its many aspects and we want to do this without asking or claiming anything from our readers, except the time and the attention to read what we write, in the hope they will find everything interesting and worth reading.

DiWineTaste is freely distributed in electronic format through the Internet. By doing this, we hope to get a good number of readers from every country in the world and we do this by publishing two distinct editions, having the very same contents but different languages. DiWineTaste is published every month in Italian and in English. The Italian language edition, besides being our language, is for the readers living in Italy, the Italians living abroad and for the many who speak Italian everywhere. The English language edition, language that is widely understood and spoken in most of the countries of the world, is our international edition.

Even though our goal is to offer a free and independent publication to our readers, we know that our goal requires a huge amount of personal effort, lots of time and money and, just like any other business, we need profits in order to make our work possible and to go on with our mission. We understand we cannot take this aspect lightly, we know this is a rule we have to obey to. In DiWineTaste's pages you will find advertising boxes and we look forward to make profits from this activity

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thus allowing our publication to live and to make it possible. We see advertising as a supplementary way of information for our readers, as well as a convenient way to promote products offered to everyone who thinks it is worth investing in our publication as a way to let their products be known. Advertising is, of course, a service also offered to the companies that, in a way or another, work in the wine business or just want their brand to be promoted. As we do not want to be misunderstood about this subject, we want our readers to know and remember that wines reviewed in "Wines of the Month", reports about wineries and their products as well as everything else you will find on DiWineTaste in written form is not and will not be source of money profit for us because we do not consider this as a lucrative form of advertising. We do not make any money from this kind of activity just because we want to be objective and honest with our readers as well as with wine producers.

DiWineTaste has columns dedicated to many wine subjects in order to allow the reader to easily spot the reports of his or her interest. Besides this, by providing the publication in Adobe Acrobat® PDF format, the reader can print the magazine at his or her complete will, for example, the reader can decide to print every month the most interesting reports only and to keep them just like any regular magazine, and having the advantage of using a lesser space to keep them. By doing so the reader can have its personal collection made of the reports of his or her interest only. Finally, the electronic format allows the reader to read the magazine on his or her screen without printing it at all and can keep the entire collection on the computer as well as having them at hand all the time.

Our mission is to promote wine culture and information and we want to do this by talking about specific subjects in every issue of the magazine, in order to allow our readers to form a personal culture, a knowledge of the wine tasting techniques and how to properly serve wine, to know more about wine producers and their products and about everything that, in a way or another, is related to the world of wine and its culture.

We also want our readers to express their opinions and preferences about wine. Besides having a regular column dedicated to our reader's mail, we thought about gathering your preferences in order to make a monthly "Wine Parade" of the best 15 wines voted by our readers. The magazine will also have a special column for our reader's classified ads.

The "ABC Wine" column will be dedicated to subjects about general wine knowledge and culture, such as enography, that is the wine areas of the world and their wines, enology, reports about specific types of wines, grapes, history and legends about wine.

The "Wine Tasting" column will cover subjects about wine tasting techniques and wine-food matching techniques. In this column the reader will usually find essential and comprehensive technical matters that will allow him or her to evaluate the quality and the characteristics of the wine; month after month we look forward to introduce our readers to the noble and fine art of wine tasting. This column will also have the "Wines of the Month" report, a monthly review of wines rated according to their qualities and evaluated by means of organoleptic analyses that we have every month.

We also have a specific column, "Wine Producers", entirely dedicated to cellars and wineries. Every month in this column we will introduce a winery to our readers, as well as its history and its products. The column will also have a special section, "Cellar Journal", a review of news and information concerning wineries, their business and activity.

In the "Events" column you will find news about events related to the wine world, such as fairs, wine contests and so on. This column will also have the "News" section, a review of news concerning the world of wine and of food and about everything related to these subjects.

Wine knowledge and culture would not be complete and could not be expressed without knowing how to serve and keep wine. The "Corkscrew" column is expressly dedicated to the service of wine and how to keep a cellar, how to keep wine, the accessories needed to properly serve wine and how to use them.

Lastly, the column "Not Just Wine" is dedicated to all the other reports and subjects concerning wine in anyway, such as alcoholic beverages and brandies, cooking, worthy and essential fellow of wine, foods and typical foods of the world. This column will also have the "Wine Parade", the best 15 wines of the month voted by our readers as well as our reader's classified ads.

Our journey has just begun and we hope to walk a very long way together with our readers and with whom will honor us of their trust, confidence and preference. The great Chinese philosopher Lǎo Zǐ in his *Dào Dé Jīng* wrote that «a journey of a thousand miles starts with one step». This is our first step. Enjoy reading DiWineTaste!

MailBox

In this column are published our reader's mail. If you have any comment or any question or just want to express your opinion about wine, send your letters to our editorial at Mail@DiWineTaste.com.

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Italy

Talking about Italy and its wines, it means, first of all, to start a long journey rich of history, culture, grapes, lots of grapes, millenarian traditions and a vastness of types of wines that it is hard to find in any other country of the world. From Alps to Sicily, among the lovely hills of the wonderful Italian views, it is almost impossible not to see, almost everywhere in the country, long and huge areas of vineyards. In Italy, vine is practically cultivated everywhere; it is present in every region and each of them has its typical and local grapes, sad to admit, they are almost forgotten or underrated, every Italian region makes wine and it is an essential part of their traditions since ever. By seeing this endless view of vineyards, it reminds you about the name the ancient Greeks were used to refer to Italy “*Enotria Tellus*”, that is the land of trained vines, a sure sign that the vine and wine were present and well established in Italy since Greek colonization times.

It is believed that vine was introduced in Italy by Etruscans, the mythical people established in central Italy in ancient times, however there are historical signs that makes believe vine was already present before Etruscan times. Anyway, it is certain that Etruscans were the first ones to set the first forms of viticulture and to make wine in Italy. Etruscans understood since the very beginning the importance and the strategic role of vine and wine and, although they were not big wine drinkers, they had good commercial and economic benefits from wine and they even sold their wine in Bourgogne, France. However, Etruscans did not introduce vine and viticulture in other countries, perhaps because they did not want to tell others about the secret of their commercial success. The spreading of vine and wine, not only in the Italian territory, was widely contributed by the Romans that introduced vine and the custom of drinking wine everywhere they went and in every land they conquered.

Even Greeks greatly contributed to the spreading of vine and wine in Italy, they did not only introduce new techniques of wine making and viticulture, they also introduced new and important vine species, most of them are still and widely spread in Italy and they are used to make excellent wine.

By seeing the huge vastness of species and quantity of grapes present in the territory, in Italy there are more that 300 different grapes species, it seems that Mother Nature was particularly generous and wanted Italy to be the country of vine and wine. Unfortunately, the richness of grapes in Italy is not really appealing to the wine makers of this country, they often ignore this extraordinary resource not found in any other country of the world. Maybe, the charm of the so called “international grapes” and the fact that the wine made from them can be easily sold, do not make the consumers and the producers realize about the wines made from local grapes. They probably are considered as minor wines and less attractive, anyway they are surely good, these grapes are capable of making wine of unique pleasure and interest.

The cultivation and the revaluation of the local grapes should be considered as an important aspect, something that

producers should not take lightly; it is, at last, an explicit invitation to producers to reevaluate and properly consider the huge richness of the grapes offered by their lands.

Italian enology has witnessed in the past twenty years a real and dramatic revolution, mainly because of the drastic change of the wine consumption and because of the growing competition with producers from others countries, Italy changed its production style, mainly made of quantity, and started focusing on quality. Wine making is a historical tradition of Italy and it is widely spread in every part of the territory; every farm or agricultural business had a vineyard and made wine. Wine was considered as an indispensable resource for living, for centuries wine has been considered as food instead of a beverage, therefore the more, the better. Despite of some historical efforts, some of them were also rigid and drastic, conducted in some part of Italy in order to change the production style and to make rules for quality, the development of wine production in Italy flourished in the course of centuries without specific laws or restrictions leading to a massive production of quantity instead of quality. This aspect surely contributed to the decay of Italy in the international wine scene and led Italy out of the competition with other European countries, such as France, that favored a production of quality over quantity.

The will and the comprehension of focusing on quality and the need to increase the quality of wines, emerged during the second half of the 1800. That time has been the beginning of the Italian enology renewal, a sure drastic change that finally led quality prevailing over quantity and the Italian wine started conquering the world again; Italy is now considered as one of the most important producers of quality wines. After having had an outstanding success with its famous and renowned wines of the Roman times, famous and acclaimed everywhere, and after the shameful decay of the Italian enology of the past centuries, Italian wines are finally took the right way, although slow but determined, to the world market and consumers from everywhere are looking for Italian wines again and are highly regarded.

The Italian Quality System

The first attempts to make laws to legally promote the production of quality wines in Italy and to safeguard the viticultural areas were conducted at the beginning of the 1900. The



Fig. 1: Italy and its regions

first real quality system that set rules to guarantee the quality of wines and their place of origin, was introduced in 1963, when Italy had to introduce some EEC (European Economic Community) laws about wine's quality production and appellation of origin. The law n° 930 dated 12 February 1963 introduced for the first time in Italy an appellation of controlled origin and set a difference between "table wines" and quality wines. With this law Italy also introduced and recognized the EEC acronym VQPRD (*Vino di Qualità Prodotto in Regione Determinata, Quality Wine Produced in Determined Region*)

The current Italian quality system is ruled by law 192 of the 1992 that fully replaced the precedent law of the 1963. Besides safeguarding the areas of quality production, this law set criteria and methods of quality production as well as the minimum requirements in order to entitle a wine to a specific appellation. The system primarily defines the geographic area of the appellation, grapes and proportions admitted for a specific wine production, the maximum yield per hectare, minimum percentage of alcohol by volume, the styles and types of wines recognized by the appellation system, the minimum time of aging before the wine can be sold, chemical and physical characteristics as well as organoleptic qualities.

The quality system is made of appellation categories defining distinct quality classes ideally structured in a "pyramid of quality" where the apex represents the highest quality level possible. The categories defined by the system, starting from the lowest quality level to the highest, are defined as follows:

- **Vino da Tavola** (*Table Wine*)
- **IGT** (*Indicazione Geografica Tipica, Typical Geographic Indication*)
- **DOC** (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata, Appellation of Controlled Origin*)
- **DOCG** (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita, Appellation of Controlled and Guaranteed Origin*)

Some appellation laws also allow optional use of special typologies, usually used for special wines made by particular production techniques and they must be written in the label with the following terms:

- **Classico** (*Classic*) - is a wine produced in the most typical and renowned area of the appellation, for example *Orvieto Classico*
- **Superiore** (*Superior*) - is a wine having a percentage of alcohol by volume higher than the normal requirement for the appellation, for example *Bardolino Superiore*
- **Riserva** (*Reserve*) - is a wine that went through a longer aging process than the normal requirement for the appellation, for example *Aglianico del Vulture Riserva*

The "Vino da Tavola" category, defined as the lowest quality level of the system, represent a paradox because there are some good and excellent wines belonging to it, they sometimes are even better than some DOCG wines. The reason of this paradox is because some producers do not agree with the quality criteria set by the Italian system and decide to make wine according their own quality criteria and standards and as they



Fig. 2: DOCG wine seals

are not recognized by any of the levels of the system, the only quality appellation they can be entitled to is the lowest one.

The Italian quality system, although being rigid about some aspects, does not actually guarantee the real quality of wines belonging to specific categories: the highest guarantee offered by the system is concerned to the area of origin of the wine. In theory, a wine producer located inside of an appellation area and whose wines have the minimum requirements set by the quality law for that area, has the full right to legally classify his or her wines according the legal system and therefore recognized as quality wines. Despite the Italian Government organize regular and legal tasting commissions in order to evaluate and entitle a specific product the rank of "quality wine", it is too obvious that quality of a specific appellation of controlled origin area greatly varies from a producer to another. This aspect does not help the promotion of the area's real quality as well as not helping those producers who believe in quality and make quality wines and prefer, for traditional reasons or because of strategic decisions, to have their wines entitled as DOC or DOCG. This surely is a drawback for the credibility of the appellation for a specific area.

The IGT category, (*Indicazione Geografica Tipica, Typical Geographic Indication*) defines wide production areas, they usually comprise a whole region, and allow the production of wine with grapes admitted and recommended in the area, usually a wide possibility of choices, set less restrictions and therefore gives more freedom to producers to make his or her own decisions about production methods. This category, although represents the first real level of the quality system legally recognized, actually include a good quantity of wines having a very good quality and it is rich of nice surprises. This category should be carefully considered by consumers because, recently, producers of quality wines prefer to have their wines on this categories and set their own quality standards.

The DOC category (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata, Appellation of Controlled Origin*) defines an area, usually narrower than an IGT, having more rigid production criteria if compared to the preceding level.

The last quality category, considered as the highest quality level of the system, the DOCG, (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita, Appellation of Controlled and Guaranteed Origin*) defines very limited and narrow production areas and having production criteria and evaluation more rigid and strict when compared to the others. Wine bottles belonging to this category must have a seal on the neck in order to guarantee the content of the bottle and to prevent any fraud or adulteration. These seals are numbered and show the name of the appellation and are issued by the Italian Government. (See figure 2)

Government seals have different colors according to the typology of the DOCG wine: light pink is for sparkling wines,

light green is used for white wines whereas magenta identifies red wines.

The appellation system also admit, where applicable, the indication of the name of a sub zone, such as a specific vineyard, farm or estate, or the name of the place of origin, in order to narrow and safeguard even more the quality a specific area having superior quality in respect to the rest of the appellation. This actually is an adaptation of the *cru* concept used in France.

The Italian system also allow the usage of particular acronyms to be written in the labels of special quality wines, such as sparkling wines ("*spumante*" in Italian) or fortified wines. These indications all derive from the acronym VQPRD (*Vino di Qualità Prodotto in Regione Determinata, Quality Wine Produced in Determined Region*) introduced by the EEC laws to designate quality wines. The acronym VQPRD, scarcely used in Italy, should be written in every bottle of DOC and DOCG wine. The special acronyms used for special wines are:

- VSQPRD - (*Vino Spumante di Qualità Prodotto in Regione Determinata, Quality Sparkling Wine Produced in Determined Region*) is a quality sparkling wine produced in a determined appellation of controlled origin area
- VLQPRD - (*Vino Liquoroso di Qualità Prodotto in Regione Determinata, Quality Fortified Wine Produced in Determined Region*) is a quality fortified wine produced in a determined appellation of controlled origin area
- VFQPRD - (*Vino Frizzante di Qualità Prodotto in Regione Determinata, Quality Slightly Sparkling Wine Produced in Determined Region*) is a quality slightly sparkling wine produced in a determined appellation of controlled origin area

Production Areas

Italy, thanks to the characteristics of its territory suitable for viticulture, it is extremely rich in grapes as well as wine. The varieties of grapes found in Italy is extremely vast and rich like no other country in the world, here there are more than 300 different species of grapes. The diversity of the territory, mainly hilly, is well suited for the cultivation of vine and therefore to wine production. This particular condition makes you think, like the ancients Greeks did, that Italy is the land of the vine and of wine; the ancient name ancient Greeks used to call Italy was "*Enotria Tellus*", that is "the land of trained vines", a sign that wine culture and cultivation of vine is well established in this countries since many centuries: wine and vines have always been an important part of the Italian history and of the traditions of its people.

If it is true that the quality of Italian wine had a dramatic decay during the past centuries, it is also true that the immense effort of the Italian producers in the past 50 years has led the quality of the Italian wines to important successes all over the world. The passion of many producers as well as the awareness of changing the production systems in order to start making quality wine, also because of the emerging competition with other countries and the increasing demand for quality wines, gave birth to a drastic change to the enology of every region.

Differently from other countries, where the cultivation of the vine and the production of wine is limited to few areas compared to the entire surface of the territory, in every Italian region wine production is an important and well established fact and it is essential for the local economies. Every Italian region produces wine and every region has its local wines not found in the others; every region has its wines and its typical grapes.

Besides the richness of local grapes, in Italy are cultivated a great amount of French species as well, they are usually referred as "international grapes", such as *Chardonnay* or *Cabernet Sauvignon* used to produce excellent wines. The trend of the Italian producers, probably because they want to meet the so called "international taste" pretty popular among consumers, is to make use of the "international" grapes along with local grapes, this trend is unfortunately getting more and more common. The Italian advantage in respect to other countries, that it the vastness of local grapes, should be highly regarded by producers. There are many and extraordinary examples of results that can be achieved by using local grapes, the elegance and the finesse of these wines are surely promising as well as interesting.

Like we said, every Italian region produces wine and talking about Italian wine production in general terms would only give an incomplete idea and would not make much sense as every region has its proper characteristics. What follows is a detailed profile of the grapes and wines found in every region. Where applicable, the profile is completed with a full list of DOCG wines and, enclosed in parentheses, the grapes used for that specific appellation.

Valle d'Aosta

This extraordinary and evocative region, where the cultivation of vine is limited, has a special record, here there are, in the communes of Morgex and La Salle at an altitude of 1 300 meters above sea level (4 265 feet), the highest vineyards of Europe; practically to the limit of survival for the vine. The whole region of Valle d'Aosta is recognized as DOC (Denominazione d'Origine Controllata, Appellation of Controlled Origin) and, according to the law for bilingualism, indications in the label are written both in Italian and in French.

Even though the production is mainly focused on red wines, the production of white wines is excellent as well, mainly produced with local grapes, they are examples of elegance and finesse. Some good white wines of the region are the "Blanc de Morgex et La Salle", produced with Blanc de Morgex grape, the refined "Chambave Moscato", also produced as passito or "Flétri". Among other white grapes of the region it is worth mentioning the Priè Blanc and Petite Arvine.

The main red grapes of the region are Petit Rouge, Vien de Nus, Neyret, Dolcetto, Freisa, Nebbiolo, Pinot Nero, Gamay, Syrah and Fumin. Typical red wines of interest of the region are: "Enfer d'Arvier", "Donnas", "Torrette" and "Arnad Montjovet".

Piedmont

This region, generous producer of great red wines and refined white wines, offers a wide selection of production and grapes; here wines of many typologies are produced, from whites to reds, from lightly sparkling wines to sparkling

wines. This is the homeland of some of the greatest Italian wines: Barolo, Barbaresco, Gavi, Gattinara, Ghemme and the renowned Asti Spumante and Brachetto.

Although the region is mainly known for its red wines, here we also find an interesting production of white wines made with local grapes. Worth of note are the ones produced with Cortese grape, in particular the "Gavi", the truly interesting Arneis, Favorita, Erbaluce used to produce an excellent passito wines as well as the almost unknown grapes Timorasso and Nas-cetta. Among the celebrities of the region, Asti Spumante and Moscato d'Asti are the most famous ones produced with white grapes, these two wines are renowned everywhere for their unmistakable aroma, they are produced with Moscato Bianco grape and this grape is used to produce the excellent Loazzolo as well.

Among red grapes, the most prominent role is for Nebbiolo, the grape used to produce the renowned Barolo and Barbaresco as well as the less known ones, however interesting, such as Gattinara and Ghemme. Another important red grape of the region is Barbera which is used to produce well structured and generous wines. Other red grapes worth of note are Dolcetto, Bonarda, Freisa, Grignolino, Pelaverga, Ruchè, Malvasia di Schierano, Malvasia di Casorzo, Vespolina and Brachetto, the grape used to produce the renowned "Brachetto d'Acqui" having a strong aroma of strawberry and rose.

DOCG wines: **white:** Gavi (*Cortese*) Moscato d'Asti (*Moscato bianco*) **red:** Barbaresco (*Nebbiolo*) Barolo (*Nebbiolo*) Brachetto d'Acqui (*Brachetto*) Gattinara (*Nebbiolo, Vespolina*) Ghemme (*Nebbiolo, Vespolina, Bonarda Novarese*) **spumanti (sparkling):** Asti spumante (*Moscato bianco*) Brachetto d'Acqui (*Brachetto*)

Lombardy

The region is mainly famous for the production of red wines and for its excellent production of sparkling wines. In Valtellina, an area located to the north of the region, are produced excellent red wines from Nebbiolo (locally called as "Chiavennasca") in particular the "Sforzato", or "Sfursat" as they would call it, a powerful and full bodied wine produced with dried Nebbiolo grapes.

In Franciacorta there is an important production of spumante, that is sparkling wines, they all come in different styles and are produced with "Metodo Classico" (Classic Method) by using Chardonnay, Pinot Bianco and Pinot Nero grapes. This area also produces good red wines. Another important wine area of the region is the "Oltrepò Pavese" where a good amount of wines are produced with Cortese, Riesling, Pinot Nero, Barbera and Bonarda grapes. Other interesting grapes of the region include the Trebbiano di Lugana used to produce the white wine Lugana, the Groppello, a typical grape of the Garda lake area, and the rare and precious Moscato di Scanzo, an interesting grape used to produce the wine having the same name, a wine that would surely deserve a better consideration.

DOCG wines: **red:** Valtellina superiore (*Nebbiolo*) **spumanti (sparkling wines):** Franciacorta (*Chardonnay, Pinot Bianco, Pinot Nero*)

Veneto

The region, renowned for its excellent viticultural traditions, it is among the most productive ones of Italy. This is the homeland of famous wines such as Soave, Bardolino, Amaronella della Valpolicella and others. Veneto is rich in good local white and red grapes. Among the white ones there are the Garganega, used to produce the Recioto di Soave, the Soave and the Recioto di Gambellara, the Prosecco grape used to produce the famous sparkling wine "Prosecco di Valdobbiadene e Conegliano". Another white grape worth of note is the Vespaiola, an interesting grape used to produce the "Torcolato", a refined passito wine of rare elegance and finesse.

The most important red grapes of the region are the Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara; these are the grapes used to produce the Bardolino, the Valpolicella, the renowned Amaronella and Recioto della Valpolicella. Another red grape of the region worth of note is the Raboso used to produce interesting red wines.

DOCG wines: **white:** Recioto di Soave (*Garganega, Trebbiano di Soave*) Soave superiore (*Garganega, Trebbiano di Soave*) **red:** Bardolino superiore (*Corvina, Molinara, Rondinella*)

Trentino-Alto Adige

This region is one of the most interesting one of Italy for its quality wines and for the variety of selection. In the Alto Adige area, to the north of the region, are mainly cultivated non-Italian grapes used to make wines of high excellence. Among white grapes there are Gewürztraminer, Silvaner, Müller Thurgau, Riesling, Kerner, Veltliner, Sauvignon Blanc, Moscato Giallo and Pinot Blanc. Among red grapes there are Pinot Noir, capable of producing in this region wines of high excellence, the local Lagrein, used to produce interesting wines, Schiava Grossa and Schiava Gentile. Moscato Rosa is a very interesting grape of this area, it is used to produce an extraordinary sweet wine having the same name and a strong as well as evocative aroma of rose.

Trentino, the southern area of the region, produces excellent wines, both white and red. Among the white grapes there are the Traminer, Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Kerner, Pinot Blanc and Nosiola, a very interesting local grape used to produce a refined "Vinsanto", an elegant passito wine. Among red grapes there are the famous Marzemino, it seems the renowned composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart particularly loved the wine made from this grape, Teroldego and other "international" grapes.

In Trentino there is also an interesting production of "spumante metodo classico" made from Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes.

Friuli Venezia Giulia

The cultivation of vine in this region has a long history and there are evidences of viticulture as ancient as 2000 years ago. The production is mainly focused on white wines. Friuli Venezia Giulia produces excellent white wines both with "international" grapes and, above all, with local grapes. Among white grapes there are the renowned Tocai Friulano, Malvasia Istriana, Ribolla Gialla, Verduzzo Friulano, used to produce

excellent wines such as “Ramandolo”, and the rare and very excellent Picolit grape used to produce a very extraordinary and precious wine having the same name.

Among red grapes there are interesting species such as the Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso, Schioppettino, Pignolo, Tazzelenghe and Terrano.

DOCG wines: **white:** Ramandolo (*Verduzzo Friulano*)

Liguria

The cultivation of vine in this region is particularly hard because of the morphology of the land and the modest quantity of the yield of the vintage is gathered with remarkable efforts. However, Liguria produces wines of high quality having particular organoleptic characteristics because of the vicinity of the sea to the vineyards. The most important white grapes of the region are Vermentino, Albarola and Bosco, all used to produce the famous “Cinque Terre” wine and with the same grapes, partially dried, is produced the excellent and rare “Schiacchetrà” as well. Another famous white grape of this area is Pigato.

Although the production of red wines is not vast, it is interesting anyway. The most important red grapes of Liguria are Ormeasco, the name used in Liguria to refer to Dolcetto grape, Rossese and Cilieggiolo.

Emilia Romagna

The huge production of the region is distributed between Emilia, the western side where lightly sparkling wines are mainly produced, and Romagna, the eastern side where the production is mainly concerned to still wines. The main white grapes of Emilia include Ortrugo, Pignoletto and Malvasia di Candia. The red grapes, with the exception of Barbera and Croatina used to produce the “Gutturnio” wine, mainly belong to the “Lambrusco” family used to produce the famous wine having the same name. The Lambrusco is mainly produced as lightly sparkling. Other red grapes worth of note are Fortana and Ancellotta, usually used along with Lambrusco.

In Romagna, where they love still wines instead of lightly sparkling ones, there are some white grapes including the Albana, the most renowned white grape of the area, Trebbiano Romagnolo and Bombino Bianco, here known as “Pagadebit”. The Sangiovese is the main red grape of the area as well as Cagnina, name used in Romagna to call the Terrano grape.

DOCG wines: **white:** Albana di Romagna (*Albana*)

Tuscany

Viticultural tradition of Tuscany is as ancient as Etruscan times and in this region the production is mainly focused on red wines. The Chianti, Brunello di Montalcino, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, Carmignano and Morellino di Scansano are just some examples of red wines of Tuscany. Production of white wines is interesting as well but it is usually ignored because of the huge quantity of red wines available in this region. White grapes of Tuscany include Vernaccia di San Gimignano, used to produce a wine having the same name, Trebbiano Toscano, Malvasia Bianca, Malvasia di Candia, Vermentino and Ansonica grapes, name used in Tuscany to refer to Inzolia.

Sangiovese is the most important grape of the region,

widely spread and cultivated in the area, as well as Sangiovese grosso, Canaiolo Nero and Mammolo.

DOCG wines: **white:** Vernaccia di San Gimignano (*Vernaccia*) **red:** Brunello di Montalcino (*Sangiovese grosso*) Carmignano (*Sangiovese, Canaiolo nero, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc*) Chianti Classico (*Sangiovese, Canaiolo nero, Malvasia, Trebbiano*) Chianti - sub zones: Colli Aretini, Colli Fiorentini, Colli Senesi, Colline Pisane, Montalbano, Montespertoli, Rufina (*Sangiovese, Canaiolo nero, Malvasia, Trebbiano*) Vino Nobile di Montepulciano (*Sangiovese grosso, Canaiolo nero*)

Umbria

The “green heart of Italy”, name usually used to call Umbria, is considered by many, enologically speaking, as the Bourgogne of Italy, has viticultural and enological traditions as ancient as Etruscan times and its wines were famous since then. The most renowned white one and one of the most ancient wines of this region is “Orvieto”, a wine that is still famous all over the world. White grapes of the region include Grechetto, a local grape used to produce a wine having the same name, Malvasia Bianca, Malvasia di Candia and Verdello.

Among red grapes, a relevant role is played by the local Sagrantino used to produce a well structured and full bodied wine having the same name in the Montefalco area. Sangiovese is widely spread in Umbria as well and it is almost present in every red wine of the region, such as the renowned red wines of Torgiano. Other red grapes of the region include Barbera, Canaiolo Nero, Cilieggiolo, Montepulciano and, in the Trasimeno lake area, among the rare cases in Italy, Gamay is cultivated and used to produce very interesting wines.

DOCG wines: **red:** Sagrantino di Montefalco (*Sagrantino*) Torgiano Riserva (*Sangiovese, Canaiolo nero, Montepulciano, Cilieggiolo*)

Marches

This region has interesting and rich enological resources and, among the most famous and renowned white wines, here we have the “Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi” and “Verdicchio di Matelica”. Red wine production is interesting as well and the most important ones of the region are “Rosso Conero” and “Rosso Piceno”.

White grapes of the Marches include Verdicchio, Malvasia Bianca, Passerina, Biancame, Trebbiano Toscano and Pecorino. Sangiovese and Montepulciano are the most important red grapes of the region and they are used to produce “Rosso Conero” and “Rosso Piceno”. Other red grapes worth of note are Vernaccia di Serrapetrona, used to produce a wine having the same name, and Lacrima di Morro.

Latium

Wines of Latium were famous since Roman times and here the production is mainly focused on white wines. Frascati, Castelli Romani and Est! Est!! Est!!! di Montefiascone are just some of the many renowned white wines produced in Latium. The region is rich in white grapes and they represent the majority of the yield. White grapes of Latium include Trebbi-

ano Toscano, Malvasia del Lazio, Malvasia Bianca, Malvasia Toscana, Bellone, Bombino Bianco, Greco Bianco and Trebbiano Giallo.

Even though production of red wines is very limited, the region has good red grapes varieties and in good quantities such as the local Cesanese, Sangiovese, Montepulciano and Aleatico.

Abruzzi

Just like the majority of the Italian regions, Abruzzi has a very ancient viticultural tradition. Its wines were very famous since Roman times and enological tradition is still well established and represented by the present production. There are two wines that led Abruzzi to celebrity: Trebbiano d'Abruzzo and Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. The former is produced with Bombino Bianco grape, although in Abruzzi they call this grape "Trebbiano d'Abruzzo"; the latter is produced with Montepulciano grape that in Abruzzi is capable of making wines of excellence.

Other white grapes of the region include Passerina, Pecorino, Biancame, Cocciola, whereas red grapes, even though in limited quantities, include Sangiovese, Aglianico and Canaiolo Nero.

Molise

This lovely region, particularly well suited for viticulture because of its hilly territory as well as a favorable climate, does not have a relevant production of wine, but the wine produced in this region is surely interesting and deserves a better consideration.

White grapes of Molise include Falanghina, Trebbiano Toscano, Bombino Bianco, Fiano, Greco Bianco and Moscato Reale, used to produce an excellent passito wine. Red grapes include Aglianico, Montepulciano and Sangiovese.

Campania

The enological patrimony of Campania is extremely rich, also because of the ancient viticultural tradition that highly contributed to its celebrity since ancient times. It is believed that viticulture in Campania was present even before the time Greeks came to Italy.

Production is equally distributed between white and red wines. The renowned "Greco di Tufo" and "Taurasi" are just a couple of the many good examples that could be mentioned when talking about Campanian wines.

The richness of the grapes patrimony of the Campania is truly vast and white grapes include Greco Bianco, Falanghina, Fiano, Coda di Volpe, Biancolella, Asprinio and Forastera. Among red grapes Aglianico is surely the most important one. Other red grapes include Piediroso, locally called "Per' e Palummo", Guarnaccia and Sciascinoso.

DOCG wines: **red:** Taurasi (*Aglianico*)

Apulia

Apulia is one of the most productive regions of Italy and it is well suited for viticulture. This region produces more grapes than any other Italian region. Production is mainly focused on

red wines, anyway, there are good examples of white wines as well, such as the renowned "Locorotondo".

White grapes of Apulia include Bianco d'Alessano, Malvasia Bianca, Verdeca, Bombino Bianco, Fiano and Greco Bianco. Red grapes include Negroamaro, an extraordinary grape capable of producing structured wines, particularly in the Salento area where they make "Salice Salentino" from it, Primitivo, another excellent Apulian grape used to produce the structured and full bodied "Primitivo di Manduria", Malvasia Nera, Montepulciano, Uva di Troia, Aglianico and Aleatico.

Basilicata

The production of this region is mainly and almost uniquely focused on the only great wine of the area, Aglianico del Vulture, produced with the Aglianico, a grape that in Basilicata, in the Vulture area to the north of the region, is capable of producing excellent wines with good structure and full body. Aglianico is practically the only red grape cultivated in Basilicata, whereas white grapes include Fiano, Malvasia Bianca and Greco Bianco.

Calabria

Calabria has a very ancient enological tradition, viticulture in this region was probably present before the Greeks came to Italy. The production is mainly focused on red wines. The most cultivated grape of the region is Gaglioppo, an interesting red grape of great potentiality and used to make the most renowned wines of the region: Cirò Rosso and Savuto. Other red grapes include Magliocco Canino, Nerello Cappuccio and Aglianico.

White grapes of the region, representing the minority of the production, include Greco Bianco, used to produce the excellent "Greco di Bianco", Malvasia Bianca and Mantonico.

Sicily

Sicily, a noble region rich in culture and traditions, has an excellent enological tradition and in this island we find one of the most famous and representative wines of Italy: Marsala. Sicily has an interesting production of white and red wines, as well as sweet and passito wines, probably the most renowned production of the region, and, last but not the least, fortified wines, such as Marsala.

White grapes of Sicily include Inzolia, Catarratto, Grillo, the three grapes used to produce Marsala and other white wines, Moscato di Alessandria, locally called Zibibbo, used to produce the excellent Passito di Pantelleria, Malvasia delle Lipari, used along with Corinto Nero to produce the extraordinary and famous Malvasia delle Lipari wine.

Red grapes, widely spread in the region, can make interesting, well structured and full bodied wines. The main red grapes are Nero d'Avola, Nerello Mascalese, Nerello Cappuccio, Frappato and Perricone.

Sardinia

This region, extremely rich in culture and traditions, has been influenced by Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans and Spaniards. They all introduced viticultural techniques in the island as well as many grape varieties, nowadays well estab-

lished and spread in the region that are now considered as local.

Sardinia produces excellent white and red wines as well as passito wines. A wine worth of the best attention is the extraordinary “Vernaccia di Oristano”, an excellent wine produced with a grape having the same name. This wine would surely deserve a better consideration among wine lovers for its unique aromas and elegance.

The main white grapes of Sardinia are Vermentino, used to produce the “Vermentino di Gallura”, Vernaccia di Oristano, Malvasia di Sardegna, Nuragus, Nasco, Semidano and Torbato.

Red grapes include Cannonau, the most cultivated and renowned red grape of the island, Carignano, Bovale, Monica, Nieddera and Girò.

DOCG wines: **white:** Vermentino di Gallura (*Vermentino*)

Conclusion

In the regional profiles, we did not intentionally mentioned the so called “international grapes”, mainly of French origin, because we wanted to focus on the vast and huge richness of Italian local grapes. This does not mean, of course, that “international” grapes are not cultivated in Italy, on the contrary, they are widely spread all over the territory and have an important and fundamental role in the Italian enology as well as being among the most cultivated species. White grapes include a huge production of Chardonnay, followed by Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris. Red grapes include huge quantities of Cabernet Sauvignon, then Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Pinot Nero and Syrah.

WINE TASTING

Introduction to Wine Tasting

This report will introduce the reader to the fine art of wine tasting; an extraordinary journey that will last many months

Appreciating a good wine means, first of all, being able to know and recognize its proper qualities, then interpreted and expressed, as an indisputable argument, by personal preferences and tastes. Therefore, appreciating wine does mean *tasting* wine. Wine tasting is that refined and noble art that allows a wine to be properly evaluated for its proper and real qualities without being influenced by any personal or subjective preference or taste. Wine tasting means to analytically evaluate every single *organoleptic* property or quality of a wine by means of one’s own experience and knowledge gained during all the previous tastings. This is a fundamental and determinant factor and requirement. Knowledge is acquired, or better, is increased, although along with ignorance, by means of practice and of evaluating different kind of wines. This practice makes the pleasing “torment” of any wine taster.

Why Tasting Wine?

Wine tasting is a refined art partially expressed by means

of one’s own talent and partially by means of knowledge of tasting’s techniques and, lastly, by means of experience and memory. Anyone can become, with proper practice and training, a good wine taster. Anyone has the indispensable requirements needed to evaluate the quality of wine: senses. Wine tasting and evaluation is made by means of sensorial analysis and thanks to the capacity of our senses to recognize and respond to specific stimuli, that is to their good efficiency and practice, our brain is capable, after having elaborated the perceived sensations, to tell and recognize the condition and therefore we can express our results. Senses, no one excluded, as well as their good usage and training, are the key for success to enjoy the wonders and surprises of wine tasting.

Wine evaluation is determined by the taster according two distinct criteria: subjective and objective ones. These two categories also determine the typology of the taster and of the tasting.

Subjective criteria are the ones expressed by an individual whom tasting end is just to determine whether he or she likes or does not like a particular wine and whether it meets his or her taste and expectations; the end of this tasting is uniquely to determine the appreciation of a wine according to personal taste.

Objective criteria are expressed by an individual whom tasting end is to evaluate the real quality and characteristics of a wine, by expressing an absolutely neutral opinion not influenced by his or her preferences and tastes, the wine is evaluated for what it is for real with no influence. This is the kind of work sommeliers and professional tasters do. An indisputable objective evaluation could be the one made by means of chemical analysis, having the purpose of determine the many components of a wine by means of universally accepted and known measuring methods. Although this kind of evaluation is truly important, chemical analysis is an important tool used in enology, it will never be used to replace our senses, which ignoring the aridity of numbers and formulas, directly tell us the kind of pleasurability of a wine. The work of sommeliers, professional wine tasters and, last but not the least, consumers and wine lovers, wine tasters having different goals and ends, is of primary importance and highly strategic for the ones who produce wine, it tells them the real skill as a wine producer and the real quality of its wines. For this reason many sommeliers and professional wine tasters are hired by wine producers.

Independently on the kind of evaluation used in the tasting process to determine the quality of a wine, the main factor having primary importance is to know how to taste a wine.

First of all, wine is tasted for evaluating its quality and its organoleptic characteristics, that is to evaluate the characteristics perceivable by senses. A wine is also tasted for comparative reasons, to evaluate whether it is better or worse than others, or to evaluate whether it has or has not the typical characteristics of the category it belongs to.

Being able to recognize a wine and to recognize a wine that meets our expectations, being able to compare it with other wines, first of all, allows us to choose good products, the ones that fully satisfy our taste and preferences. It surely is a remarkable thing. Living in a world where our taste and preferences are highly influenced by others, being able to choose according our real taste, and only that, is also a matter of freedom. It is a remarkable thing worth of attention.

We often prefer and make use of some products, not just wine, only because someone told us about it, or because we heard of it or simply because someone having strong economical interests on those products tells us to buy it and make use of it. This is a sign of ignorance and scarce culture, last but not the least, the incapacity of being able to choose because of confusion. Being able to taste a product and being able to evaluate it, is a precious capacity and allows us to choose and select only the things according to our real preferences and, lastly, is a way to tribute the right prize to those producers which have been capable of creating a product that can give us the opportunity to have a good time and good sensations. Being able to evaluate a wine also means to determine its real economical value; thanks to our experience and to our skill to evaluate, we can realize there are other products around and they are probably better and cost less.

Conditions for Wine Tasting

The right conditions for a proper wine tasting depend on the kind of end of the tasting. There are two main and different ways to have a wine tasting: the one achieved by a single individual whose result also determine the entire result of the evaluation, and the tasting achieved by a group of tasters, where the results and the evaluations of each of them are used to determine the final result.

Independently on the way a tasting is achieved, it is very important to know and use rules and terms recognizable by anyone who wants to know or evaluate the result of the tasting. Using a known common language and common terms is, for example, of primary importance in order to express concepts easily understandable by any other taster or by anyone who is going to determine the quality of a wine according the result of the tasting.

Organoleptic analysis of a wine is mainly expressed by means of sensorial capacities of each taster and, sometimes, it represents a problem in understanding his or her evaluation when compared to others. Each individual is capable of evaluating sensations by using his or her sense organs and this is, indisputably, the result of a process of subjective nature. For example a wine can be considered as "very sweet" by an individual whereas for another could simply be considered as "sweet". This kind of evaluation depends on many factors, such as the threshold of sensorial perception and the tolerance and sensitivity to specific stimuli. An individual who is very sensitive to the perception of sweet taste, will probably tend to judge a wine as "very sweet" when in reality, according to a more objective opinion or according to a chemical analysis on the quantity of sugars, it should be considered as "sweet".

Other factors that could influence the sensorial perception are the mood, the environment and time of the day. It is believed that the best time for having wine tastings is about at the end of the morning, when the appetite is stronger as well as the hunger, our sensorial capacities are more sensitive. This is, or better to say, should be, the best moment of the day for having a serious wine tasting.

We still have the problem of how to unify the sensorial evaluation according to specific stimuli. Every professional taster knows that a wine can be considered as "sweet" when it contains a specific quantity of sugar, as it could be easily and

objectively determined by means of chemical analysis. Taste buds, arranged on the surface of the tongue, can perceive the intensity of a specific stimulus, however, they cannot perceive and communicate the exact quantity of sugar in a wine that was the origin of the stimulus itself. The quantity of sugar in a wine can be determined, however, by the experience of the taster. How can we finally have the capacity of expressing a useful judgment about a wine as well as reliable and comparable with the work of others? There are four determinant factors and they also are very important for every wine taster: memory, experience, practice and will to learn and study new wines with humility, honesty, without being influenced by approximation.

Very soon you will realize that memory, in particular memory for odors, is a loyal and reliable fellow for the taster's job. While the development of visual memory, that is the capacity to recognize colors and shapes, and taste memory, that is the capacity to recognize flavors, is quite simple and easy, smell memory is the hardest work for a taster. Being capable of recognizing and telling colors is something we do on a daily basis and in every moment, it is something we do unconsciously; recognizing colors in a wine is in fact the easiest analysis of them all. Being able to recognize flavors, besides being essential for surviving, is something we usually do only when we eat, however, a *conscious* recognition of flavors is done only when we eat and pay attention to the stimuli coming from taste buds. Tasting requires concentration and a strong will to the work of analyzing a food or a beverage, to totally investigate its qualities, you must pay attention to the sensations of the taste buds because sometimes, stimuli are confused among others. This is absolutely true for the recognition of odors and aromas. However, during the process of recognizing smells, things get complicated because, no matter how concentrated we can be in what we are doing, after a specific amount of time spent on smelling and investigating the aromas coming out from the glass, smell receptors in the nose tend to get used to those odors and, in a sense, filter the smells that have been smelt for a long time. This can be easily experienced when we are in a room where there is a strong smell: in the beginning the smell will be easily recognizable and perceivable, after some time, usually few minutes, the smell intensity will attenuate and then it will not be perceived anymore, we simply reached the point to getting used to this odor and it will be ignored by the olfactory bulb. Every wine taster is aware of this "risk", in fact, after having smelt a wine sample for two or three minutes, takes a break from the olfactory analysis in order to relax his or her olfactory system, in order to prevent overworking and to prevent getting used to smells.

The olfactory analysis of a wine is surely the most complicated and hard part of the whole evaluation. This analysis, more than any other else, requires a good experience and a continuous training, last but not the least, the olfactory analysis of a wine, its odors and its elegance of aromas, are what makes the tasting more pleasing and interesting. Olfactory analysis is a fundamental aspect of tasting. Complexity of this analysis is mainly dependent on two distinct factors: the first one, although it can be seen as obvious, is that one must know a smell before one can tell what aroma it is, one must be able to recognize a specific smell; the second one is that our common habits and life style made us forget to pay attention to the

sensorial perceptions; among the many perceptions, the capacity of paying attention to smells is the least used of them all. As dramatic as it can be seen, a cure exists and the only effective one is to re-educate our perception to smells and this requires lots of efforts, concentration and will. Paying attention to smell perceptions is a work that requires concentration; total commitment during the olfactory analysis is an essential factor, but with good will and practice, as well as with time, the results will be amazing and encouraging. The real problem is how to recognize smells: it is impossible to identify and classify a smell when it is completely unknown to the one who is smelling it, one can, at least, classify this smell as unknown, something that will surely not solve our problem, indeed, it makes things worse.

During the description of wine's aromas profile, or bouquet, according to wine tasting parlance, a common terminology is used in order to allow anyone to understand or realize about the typology and quality of the aromas. To make olfactory description easier, the name of the chemical substances that are the origin of smells are never used, they are only used when defects and faults are being described, it is preferred to make use of common things' names or objects that everyone usually associates to those odors, such as fruits and flowers. Despite of this simplification, the capacity of recognizing a specific smell, even though associated to a "common" thing, is not completely possible if one only knows about the existence of that thing without knowing what kind of smell it has. Everyone knows that jasmine is a flower, but not everyone probably has smelt its aroma, therefore telling that a wine smells of jasmine, it means, first of all, to being able to recognize this odor, and telling others who never smelt a jasmine flower a wine smells of jasmine is just telling them nothing. Things get more complicated when a wine has many aromas, not just one, and this is the most common and usual condition. In case a wine would have just one aroma, things would surely be easy, because this smell would be unequivocally and indisputably perceived by the nose with no error. When smelling a wine having a complex aroma, that is the union of many odors, the capacity of being able to recognize every single aroma is essential, it is of primary importance to be able to distinguish and isolate every smell from the others.

Professional wine tasting is accomplished in special rooms arranged in order to allow every taster to do its job and allow the analysis of wine samples in a proper environment and condition. Unfortunately, evaluation of wine in those tasting room is not always possible because sometimes the conditions are just casual, for example, during a visit to a cellar or a wine shop, and we need to express our judgment. However, every time a wine is being tasted, proper and basic tools should always be at hand in order to get proper and reliable results, the most important one is the tasting ISO glass, a particular glass having a special shape expressly studied for the development of aromas and to make olfactory perception easier. Another useful tool is the wine thermometer that can tell the temperature of wine in moments, this tool can be bought in wine shops. Perception of smells and aromas is strongly dependent on temperature; a warm wine will smell differently and "coarse" from the same wine tasted at lower temperature. With time and experience it will be possible to tell and determine the temperature of wine with a good approximation and without using a

thermometer. This tool is certainly useful for beginners and for the ones who are learning the fine art of wine tasting, the help received from the thermometer will surely be valuable in order to relate sensations to temperature.

In order to properly evaluate colors in a wine, a white surface used to contrast the content of the glass and reveal its real colors, intensity, tonality and hue will be of help. However, to properly taste a wine and express a good and reliable judgment, it is best to have a room with plenty of light, with no odors or smells and with a good aeration. Tasting a wine in a cellar, among barrels and casks, few light and the typical smells of this environment, it is not a good idea. When the same wine tasted in a cellar is being tasted in a different room, the result of the evaluation will probably be different.

Personal mood and conditions will greatly influence the result of a tasting as well, it is indispensable that all sense organs are in good condition and health and they must not be altered or influenced by any previous event or condition, such as smoking or eating just before evaluating a wine. Besides all this, sensorial perception is very sensitive just before meals, when the appetite and the hunger are stronger, therefore it is not good to taste a wine after a meal, the result will not probably be much reliable.

Phases of Wine Tasting

Tasting a wine is a process made of many phases, each one concerned to a particular kind of analysis and to the evaluation of specific organoleptic characteristics.

The tasting process begins with the arrangement and the preparation of the tools and the wine samples to be evaluated. Tasting glass must be perfectly clean and with no odors that could interfere with the perception of wine's aromas; this also includes the smells of the soap used to wash the glass. In the next months we will talk about proper usage and handling of this important tasting tool, for the moment we will say that washing the tasting glass with soap should be avoided because of its smell. The best way to wash the tasting glass is to thoroughly rinse it in lukewarm water, without using any soap or dishwasher, and to carefully dry it with a clean cloth. The place used to keep glasses is important as well; in case the glass stays in places having strong smells, those smells will be transferred to the glass and they will be perceived during the evaluation of the wine.

Wine samples to be evaluated must be prepared and they must be at the right temperature before being analyzed; once again, it should be remembered that temperature greatly changes and influence the perception of the organoleptic sensations. We will discuss this subject in the next months.

As the wine sample is poured in the glass, the first analysis to be achieved is concerned the visual aspect; we will proceed in determining the color, intensity, hue and the tonality of the wine. The visual analysis is used to determine any possible defect or fault in the wine making process, to evaluate whether the wine is in good health as well as its typology and its age.

The next phase is the olfactory analysis. During this phase it will be determined the intensity of the aromas, that is how strong and intense the odors are, how long they last and the overall aromatic elegance and finesse of the wine. After this preliminary analysis has been done, we will proceed with the

identification of every aroma by describing the quality and the typology of every smell that make up the olfactory profile of the wine. This surely is the hardest part of the whole evaluation process because, like we said, good experience and practice are needed. The recognition of each aroma is used to determine any possible defect as well as identifying the kind of grapes used to make the wine, the area where it comes from, its age and even the condition and the maturation state of the grapes at the time of the vintage. Olfactory analysis, even though it is hard because of the need of identifying aromas, is the most pleasing phase experienced during wine tasting as well as when drinking wine.

Then follows the gustatory analysis by introducing and keeping a small quantity of wine in the mouth, in this phase will be evaluated the intensity and the quality of primary flavors (sweet, acid, salty and bitter) and, factor on which the quality of a wine mainly depends, the finesse and the time the flavors last in the mouth after the wine has been swallowed or expelled. This amount of time, which is measured in seconds, determine the *persistence* of a wine, an indisputable factor of quality always welcome and appreciated in every wine. The gustatory analysis is also conducted to determine any possible defect or fault of the wine.

In the last phase of the tasting it is expressed the overall judgment for the wine and it is determined according to the quality of the three preceding phases. During the course of the evaluation of a wine, it is a good idea to write down some notes and impressions for that wine instead of simply writing down the notes and specifications required for the tasting session.

The need of subdividing a tasting in distinct phases, besides being a good practice, allows the taster to properly concentrate and focus to the characteristics of a particular phase only and without being influenced by the ones belonging to the others. Lastly, let's consider tastings made by a group of tasters. In these cases it is of primary importance that every taster does his or her job in complete autonomy, without comparing its work with the one of others or even seeing what the others are doing, because he or she could be influenced by the opinions and suggestions of the other members and could end up perceiving sensation that are not perceived at all. The goal of a tasting accomplished by a group is not to let tasters compare their opinion with others, not during the analyses, but to determine an overall result made of every evaluation. Often the opinions of everyone will agree one each other, a sure sign that the wine has been evaluated in an objective way, and sometimes the opinions will disagree completely as well. The goal of a group tasting is to determine the quality of a wine based on every single evaluation, in the best objective way possible, and this judgment is, indisputably, the result of a set of more or less subjective judgments.

Wines of the Month

Score legend

- ◇ Fair - ◇◇ Pretty Good - ◇◇◇ Good
 ◇◇◇◇ Very Good - ◇◇◇◇◇ Excellent
 ★ Wine that excels in its category



Colli di Faenza Sangiovese Renero 2001 TReRè

Grapes: Sangiovese

Price: € 9,00

Score: ◇◇◇

Good ruby red color with hints of purplish red, as an evident sign of its young age, this wine has a good fruity bouquet. Fruit aromas can be easily recognized such as black cherry, cherry, strawberry, bilberry as well as a pleasant hint of vanilla. The taste of this wine is balanced, evident tannins, surely well integrated with the rest, are a sign of a good development for the years to come. Wine's finish is persistent with good flavors of black cherry. Renero is produced with a long maceration of skins followed by 3-4 month of aging in barrique

Food match: Robust and structured pastas, Stewed meat



Sangiovese di Romagna Superiore Vigna dello Sperone 2001 TReRè

Grapes: Sangiovese (85%), Cabernet Sauvignon e Merlot (15%)

Price: € 8,00

Score: ◇◇◇

Intense ruby red with purplish red tonality showing the young age of this wine. It has vivid and intense smells of fruits such as blackberry, plum, raspberry, black cherry, cherry, strawberry jam as well as chocolate and vanilla. Despite of its young age, the wine already has balanced tannins well integrated with good alcohol and other components. Intense flavors of fruit, particularly cherry, gives this wine a nice pleasantness. Wine's

finish is persistent with a intense flavor of cherry. This wine is produced by long maceration in skins and it is aged in casks for about 6 months

Food match: Well structured pastas, Roasted meat



**Sangiovese di Romagna Riserva
Amarcord d'un Ross 1999
TreRè**

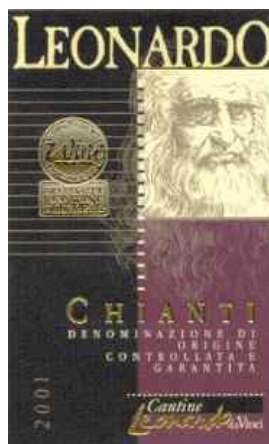
Grapes: Sangiovese (85%), Cabernet Sauvignon (15%)

Price: € 10,00

Score: ◇◇◇★

Interesting example of Sangiovese di Romagna. The wine shows an appealing ruby red color and has a good variety of smells of fruits. black cherry, raspberry, bilberry, carob and red-skin fruits as well as licorice, tobacco, vanilla and a good hint of toasted wood which is well integrated with the whole bouquet. The taste is balanced and has good body, well balanced tannins and good sapidity. Finish is persistent with a good and pleasing flavors of fruit. Wood aromas are well balanced in mouth as well; they are pretty evident in the beginning although flavors of fruit are perceived soon after. This Hangovers is produced with long maceration in the skins and it is aged for 2 years in barrique.

Food match: Roasted meat, Steamed meat, Braised meat, Broiled meat and barbecue



**Chianti Leonardo 2001
Cantine Leonardo da Vinci**

Grapes: Sangiovese

Price: € 6,47 (\$ 8.99)

Score: ◇◇★

The wine shows a rube red color with purplish red hints. Its bouquet is mainly of fruit of good intensity. A very direct and immediate bouquet of strawberry, raspberry and black cherry make the wine's olfactory profile. Pretty good refreshing in the mouth, the wine has well balanced good tannins. Wine's

finish is persistent with evident hints of black cherry. Chianti Leonardo is produced with a 8 days of maceration in skins and it is aged for thermo-controlled vats until march

Food match: Broiled meats and barbecue



**S.to Ippolito 2000
Cantine Leonardo da Vinci**

Grapes: Syrah (50%), Merlot (50%)

Price: € 15,96 (\$ 24.99)

Score: ◇◇◇◇

This wine's aspect is almost impenetrable and has a beautiful dark ruby red color with hints of purplish red. The bouquet is rich, clean and intense, every aroma is well recognizable and long lasting. S.to Ippolito has a valuable fruity bouquet with aromas of black cherry, blackberry, plum, black currant, black cherry jam as well as pepper and black pepper. The bouquet is completed by aromas of wood, vanilla and coconut. The wine is full bodied, is intense and has good personality, good tannins well balanced with the rest. Wood aromas are also recognizable in the mouth although they are balanced with fruity flavors. Wine's finish is fruity and persistent: a wine which is hard to forget. S.to Ippolito is produced with long maceration in skins for 20 days and the it is ages for 10 - 12 months in barrique as well as 8 months in bottle.

Food match: Hard cheese, Barbecue and broiled meat, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat



**San Zio 2000
Cantine Leonardo da Vinci**

Grapes: Sangiovese

Price: € 11,76 (\$ 16.50)

Score: ◆◆◆◆

The wine has an almost impenetrable look with beautiful dark ruby red color. Wine's bouquet is rich and appealing as well as persistent and clean. Aromas of fruits are mainly perceived in this wine in particular black cherry, ripe cherry, blackberry, black currant, plum jam, cherry jam as well as a clean aroma of violet. The bouquet is completed by good aromas of cocoa, cinnamon, licorice as well as aromas of wood and vanilla. A very elegant, refined and persistent bouquet. Wine's taste is full bodied with intense flavors, good tannins well balanced with the rest. Wood flavors are easily perceivable although they are soon followed by fruity ones as well as flavors of jam. Wine's finish is persistent with flavors of fruits and jam. A truly well made wine. San Zio is produced with long maceration in skins and it is aged for 10 - 12 months in barriques as well as 8 months of bottle aging.

Food match: Succulent roasted meat, Broiled and barbecue meat, Steamed and braised meat, Great hard cheese

WINE PRODUCERS

Terre de' Trinci

The dynamic Umbrian winery aims for quality and its results are confirming its course. Let's meet the cellar where the Sagrantino di Montefalco Secco was born

Umbria, this evocative Italian region considered as the green heart of Italy, homeland of Saints and Heroes, has a very long history and traditions about enology and it still has a prestigious fame because of its wines, Umbria surely is one of the many having a leading role in the wine scene of the world. One of the many leading wineries of Umbrian enology is Terre de' Trinci which is aiming for quality wines and for quality in production techniques and has achieved excellent results in a relatively short time, these results are surely confirmed by its wines. Terre de' Trinci was the first Umbrian winery, and the second in Italy, to get and apply the certified quality standards UNI EN ISO 9002.

After having crossed the Umbrian roads, from Perugia to Assisi and then Foligno, pleased by the evocative views of this green Italian region, we get to the Terre de' Trinci winery, in Foligno, and we are welcomed by Dr. Lodovico Mattoni, president of the winery. Dr. Mattoni, a truly kind and remarkable person, has a long experience about enology and before becoming president of Terre de' Trinci, he was the managing director of Enopolio di Foligno, the former winery from which the present business was born. Besides this, Dr. Mattoni has been one of the fathers of that brilliant idea of making wine from the Sagrantino grape as dry instead of passito, as opposed to the local and ancient tradition, and thus creating one of the most striking success of the Umbrian enology as well as contributing to give a new light to Umbrian wines worldwide.

Terre de' Trinci is a relatively young winery, it was established in 1992 from the Enopolio di Foligno and, in less than ten years, they accomplished excellent results, in the beginning their fame was just local and in a short period of time the success has been internationally acclaimed. Dr. Mattoni tells us

a significant profile «Terre de' Trinci was established in 1992 because of the wishes of some local viticulturists that were interested in making wine from their grapes. Now we produce 15 000 quintals of grapes (1 653 US tons) all gathered from our estates, we do not buy either grapes or wine from anyone, the wine we make is exclusively produces with grapes coming from our vineyards, about 250 hectares (about 617 acres) located in the Foligno, Bevagna, Montefalco and Gualdo Cattaneo areas. Terre de' Trinci mainly produces Sagrantino di Montefalco, Rosso di Montefalco and Rosso di Montefalco Riserva, Colli Martani Grechetto and Grechetto IGT. Lately we also started selling two new wines: Cajo and Luna. Cajo, which has been produced since three years, was created because we wanted to revalue viticulture outside the Montefalco DOC area which is particularly suited for vine cultivation and hence for wine production. Cajo is produced with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Sagrantino grapes, the latter cultivated outside the Montefalco DOC area. After two years of experiments and encouraged by the excellent results, the wine was first sold in 1997 and since then it is having a striking and lasting commercial success. Expectations for this year's vintage, which will be available in 2004, are for a production of 100 000 bottles, and we expect, according to our plans, to raise the production to 150 000 bottles in the next years. Cajo is aged for 18 months, part in large casks and part in barriques, then follows bottle aging for about six months. Wood aromas of the wine are quite moderate, according to our winery's philosophy. In 1996 we have been awarded certification for quality standards UNI EN ISO 9002, and we have been the first winery in Umbria and the second in Italy to receive this award. I want to state precisely that Terre de' Trinci is a winery which exclusively aims for the quality of its wines and our production is having a decreasing trend in favor of quality».

Terre de' Trinci's headquarter is in Foligno, near Montefalco, homeland of the excellent Sagrantino, an extraordinary grape renowned in the world for its unmistakable qualities, capable of producing full bodied and well structured wines,



Dr. Lodovico Mattoni, president of Terre de' Trinci and one of the fathers of dry Sagrantino



History of Sagrantino: on the left a rare bottle dated 1972, a 1973 on the center and a 1975 on the right

either dry or passito. Producing Sagrantino and being in the Montefalco area has a strategic role for the winery as told by Dr. Mattoni. «The winery is located in Foligno, outside the Montefalco DOC area, however our vineyards are in the DOC area. Sagrantino gave us the opportunity for new investments, to introduce new production technologies, renew our wine making systems and storage. In the last four years we invested one million of euros (a million US dollars) on technologies in favor of quality production where Sagrantino di Montefalco and Rosso di Montefalco are leading the way».

Sagrantino, this extraordinary grape that is traditionally used to make a passito wine after having allowed grapes to partially dry on mats, has been drunk by the inhabitants of the area for centuries as well as nowadays, is usually and traditionally matched with robust, succulent and spicy foods. The history of dry Sagrantino di Montefalco is quite recent and Dr. Mattoni is one of the protagonists of this important intuition. He tells us this important story, how everything started and evolved in one of the most significant events of the local enology: «Sagrantino was traditionally produced as passito and in scarce quantity and it was not much known outside the Montefalco area. Sagrantino passito, as opposed to what one may think, it is not a dessert wine, it is a robust wine and according to the local tradition, it is mainly drunk during the Easter day, matched with roasted lamb meat, robust roasted meats, hard cheeses and, last but not the least, can be considered as a meditation wine. Sagrantino Passito has a lightly sweet flavor, a lovely sapid and sweet taste and its potent tannins easily and perfectly clean the mouth even after having eaten robust meals; I do not agree much the idea of matching Sagrantino passito with desserts. In 1970 Sagrantino was exclusively produced as Passito and it was rapidly disappearing. At those times, it was 1972, I was just graduated and I was hired out as a managing director by the Enopolio di Foligno, the former winery from which Terre de' Trinci was born, and together with enologist Daniele Spinelli, Dr. Marcello Tassi, agronomist and inspector of the Agricultural Bureau of Umbria, and Prof. Nestore Iacovone of the Agronomy Faculty of the University of Perugia, we accomplished in this winery the very first experiments of dry Sagrantino made from non-dried grapes. The grapes were

provided by the vineyards of Mr. Angelo Fongoli's farm in Montefalco. In our winery's offices we still have and keep as a historical memory, some bottles of dry Sagrantino dated 1972, 1973 and 1975 and they prove this winery was the very first one to make Sagrantino this way. The real pioneer of making Sagrantino wine using non dried grapes was Dr. Tassi; at those times started introducing this brilliant idea and after the first encouraging results of the 1972, we promptly requested the DOC appellation status to the Italian Administration, the DOC was awarded in 1979. The preliminary draft of the Sagrantino di Montefalco DOC was written by Prof. Iacovone. In the beginning the wine had harsh and not much elegant tannins, with time we greatly improved this wine, also thanks to the new wine making technologies, and nowadays it has smooth and pleasing tannins also because of the aging techniques adopted as well as a proper bottle aging. Today Sagrantino di Montefalco is known and renowned all over the world».

Talking about Sagrantino, current production for this wine, either as passito or dry, represents about 15% of total production, where the production of passito is about 4500 bottles. Production is expected to raise in the next years and we are planning the production to raise soon at 30% and within the years 2004-2005 our plans are for a production of Sagrantino at a 50% of total production. Talking about past vintages of Sagrantino, Dr. Mattoni recalls: «1992, Terre de' Trinci's year of establishment, was a hard year for us because Sagrantino grapes were not considered of good quality and we decided not to make any wine from them. 1995 and 1997 have both been excellent years whereas the 1999, soon available on the market, has excellent qualities and I think it will be an exceptional wine. 1999 was a great vintage because July was quite hot and at the end of the month it providentially rained then followed sunny days. The result was an excellent vintage». Talking about next vintage and this year's yield «2002 will probably be considered as a great year because July was hot and it also rained; those rains were surely determinant for the vines. 2002 vintage will be available in 2005». Talking about Terre de' Trinci's marketing and about the countries where its wines are sold, Dr. Mattoni says «in the beginning of our business, Terre



A view of Terre de' Trinci's cellar. In these barriques Sagrantino patiently ages and wait for time to make its course

de' Trinci was mainly present in the local market, even though our production was low, today we are present all over Europe, in the USA, part of Canada, in Japan and in China».

Talking about Terre de' Trinci's new wines, Luna and Cajo, Dr. Mattoni, once again, explains us the meaning of these particular names «the names were chosen because they are related to our winery. Terre de' Trinci is named after the Trinci's family, ancient lords of Foligno whose origin was probably Longobard, they governed the city of Foligno from 1305 to 1493. The Trinci family was the proprietor of the estates where today we cultivate our vines and this is the reason why we named our winery like that. The name Luna ("moon" in Italian), has been chosen because of a painting of Gentile da Fabriano. The painting is in the Trinci's Palace, in Foligno, a beautiful palace I strongly suggest everyone to see and visit. Cajo was the name of a Roman Emperor, Cajo Mario, depicted in a fresco of the Giant's room in Trinci's Palace. As the wine is vigorous as well as it was Cajo Mario, we thought his name was well suited for our wine. Luna is the last wine created by Terre de' Trinci. We needed a prestigious white wine and, after two years of experiments, the wine has been released last year for the first time with a production of 3 000 bottles. Luna is produced with Chardonnay, about 15%, and Grechetto, a local grape of Umbria. Terre de' Trinci believes in revaluation and utilization of local grapes. This wine is aged for a short time, about three months, in light toasted barriques and this gives the wine a pleasing and lovely vanilla aroma. Cajo is an IGT wine produced with Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Sagrantino, in about equal quantities, according to vintage conditions and yields. This wine is the result of a blend of more wines, as every grape reaches full maturation in different times. Grapes are separately processed and we make wine from each of the three varieties, then the wines are assembled and they are aged for about one year in large casks as well as in barriques. The aging is completed with a period of six months in bottle»

Terre de' Trinci also has a dedicated tasting room where customers can personally evaluate and taste wines and they can also buy wines directly from the winery.



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



Luna 2001
Terre de' Trinci

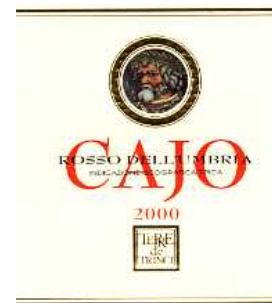
Grapes: Grechetto (85%), Chardonnay (15%)

Price: € 7,50

Score: ◆◆◆◆

Refined and elegant, this wine has a crystalline aspect and greenish-yellow color. Wine's bouquet is very good and truly elegant; fruit aromas are well integrated with other sensations, in particular flowers. Luna has good aromas of grapefruit, peach, pear, banana and an elegant hint of lemon as well as broom and acacia besides a pleasant hint of thyme. The bouquet is completed with a delicate and sweet aroma of vanilla and light aromas of wood. The wine is refreshing, intense and pleasant; acidity is well balanced by alcohol. Wine's finish is very elegant and has good persistence. Luna is aged for three months in light-toasted barriques.

Food match: Pastas with fish sauces, Risottos with vegetables, Fish, White meat



Cajo 2000
Terre de' Trinci

Grapes: Sagrantino, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot

Price: € 10,00

Score: ◆◆◆◆

The wine shows a beautiful and rich ruby red color. The bouquet is intense and has a good variety of aroma, mainly of fruits, such as blackberry, black cherry, raspberry, ripe cherry, blackberry jam, cherry jam as well as tobacco, vanilla and cocoa. The bouquet is completed with a light and good aroma of wood which is well integrated with the rest. Wine's taste is robust, full bodied and balanced. Tannins are evident and are well balanced by other components. Finish is persistent with good and clean hints of blackberry. Cajo is produced by blending more wines, part of wine is aged in casks and part in vats. The aging process is completed in bottles.

Food match: Broiled meat and barbecue, Robust roasted meat, Hard cheese, Braised and stewed meat



Montefalco Rosso Riserva 1999
Terre de' Trinci

Grapes: Sangiovese (65%), Sagrantino (15%), Merlot (20%)

Price: € 12,00

Score: ◇◇◇★

The wine shows a good and brilliant ruby red color with a good transparency. Wine's bouquet is mainly and evidently of fruit and aromas of wood are delicate and integrated, according to winery's philosophy. Aromas are clean and intense of fruit such as black cherry, blackberry, black cherry jam, plum jam as well as licorice and vanilla. The flavor is intense and balanced, tannins are evident although well integrated. Wine's finish is persistent with good hints of black cherry and blackberry. This reserve is produced with long maceration in skins and it is aged for 10 months in casks and 6 months in bottle.

Food match: Structured and robust pastas, Roasted meat, Broiled meat and barbecue



Sagrantino di Montefalco 1998
Terre de' Trinci

Grapes: Sagrantino

Price: € 20,00

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The color of this wine is light ruby red, not very consistent. Wine's bouquet has a good variety of intense aromas such as black cherry, ripe cherry, blackberry, plum, strawberry, cherry jam as well as licorice and vanilla. Flavor is intense, good body and balance and has good and evident tannins as well as a good alcohol balance. Finish is persistent with clean hints of blackberry and fruit. This wine is aged for 12 months in casks followed by 6 months of aging in bottle.

Food match: Broiled meat, Hard cheese, Roasted meat



Sagrantino di Montefalco 1999
Terre de' Trinci

Grapes: Sagrantino

Price: € 20,00

Score: ◇◇◇◇◇

This wine, in its current state, is to be considered as an excellent investment for a personal cellar. Everything in this wine is promising for a very interesting development in the next 2-3 years, however the wine can be drunk already with pleasure and satisfaction. The wine has an appealing, extraordinary, gorgeous ruby red color, very intense. Wine's bouquet is very intense and persistent and has aromas of fruit such as blackberry, black cherry, black currant, plum jam as well as walnut-husk, licorice, vanilla and a light hint of thyme. Wood aromas are well perceivable, it is well integrated and does not cover the good fruit bouquet. The wine has potent tannins, has good consistency and it is robust as well as full bodied. However it is well balanced by the alcohol and other components, even though tannins are well perceivable, this is a wine that easily and immediately shows its potent character and personality. The wine is aged for 12 months in casks and 6 months in bottle.

Food match: Great roasted meat, Hard cheese, Braised and stewed meat

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- **Winemaker:** Maurilio Chioccia - **Established:** 1992 -
Production: 500 000 bottles
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Cellar Journal

This section is reserved to wine producers who want to publish news and information about their business, to announce new products or just for communicating to its customers informations and promotions about their products and activity. Send news to be published at the e-mail address CellarJournal@DiWineTaste.com.

EVENTS

News

In this section will be published news and informations about events concerning the world of wine and food. Whoever is interested in publishing this kind of information can send us a mail at the address Events@DiWineTaste.com.

CORKSCREW

Serving Temperature

Serving a wine at the right temperature is very important: even though it can be considered as a personal preference, drinking a wine at the right temperature means, first of all, to appreciate it at its best conditions

One of the most important aspects of the wine service is the temperature at which it is drunk. Wine's temperature is often subject of dispute among wine lovers and, just like everything concerning human beings, every opinion, made of personal and subjective preferences, are very hard to change. However there are general rules that can be applied with success in almost every and usual circumstance and that can satisfy everyone's preference and taste. The sure thing is that wine is often, too often, served at the wrong temperature: whites are served too cool and reds too warm.

Before talking about the definition of "general" temperature levels for every wine typology, it is better to focus on the reasons why a specific wine should be served cooler or warmer. Besides this, it is important to note that there is a difference between serving temperature, that is the temperature used when the wine is served with the only purpose of drinking or appreciating it, and the tasting temperature, that is the temperature used when the wine is being analyzed and evaluated by tasters in order to determine its organoleptic characteristics, its real value and quality. This report will focus on serving temperature only, the ideal temperature to be used to properly serve a wine at the best condition possible in order to be properly appreciated and enjoyed, hopefully well matched with a proper food.

Effects of Temperature in Wine

Temperature represents a critical factor and it is a very important aspect in all wine's life cycle, from cellar to glass, it is a determinant factor for a proper development while it stays in the bottle, as well as allowing a proper appreciation when it is poured in a glass. This report will focus on the effects of temperature in wine in this "ultimate" phase of its life and the way it can alter the sensorial perception of the qualities. In particular, we will focus on effects of the temperature in the perception of smells and flavors.

According to a logical order of evaluation, when the wine has been poured in a glass, the first thing done is taking a look at it, then it is smelt and tasted, and finally an overall judgment, according to the preceding analyses, is expressed, or, in case the wine is being matched with food, the balance of the combined sensations of food and wine left in the mouth are considered. If we consider the average time needed to have a wine at its right serving temperature, usually a short time, this factor does not influence or alter the aspect of the wine in a significant way, therefore we will not discuss this particular subject on this report.

A truly important thing to understand is the effect of temperature in the perception of wine's smells and aromas. As a general rule, we can state the following:

- The lower the temperature, the lesser the perception of smells

therefore:

- The higher the temperature, the greater the perception of smells

These two simple rules let us understand that a wine having few aromas, or having a scarce intensity of aromas, can be improved by serving it at a higher temperature. A higher temperature will help aromas' development and perception; this also means that bad smells, defects and faults will be more evident as well. On the contrary, a

wine rich in aromas and smells, such as the ones produced with Muscat Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Brachetto and other aromatic grapes, can be served at lower temperatures with no problem and without compromising the development and the perception of its smells.

The application of these two simple and fundamental rules can turn smells perception into an extraordinary pleasure or into an absolutely boring one. However it should be noted there are temperatures, in particular too high or too low temperatures, that can greatly compromise the perception of smells and the joy of tasting a wine. Smell perception in a wine is drastically diminished when the serving temperature is lower than 8° C (46° F), except when the wine is exceptionally aromatic. Serving a wine at a temperature lower than this is an explicit invitation to ignore the olfactory analysis, as well as ignoring, or better, hiding, all the defective smells because of scarce quality as the wine's smell will be greatly diminished and scarcely perceivable. On the contrary, a temperature higher than 20° C (68° F), according to the above rules would make one think about an amplification and enhancement of aromas, would make a wine's smell not very attractive, dull and coarse as the main odor perceived would be the one of the volatilization of alcohol; the bouquet and the finesse of the wine would be coarse, while boosting the pungency of alcohol instead. By evaluating these considerations, the right serving temperature that allows proper perception and development of fine aromas usually ranges from 8° C to 18° C (46° ÷ 65° F). In case a full bodied or tannic wine is being served, as well as special and robust reserve wines or wines aged for a long time in bottle having a complex bouquet, the serving temperature can exceptionally be as high as 20° C (68° F).

Temperature greatly influence the perception of flavors as well. Just like smells, the perception of flavors can be defined by means of simple rules that will help us understanding and choose the right serving temperature.

- High temperatures increase the perception of sweet flavors and diminish the perception of bitter and salty flavors
- Low temperatures increase the perception of bitter and salty flavors and diminish the perception of sweet flavors
- Perception of acid flavors does not change with temperature; however an acid flavor is more enjoyable at low temperatures
- Low temperatures increase the sensation of astringency caused by tannins in red wines
- Low temperatures diminish the aggressivity and the perception of alcohol whereas high temperatures increase this sensation

By considering these rules it is clear the reason why tannic red wines, that is the ones that are astringent in the mouth, are not served at low temperatures. Another fundamental consideration can be stated for acid flavors. Pleasantness of an acid beverage, and remember, wine is an acid beverage, is more acceptable and enjoyable when served cool or at low temperatures. This consideration let us understand the reason why a white wine, usually more acid, or more fresh, crisp or lively according to wine tasting parlance, and less astringent of a red wine, is usually served cooler.

The rules considered so far can also make us understand that an alcoholic and sweet wine, such as a passito, when served at a low temperature, the sensation of "hot" caused by alcohol will be more tolerable and the excessive sweetness will be diminished. The application of these rules let us understand that red wines can be served at a low temperature only in case they are not tannic or astringent, and this is the case of the so called "light red wines", with little body and few tannins, as well as the "new wines" such as the Beaujolais Nouveau.

Another important component found in wine and in variable quantities according to the typology, which perception and influence on taste changes according to the temperature, is the carbon dioxide (CO₂). Every wine, including the ones considered as "still", that is non sparkling, have some carbon dioxide which is naturally produced during the fermentation process. This component is easily and evidently perceived both at sight and in taste, in every sparkling or lightly spark-



Fig. 3: Wine Thermometer

ling wine. Visibly, the presence of carbon dioxide is evidenced by the development of a chain of tiny bubbles in the glass, whereas in the mouth it is perceived as a more or less pleasing “itch” according to the total quantity. This component has a relatively simple flavor and it is lightly acid, has the capacity of enhancing acid flavors as well as astringency and attenuates sweet flavors. The acid flavor of carbon dioxide will be evident, and unpleasant, as the temperature gets higher; this is a good reason to serve sparkling wines at low temperatures. Temperature influences solubility of carbon dioxide as well. Carbon dioxide is easily released at high temperatures whereas at low ones it is released in small quantities. One of the pleasing aspects of a sparkling wine is the “bubble’s chain of pearls” running along the side of a glass. At low temperatures, carbon dioxide is freed more slowly and in lower quantities, therefore the “perlage” of a sparkling wine, according to the wine parlance, will be more persistent and lasting. Keeping carbon dioxide as long as possible in a sparkling wine while it is being tasted is essential because it will help the perception of acidity and of freshness, factors that are always welcome and enjoyed in this kind of wines. This can be easily done by serving this wine at a low temperature; however it is good not to get temperature lower than 8° C (46° F) or the main thing perceivable in the wine will be the “itchy” sensation of the carbon dioxide, whereas all those refined and elegant flavors and aromas developed with time will be attenuated and scarcely perceived.

To better understand the importance of temperature and its effects in the perception of smells and flavors, we can make the following experiment. To make the experiment more interesting, we need a wine thermometer (see figure 3), however, the experiment can be made even though a wine thermometer is not available and without significantly compromising the result. Take two bottles of wine, one white wine and one red wine: to make things easier in finding these wines, let’s take a bottle of Chardonnay as a white wine and a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon as a red wine. Both wines must be young. The area where the wines come from is not important at this time, so every area will work. We also need four glasses, preferably tasting ISO glasses. Leave both bottles at a room temperature, preferably at 18-20° C. (64° ÷ 68° F) Uncork bottles and pour some white wine and some red wine in two different glasses. Close both bottles and keep them at hand. Cover both glasses with a saucer and put them in the refrigerator until they reach a temperature of about 5° ÷ 6° C (41° ÷ 43° F)

Take both glasses out of the refrigerator and pour some of the wine at room temperature in the remaining glasses. Smell the wine contained in the glasses that were in the refrigerator and compare the aromas and the olfactory sensation with the wine contained in the glasses at room temperature. Difference between the finesse and elegance of aromas should be evident. Now taste the cool wine and try to concentrate on perceived flavors and tastes. Do the same with the wine at room temperature; the second wine should be more “coarse” and less pleasant if compared to the first wine. Do the same test with the red wine. Astringency of the cool wine will be exaggerated and unpleasant, whereas the one of the warmer wine will be more acceptable and appropriate.

In case you have a wine thermometer, try repeating the tests on cool wines every time the temperatures is raised of about 2° C (3° ÷ 4° F) You will realize that even an apparently insignificant temperature as little as that can really change the sensorial perception, it can increase or diminish specific sensations, both olfactory and gustatory.

White Wines

White wines are usually more acid than red wines and, as opposed to them, they have less tannins and, therefore, the sensation of astringency will be low, practically imperceptible. As an acid beverage is usually more pleasant when served at low temperatures, white wines are not generally served at high temperatures. Preferred temperature for this typology of wines usually ranges from 10° C to 14° C. (50° ÷ 57° F) Young, fresh and aromatic white wines can be served at 10° C (50° F) whereas the least aromatic ones are served at 12° C (53° F) Smooth and mature white wines, aged for some years in bottle, can be even served at higher temperature, from 12° C to 14° C (53° ÷ 57° F)

Serving a white wine at a higher temperature than these, would allow its “sweet” character to come out more evidently and the acid character, welcomed and appreciated in whites, will be diminished.

Rosé and Blush Wines

The service of rosé wines usually follows the same rules applied to white wines. However it is important to consider the quantity of tannins sometimes contained in this kind of wines; in this case it will be better to serve them at a higher temperature in order not to increase astringency. Young rosé wines, not tannic, are served from 10° to 12° C (50° ÷ 53° F) whereas the more robust and structured ones as well as mature ones, can be served from 12° to 14° C (53° ÷ 57° F).

Red Wines

Serving temperature for red wines is dependent on many factors, but as they usually have a “tannic” nature and are less acid than white wines, they generally are served at higher temperatures. Young red wines, having little tannins, are served from 14° to 16° C, (57° ÷ 61° F) whereas full bodied and tannic ones can be served at 18° C. (65° F) Red wines aged for years in bottle, having a full body and lots of tannins, can be served at 18° C (65° F), or, exceptionally, at 20° C. (68° F)

Young red wines, having little tannins and structure, can be served from 12° C to 14° C (53° ÷ 57° F) at this temperature they can be enjoyed without any astringency. This rule also applies to “new wines”, such as Beaujolais Nouveau: thanks to the wine making process used to produce them, they have little tannins and good aromas, therefore they can be served at low temperatures.

Sparkling Wines

Because of the many typologies of sparkling wines available, stating a general rule valid for every typology would not make much sense. White sweet and aromatic sparkling wines, such as Asti Spumante, can be served at a temperature as low as 8° C; (46° F) as these wines are very aromatic they can tolerate low temperatures without compromising bouquet.

Red sweet sparkling wines, such as Brachetto d'Acqui, can be served at temperatures ranging from 10° C to 12° C; (50° ÷ 53° F) the same general rule about smells is applied here as well, the most aromatic red sparkling wines tolerate temperature as low as 8° C (46° F), whereas the tannic ones should be served at higher temperature and as high as 14° C. (57° F).

Dry or Brut sparkling wines produced with the "Charmat Method" or "Martinotti Method", such as the Prosecco di Valdobbiadene e Conegliano, can be served at temperatures ranging from 8° C to 10° C. (46° ÷ 50° F)

Particular attention should be paid to sparkling wines produced with "Classic Method", such as the Franciacorta, as well as for the ones produced with "*Méthode Champenoise*", such as the Champagne. This wines are usually served at temperatures from 8° C to 10° C, (46° ÷ 50° F) however when vintage or "millésime" wines are being served or important sparkling wines aged for some time, the temperature can also be 12° C (53° F) in order to encourage the development of complex aromas that were patiently and slowly formed and developed during the course of time.

Fortified, Passito and Sweet Wines

The common characteristic found in these style of wines is, generally speaking, the high quantity of alcohol and, most of the time, they are sweet as well. However there are fortified dry wines, such as some typologies of Marsala and Jerez (Sherry) Finos, that, although they have some sugars in it, they are not generally and significantly perceived. The serving temperature for these wines should be determined according to what it is wished to be perceived the most. In case it is wished to accentuate the sweet taste of the wine as well as the complexity of aromas and their austerity, it will be best to serve them at a high temperature, from 14° C to 18° C (57° ÷ 65° F) but remember that the alcohol will also be accentuated as well. In case it is wished to accentuate their freshness, or in case of an exceptionally sweet wine where this aspect should be diminished, it will be better to serve them at a lower temperature, from 10° C to 14° C. (50° ÷ 57° F)

Fortified dry, fresh and young wines can be even served at a lower temperatures even lower than 10° C: (50° F) in this way the perception of alcohol will be greatly diminished; however it is wise remembering that the lower the temperature, the lower the development and perception of aromas. The pleasantness and the complexity of these wines' aromas, is a welcome and interesting aspect: serving them too cool would explicitly scarify this aspect.

How to get a wine at the right temperature

Before talking about the right techniques to chill or warm a wine in order to get it at the right serving temperature, let's make things clear about a common concept which is usually and erroneously used and applied to wine: room temperature. The custom of serving wine at room temperature has originated in the past centuries, when houses of those times, even because they completely lacked of an effective heating system as well as the not so good isolation with the outside, room temperature was rarely higher than 20° C (68° F), except for, of course, summertime. In our modern houses, having heating systems, often exaggerated, as well as a good isolation with the outside, it is pretty easy to get temperatures higher than 23° C (74° F), a tem-



Fig. 4: Thermal bucket or "glacette"

perature which is not ideal for serving wine. Things get worse in summertime when room temperature can get as high as 30° C (86° C). This means that we need to chill red wines, not only white wines, before serving, and we better forget, or change our idea, about "room temperature" when applied to wine.

Another important factor to be considered when serving wine is the temperature of glasses. When they are left on the table, their temperature will be as high as the one of the environment or room, needless to say, too high. When the wine is being poured in a glass, it rapidly gets warmer and in a short period of time its temperature will be raised of about 2° C (about 3° F) The wine's temperature will continue to raise, of course, for all the time it stays in the glass until reaching room temperature. For this reason, when a wine is being chilled or warmed at its serving temperature, it is good to make sure that the wine in the bottle is having a temperature of about 2° C (3° F) lower than its usual serving temperature, this is particularly true when room temperature is quite high.

During warm seasons and whenever the temperature is high, it can be a good idea, when allowed by the typology of wine to be served and by its organoleptic characteristics, to serve a wine at a slightly lower temperature, because the wine will get warmer sooner and because with high temperatures cool beverages are usually welcome.

There are two methods used to get a wine to its right serving temperature, the first one, and the most obvious and frequent one, is to chill it, whereas the second one, even though it could be considered as absurd, is to warm the wine in case it is too cool. In both cases the job is accomplished by means of a wine or ice bucket and water.

The best way to chill a bottle of wine is to fill an ice bucket with water and ice and then to submerge the bottle until it gets to the serving temperature. Make sure the bucket is sufficiently tall in order to let the bottle to be completely submerged; make sure the neck of the bottle, but not the capsule, is submerged as well. Using water is essential because it lets the wine to chill faster and the conduction of low temperature generated by the ice will be improved. Generally speaking, ten to twenty minutes will be enough to get a wine to its serving temperature. The amount of ice to be used and the amount of time are both dependent on the serving temperature to be reached; room temperature and starting wine's temperature play a determinant role as well. As a general rule, the bucket is usually half filled with ice and the rest is filled with water. Check the temperature in the bucket with a wine thermometer and, in case a lower temperature is needed, add more ice; in case a higher temperature is needed, add more water or

take out some ice cubes.

In case it is preferred to chill a wine in the refrigerator, it will be enough to leave the bottle inside it for a time ranging from 60 minutes to 4 hours, the amount of time depends on the starting wine's temperature, capacity and efficiency of the refrigerator and, of course, serving temperature. Anyway, never leave or keep wine bottles in the refrigerator for long periods of time: the refrigerator should be used only to get a wine to its serving temperature, so the bottle should be put in the refrigerator just before the service and only for the needed time. A refrigerator is not a cellar. Keeping or storing wine in the refrigerator, that is leaving the bottles in it for a very long time, this means many days, weeks or months, it is a sure and infallible way to definitely ruin it.

As the wine gets to its serving temperature, it can be served and left on the ice bucket; this will help the wine to stay chilled, however it should be remembered that in case the water's temperature in the bucket is lower than the serving temperature, wine will continue to chill down. In this case the bottle can be put in a thermal bucket (see figure 4) and served. This handy tool, also known as "*glacette*", is a bucket as tall and as large as a bottle and it is coated by a hollow space that limits temperature dispersion as well as insulating the inside with outside's temperature.

The ice bucket is also used in case a too cool wine is to be warmed. In this case the bucket will be filled with plain water, or lukewarm water when needed, and then the bottle is submerged until reaching the serving temperature. This practice is usually used for red wines. A "disgraceful" and "terrible" practice about warming a wine, too often seen in many restaurant, is to put the bottle on a radiator. This practice is very bad for the wine and it must be avoided in any case. The high heat, as well as the sudden temperature change, particularly on the side being in contact with the radiator, gets fine aromas and flavors coarse and accentuate the alcohol's aroma and taste.

NOT JUST WINE

Grappa

The renowned Italian's national brandy is rich in pleasures and surprises. A tradition coming from centuries of history and still alive in the country

Among the many traditional beverages of the Italian culture, two of them have an important role in people's life, their presence has been an integral part of the country's traditions for many centuries and they are both alcoholic beverages: wine and grappa. Although grappa has not a history as ancient and as definable as wine's history, grappa has been, practically since ever, the most preferred brandy of Italians. In the past centuries grappa was considered as a "coarse" brandy, something to be exclusively destined to people of low social status and it seems that nobles and higher social classes were not interested in grappa and they also did not drink it. In recent times, also thanks to new distillation technologies and to the rigorous selection of quality ingredients, grappa has got back to limelight and it is getting more and more to a dignified position among brandies, the high quality of this brandy has greatly contributed to its celebrity and renewed interest among Italians of any social class. Although grappa is known and produced everywhere in Italy, it is mainly spread and drunk in the regions of the north-west side of the country, in particular Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Trentino Alto Adige as well as Lombardy and Piedmont.

What is Grappa?

Grappa is a brandy made from grape's pomace, it is produced by distilling fermented pomace (grape skins) used to produce wine. As opposed to other brandies, such as Cognac, produced by distilling wine, grappa is produced by distilling solid matters, that is by distilling fermented grape's skins, after they have been pressed for the production of must used to make wine.

The word "grappa" comes from the Lombard *grapa*, having its origin from the Gothic word *krappa*, which meaning is "hook" and gave origin to the word *raspo* and *graspo*, that is *grappolo* (Italian for "bunch") that finally relates grappa to grape, the matter used to produce grappa. Even today in Lombardy, as well as in other northern regions of Italy, although with small dialectal variations, the term "grapa" is used to refer to the substance left at the end of the wine making process, that is grape's skins, pips and stalks macerated in the must during wine fermentation and, once again, states this name is truly originated by the word "grape".

Grappa is classified according its age, the typology of aging technique used during production, grape or grapes used to produce it as well as the vegetal essences used to aromatize it. Grappa is classified according the following categories:

- **Giovane (young) or bianca (white)** - it is the grappa which is bottled soon after production and was not stored or kept in wooden containers. This kind of grappa has no color and it is transparent, it has a delicate and typical aroma as well as a dry and clean taste
- **affinata (aged)** - it is the grappa which is bottled after having been aged for a period not longer than 12 months in wooden containers. Its color, smell and taste depend on the typology and capacity of the wooden containers
- **invecchiata (old) o vecchia (old)** - it is the grappa which is bottled after having been aged for a period of time from 12 to 18 months in wooden containers. Its color, smell and taste depend on the typology and capacity of wooden containers
- **stravecchia (very old) o riserva (reserve)** - it is the grappa bottled after having been aged for a period of time longer than 18 months. Its color, smell and taste depend on the typology and capacity of wooden containers
- **aromatica (aromatic)** - grappa produced with aromatic or semi-aromatic grapes, such as Muscat blanc, Gewürztraminer, Müller Thurgau, Malvasia, etc.
- **monovitigno (mono-varietal)** - it is a grappa produced with the pomace of a single variety of grape. The name of grape used is usually written in the label
- **polivitigno (poly-varietal)** - it is a grappa produced with pomace of many varieties of grapes.
- **aromatizzata (aromatized)** - this grappa has been added with one or more aromatic vegetal essences. The most common aromatic grappas are aromatized with fruits (raspberry, apricot, blackberry, peach, etc.) as well as officinal and aromatic herbs (juniper, rue, licorice, etc.)

It should be noted that every category can be combined with others in order to create a new and specific classification of grappa, such as, *grappa monovitigno riserva* or *grappa aromatica monovitigno stravecchia*. Quality of grappa mainly depends on quality of the pomace used to make it as well as the variety of grape. *Monovitigno* grappas, that is the grappas produced by using one single grape variety, are usually the most elegant and refined ones, even better, the monovitigno grappas produced with aromatic or semi-aromatic grapes. Monovitigno grappas usually have the name of the grape used in the bottle's label, such as *Grappa di Moscato*, *Grappa di Nebbiolo* or *Grappa di Nosiola*. *Polivitigno* grappas can be easily recognized because they have no supplementary indication in the label, usually

only the term *grappa* is written in it with no specific mention about the grapes used to produce it.

Grappa can be sold, according to the Italian law, only if the alcohol by volume is from 38% to 60%, however most of the grappa sold has about 43% of alcohol by volume. The percentage of alcohol in a grappa is a specific and precise choice of the producer, who decides the exact percentage of alcohol in order to have a balanced product as well as according to its organoleptic characteristics.

Production of Grappa

Grappa is a distilled beverage produced with grape's pomace. Quality of pomace is the first and most important factor in producing a good quality grappa. Producers know this very well and they wisely take a scrupulous care in keeping and handling this matter. Pomace must be in good health and properly storing and keeping pomace is a very crucial aspect because every defect or fault, even the most insignificant or small ones, are easily transferred to grappa and they will be perceived by any good and well-trained grappa lover or taster.

Before distilling grape's pomace, it is necessary that they have some alcohol. This is possible only when the pomace have been fermented, that is when the sugar has been transformed into alcohol. This condition depends on the origin of pomace, that is depends on the method of wine making in what they have been used to. Pomace used for the making of white wine, that is the pomace not macerated in the must during the alcoholic fermentation, are called "*virgin*", they are rich in sugars and have no alcohol, therefore they must be fermented before distillation. The pomace used for the making of rosé or blush wine, that is the one slightly macerated in the must during wine making, are called "*semi-fermented*" and have a little quantity of alcohol. Pomace used for making red wine, that is a pomace which has been fermented during the maceration in must, are called "*fermented*" and, as they contain alcohol in good quantities, they are ready for distillation. Before distilling *virgin* and *semi-fermented* pomace, it will be necessary to ferment them in order to transform sugars into alcohol, thus obtaining *fermented* pomace.

In case fermented pomace is not distilled in a short time, proper and scrupulous care is needed to keep and store it, because it can be easily spoiled, lose its quality as well as getting mouldy. Proper storage and care of pomace is fundamental, because a spoiled or defective pomace will surely give a defective grappa having low or bad quality.

The process of distilling pomace is made by means of a distiller. The most popular and used type of distiller is the *discontinuous* one. Besides being the most traditional choice for grappa production, discontinuous distiller, because of its proper technical and functional characteristics, usually gives the best quality grappa. As the subject of distillation and of distillers is quite vast as well as interesting, we are not going to discuss this matter because it would go far beyond the scope of this report; for the moment, knowing that a grappa produced with a discontinuous distiller is better than the one produced with other types of distiller is surely enough. Producers usually write in the bottle's label the type of distiller used to make their grappa.

The process of distillation begins by filling up the distiller's cauldron with fermented grape's pomace, and then the cauldron is being warmed. This first phase allows the evaporation of liquid substances from the solid matter, mainly alcohol and water. Ethyl alcohol, that is the main substance in a distilled beverage, starts boiling at 78,4° C, (173.12° F) however, as the alcohol in pomace is mixed with water, the boiling point will be higher and it will vary according to the percentage of water in the mixture as well as of alcohol. The higher the quantity of water, the higher the boiling point of the mixture. The pomace to be distilled also contains other components which evaporate when heated and are transferred to the distilled liquid. Many of these substances are unpleasing, therefore unwanted, and they will be removed or excluded. Fortunately, the many substances contained in the pomace have different boiling points, therefore by scrupulously

controlling the temperature of the heating process, it will be possible to eliminate any unwanted component while keeping all the wanted and quality substances instead. This process of separation, or elimination of bad and unwanted components is called "*cutting out heads and tails*".

Vapors produced by heating and subsequent concentration, are chilled in order to turn them back again into their liquid state, this is what originates the distilled beverage. Every phase of distillation generates a particular type of liquid and it is classified, according to its components, as *head*, *heart* or *tail*. The head part is the very first liquid coming out from the distillation process and it is mainly made of bad and unpleasing components, that would give a vinegar taste to grappa as well as coarse aromas, and it also contains methyl alcohol, which is toxic, and therefore it is eliminated. Fortunately all these components have a boiling point lower than all the other wanted and "noble" substances and they are the first ones to be produced by the distillation. One of the many talents of the producer, is to determine the end of the *head* part and the beginning of the *heart*, that is the good and precious part of the distilled liquid, rich in ethyl alcohol and aromatic substances. The producer must also have the talent to recognize and determine the end of the *heart* and the beginning of the *tail*, that is the final part of the liquid; this part will be eliminated as well because it contains coarse and unpleasing substances and not much alcohol, already extracted with the *heart*, and it will not be part of the grappa. In short, grappa is exclusively made of the *heart* part, that is the liquid produced during the middle phase of distillation, rich in ethyl alcohol and fine and elegant aromatic substances, while discarding all the rest, *head* and *tail*, that is the initial and the last parts.

At the end of the distillation process a brandy having a high quantity of alcohol is obtained, usually from 60% to 75% by volume when produced with discontinuous distillers, therefore the grappa is not yet ready to be consumed and appreciated. The next phase is used to lower the alcohol's percentage, according to the Italian Laws about grappa, this percentage can be from 38% to 60% by volume. Diminishing the percentage of alcohol is accomplished by adding distilled or demineralized water until reaching the wanted percentage of alcohol. The percentage of alcohol by volume in a grappa is a specific choice of the producer determined according to the typology of grappa; the alcohol must be well balanced with all the other components without "burning" the mouth and without "hiding" all the other organoleptic sensations. Because of some insoluble substances contained in the distilled liquid, adding water will turn it turbid, giving it a "milky" and opaque aspect and this is, of course, unacceptable and unwanted to any taster. As the grappa must be transparent and crystalline, it must be filtered in order to eliminate these insoluble components. The filtration process also eliminates other coarse and unwanted substances as well as some insoluble oils. To make the filtration process easier, grappa is chilled to a very low temperature, usually ranging from -10° C to -20° C (14° ÷ -4° F) and then filtered.

When the filtration process is done, grappa is finally ready to be bottled or aged in wood according to the typology the producer wanted to make.

Service and Evaluation of Grappa

Before being tasted and appreciated, grappa, just like any other food or beverage, must be properly prepared for service. The first aspect we will discuss is the temperature, determinant factor to accentuate or diminish the organoleptic sensations of this brandy. The general rule about temperature, alcoholic beverages and aromas is that low temperatures diminish the perception of smells and alcohol, high temperatures accentuate them. A high temperature, that would accentuate grappa's aromas, will accentuate alcohol pungency in the nose instead and therefore all the others aroma will be scarcely perceived. Young or white grappas are usually served at temperatures from 8° C to 12° C (46° ÷ 53° F) whereas aged, old and reserve grappas are generally

served at temperatures from 15° C to 18° C (59° ÷ 64° F) and sometimes at 20° C (68° F) Grappa lovers usually like drinking grappa at temperatures from 18° to 20° C (64° ÷ 68° F), this temperature will surely accentuate all aromas, including the bad and defective ones, this means that it will be easier to recognize a bad or mediocre quality grappa from the good ones. Like we said, high temperatures also accentuate alcohol pungency in the nose: in case it is preferred to drink grappa at these temperatures, it will be a good idea to take same precautions in order not to get “burned” by the alcohol’s aggressivity while smelling its bouquet.

Using a proper glass is the main precaution against alcohol’s “aggression” in the nose as well as allowing a better appreciation of all those fine and elegant aromas of a grappa. A good grappa glass should be tall and narrow while opening a little more at the top in order to allow a better perception of aromas. Figure 5 represents an example of a grappa glass. As can be seen, the glass has a reduced diameter and volume, it is tall and slim and its opening is lightly enlarged. The body is tall about 9 ÷ 10 centimeters (about 3½ ÷ 4 inches) and keeps the nose at the right distance to the grappa and avoids alcohol vapors to “burn” the olfactory bulb. Grappa glass is also narrow therefore the quantity of distilled liquid it can contain will never be high. It should be remembered grappa is an alcoholic beverage and has about 43% of alcohol by volume and therefore it should be drunk with moderation and, to better appreciate it, at tiny sips. The glass is “completed” by a long stem, it should be as long as the body, and a base. The glass of this kind should be held by the base and never held by the body; this keeps the hand as far as possible from the nose as well as avoiding grappa to be warmed by hand’s heat. The hand holding the glass could also have smells and odors, because of deodorants or soaps as well as for having being in contact with odorous substances, and this would disturb and alter the olfactory perception. Holding the glass by the body would, of course, heat the grappa and therefore the aromas and taste will be altered as well.

Grappa glass should be filled for a little less than one third of its height: do not forget one of the purposes of this glass is to ensure a proper distance between the nose and the grappa. Using the glass of figure 5 as a reference, this should be filled up to the largest part of its body or slightly above this level.

The first characteristic being evaluated in a grappa is the aspect that will always be transparent and crystalline with no exception, show-

ing no extraneous substance. A grappa not transparent or opaque would mean a fault or defect during the filtration process or during the chilling phase before filtering. Young grappa will always show no color whereas the color of aged or old grappas can be straw yellow, more or less intense, as well as being amber in certain cases. The color of aged or old grappas directly depend on typology of wood used and on the amount of time the grappa has been in contact with wood. Generally speaking, the more the color of grappa tends to amber, the more the time of aging.

The next evaluation is about smells. Lightly swirl the glass, this operation will allow a better development of aromas, and smell with decision for a short time. In aromatic grappas, that is the ones produced with the pomace of aromatic or semi-aromatic grapes, a strong and good perception of the grape’s aroma should be perceived then followed by all other aromas. In aged or old grappas, aromas transferred from wood to the liquid are perceived as well, their intensity varies according the essence of wood used as well as the time of aging. Typical grappa’s aromas are the ones resembling fruits, such as, banana, raspberry, apple, strawberry and peach, as well as dried fruit, such as hazelnuts, flowers, vegetal substances and herbs. A defect that could be detected in some grappas is the exaggerated pungency of alcohol; detection of this defect is easily recognizable by the “burning” and “painful” sensation as the alcohol’s vapors get to the olfactory bulb. Bad smells, such as vinegar, sweat, wax, smoke or burnt are, of course, defects and are usually originated by a bad pomace’s storage and quality as well as a bad distillation practice.

After this analysis is done, we will proceed with tasting the grappa. Grappa must be consumed at tiny sips and as the liquid is in the mouth, inhale a little air through the teeth while distributing grappa all over the mouth. The introduction of air in the mouth will oxygenate grappa and will help the development of aromas, the development will also be accentuated by the heat of the mouth that will warm the grappa. The first perceived taste will be, of course, the burning sensation of alcohol that will be perceived as a “pseudo-caloric” sensation more or less strong according to the quantity of alcohol contained in the liquid. After that, the flavors of grappa will come out and will be easily perceivable and recognizable: sweet and bitter. Acid flavor will be completely contrasted by alcohol and therefore it will not be perceived, whereas the perception of a salty flavor is always considered as a defect. Besides that, flavors of fruits will be perceived as well, usually the same ones perceived by the nose. The examination of grappa ends with swallowing. The grappa will be heated because of body’s temperature as well as of oral cavity’s temperature, therefore new aromas and odors will be perceived as “retro-olfactory”, that is on the inside and back part of the nose, these odors will contribute to the finesse and to the quality of grappa. The amount of time these aromas last and the capacity of grappa of leaving a “clean” mouth are both quality factors, sign of a good distillation practice as well as a sign of good storage and care of the pomace.

Grappa is a refined and elegant brandy and more than any other, evokes the soul of grape: in it are perceived the characteristics of the grape used to made it and the talent and passion of man. A good producer of grappa is, first of all, a person who respect the matter used to make grappa and take excellent care of it, add his or her talent and mastery in order to obtain a nectar rich in aromas and sensations. The next time you will taste a grappa, don’t forget to concentrate on its aromas, try to appreciate this aspect as much as possible, do not just drink it, try to appreciate every single aspect of it. This will surely make the tasting of this ancient brandy more pleasing and will let you understand the differences between a grappa and another, last but not the least, will honor the work of whom, with meticulous and scrupulous patience, passion and mastery, produce it.



Fig. 5: A type of grappa glass

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 www.DiWineTaste.com.

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