

DiWINEtaste

Wine Culture and Information

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Wine's Fashions

Every time has its fashions and among the fashions of every time, wine has always been one of the many. A preferred drink during moments of social celebrations, such as parties and special days, as well as in every day's life, preferences about wine consumption have always been determined by the fashions of the times. Every epoch of our history has always had and preferred particular kind of wines, as well as particular wine areas, and these preferences have always been renewed in the course of time, indeed, many of these fashions have been capable of resisting the "challenge" of new products, up to now. One of the wines that has been capable of resisting the challenge of time, more than any other else, is the one most of people commonly think of when they have to associate a wine to a celebration or a particular event: sparkling wine or Champagne. However, it must be noticed that consuming sparkling wines in occasion of special and particular events, is actually a sort of "curse" for these wines, as the majority of consumers would never have a sparkling wine or a Champagne, for example, during an ordinary meal. This habit, which had its origin as a particular fashion of French high society that was introduced some centuries ago, gives sure and high profits to wine producers during Christmas time, anyway, it penalizes a product that would surely deserve a better and proper attention in the enogastronomy.

Fashions and habits truly have a strong influence on our choices; if one thinks about ten years ago, the common preference among consumers was for white wines, a fashion which surely was encouraged by commercial interests and that has red wines sales to slow down. Now we have an opposite trend and most of the consumers look for red wines whereas white wine is practically ignored. In this moment every one is talking about red wines, to be more precise, about "great red wines", about those kind of red wines which are potent, powerful, full bodied, concentrated and thick, so concentrated and thick that one would be tempted to use fork and knife instead of a glass. These wines, surely excellent and potent, according to their structure and body, are capable of fading most of the foods out, therefore a correct and balanced match is pretty hard and binding to do, and as a consequence, these wines are not consumed with foods. If they are not consumed with food, so, with what they are consumed with? In particular moments that does not include foods? Maybe. What frequently happens is that they are considered as wines to talk a lot about but, in reality, few people have them. These wines, also considering the prestige they have, legitimate or forced, because of the rigorous quality processes required to make them, usually have high prices, sometimes justifiable according to their indisputable high quality, and every one knows quality in wine

has a high price, sometimes excessive and unjustifiable, they easily become cult wines. Cult! Here it is a new fashion common to the wine subject. A fashion which gave origin to that multitude of "labels drinkers", who just talk about particular wines, universally considered as excellent, and they surely are indeed, they usually are just capable of recognizing or appreciating their names but not their quality. This "mania" also spreads among the ones who are trying to get into wine and, just not to be considered as incompetent or scarcely informed about the subject, they usually praise their magnificent characteristics and their incomparable qualities; they usually feign a knowledge about those wines they heard a lot about but they never had and probably they will never have.

Moreover, fashions are, in a sense, the soul of the society of every time and they surely follow the evolution of taste. In ancient times the most drunk wine and the one preferred among consumers was sweet and syrupy, then, also thanks to the improvement of the wine making technologies, the preference was for dry wines, then to sparkling wines and finally to dry wines again. Moreover, there were times where fortified wines, such as Marsala, Jerez (Sherry), Porto, Madeira, were the wines preferred the most, they usually were associated to certain social classes, like what happened to Champagne, which is considered since many centuries as the wine of the high and noble classes and the wine to have during the most refined and elegant occasions.

Fashions, indeed, are also events imposed by some subjects to the society and they are easily accepted by the majority of people with the false hope and illusion of feeling acceptable and legitimate members of the society they belong to. Every

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fashion or thing “promises” this recognizability and the legitimization of belonging to a social group, as well as guaranteeing success in the society, a fact that surely is a privilege and make people feel more acceptable. Wine, of course, is no exception, it cannot be as long as we keep this concept as general. Moreover, it should be noticed that the fashions of our modern society are also commercial phenomena which are introduced with the explicit goal of making profits and, the higher the success, the higher the profit. This strategic rule is applicable to most of commercial products, including wine, of course.

Wine is nowadays a hedonistic good, the necessity of considering it as food is probably gone forever, moreover, in certain cases, wine consumption, the consumption of certain wines, to be precise, represents an opportunity to show off haughty and prestigious behaviors. Wine is drunk for the fun of it, for pleasure, hopefully always consumed with moderation, to satisfy a necessity, not just a necessity for senses, it can also be consumed as a consequence of following a certain fashion. If wine is consumed just to follow a fashion, this very moment’s fashion, it is natural to ask ourselves how much real wine is out there and how much wine is made with the only goal of imposing a fashion. Moreover, we should ask ourselves how many people out there have wine with the real and sincere pleasure of tasting and appreciating a product and how many people out there drink wine just because of a fashion. According to a “simple” commercial standpoint, this makes no difference at all, no matter how wine is used or consumed, the commercial goal is surely achieved. Anyway, it should be noticed that a fashion can also pass and can be replaced by new ones, in this case, wine producers who make wine just to satisfy a fashion, could be in big troubles as they will have to adapt their products to these new fashions, in case these new ones are about wine, or merely experience a commercial crisis.

Wine is having a very special moment and there is a lot of interest for it, there is a renewed interest among consumers, including young consumers, they finally and fortunately are looking for quality instead of quantity in alcoholic beverages and this is too a result of a fashion, the fashion of our time. This is certainly good and positive for the proper reevaluation of enology and of wine producers; the investments they are making for the wine industry are surely high and this should be an investment that must, inevitably and justly, make profits. We sincerely wish this profit to continue in future and the huge investments made for wine in this time are in favor of wine instead of just sustaining a fashion. Our hope, and probably the hope of all wine lovers, is that the opportunity offered by this fashion and by this renewed interest will be turned into something profitable, not just for economic profits of the moment,

but also, and above all, to spread and promote the culture of the conscious and proper consumption of wine. A fashion can pass and can be replaced by other fashions, the richness of a culture can surely be transformed into something else, but it is harder to replace a culture than a simple fashion. This is a great opportunity offered to wine producers and to the ones who work in the wine business, this should be a serious opportunity for pondering and for understanding that it is a moment where a serious and proper investment about wine culture and quality is what we should make the most, we have to work hard in order to have everyone understand this. The high risk of wine getting back to what it was twenty years ago, where most of people were uninterested in it and the quality of wine was pretty mediocre, is a probability that could happen again in case we are just sustaining a mere fashion. Honest collaboration among the ones who make wine and the ones who work and believe in spreading wine culture, last but not the least, the ones who love wine, is truly essential; a collaboration that must lead to the consolidation and the confirmation of the success of this moment, to turn this success into a cultural patrimony and richness of people, of us all.

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.

I am regular reader of DiWineTaste since the first issue and I am sending you my congratulations for your job, the columns are very interesting and comprehensive, I sincerely wish you will keep on working this way. In November’s issue I read Petit Verdot grape is used in wines from Bordeaux and this is what I knew too. Recently I had a wine made in Latium (Italy) and this wine was made with Petit Verdot grape; this made me think about what I read in your magazine: honestly I did not know Petit Verdot was cultivated in my region as well. Are there any other areas in Italy where Petit Verdot is cultivated?

Cristina Gaudenzi – Roma (Italy)

Dear Ms. Gaudenzi, thank you so much for your appreciation about DiWineTaste, we are glad to know our publication is interesting to you and we will certainly do our best in order to continue our job this way. Petit Verdot is, like you rightly said, a grape typically used in some Bordeaux wines and recently there is a renewed interest for this grape among wine producers, not only French producers. Petit Verdot is mainly used in Bordeaux wines in order to add taste, color and a good quantity of tannins. When this grape is used alone to make wine, without using any other grape, Petit Verdot is capable of giving wines having good body, very colored and with spicy and peppery aromas, they are pretty tannic and alcoholic as well. In Italy, besides what you already knew, Petit Verdot is cultivated, although in little quantities, in Latium as well as in Alto Adige, Trentino, Emilia Romagna and Tuscany. This grape is also cultivated elsewhere in the world, particularly in Chile and California.

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I noticed bottles of Champagne are usually thicker than bottles used for still wines, of course, because of the internal pressure. I would like to ask you how much is the pressure which develops inside of a bottle of Champagne?

József Szilágyi – Szeged (Hungary)

The internal pressure in a bottle of Champagne is usually of about 6 atmospheres (85.34 psi) and this is true for sparkling wines made with “classic method” as well. Internal pressure is originated by a “secondary fermentation”, which takes place in the bottle, and its purpose is to transform the sugar contained in the so-called “*liqueur de tirage*” into alcohol and, as a byproduct, carbon dioxide which in turn, as being trapped in the bottle, raises the internal pressure up to about 6 atmospheres. Technically speaking, 4 grams of sugar (about 0.14 oz.) dissolved in the “*liqueur de tirage*” develops about one atmosphere (about 14.2 psi), therefore the total quantity of sugar needed to have 6 atmospheres is 24 grams. (0.84 oz.)



As “Nouveaux” wines are about to be released in the market, a friend of mine and I did not agree about the serving temperature of these wines. I think, as they are red wines, they should be served at a temperature of at least 16° C (60° F), whereas my friend says these wines can be served at lower temperatures. Who is right?

Lorraine Hartshorne – Brisbane (Australia)

We are very sorry to contradict your opinion, but your friend is right. Nouveaux wines, because of the particular wine making technology used to make them, the so-called “*carbonic maceration*”, do not have high quantities of tannins and are pretty aromatic; a couple of conditions that would suggest a low serving temperature, just like for white wines. Concerning this subject, we can suggest you reading the report about “serving temperature” published on DiWineTaste’s issue 1, October 2002.

ABC WINE

United States of America

After the dark times of the twenties, also followed by the rebirth from prohibition’s ashes, thanks to right choices and strategies, this country nowadays makes very interesting wines

If one thinks of the United States of America, wine would not probably be what one mainly associates to this country, indeed, United States ranks as the fourth or fifth wine producer of the world, according to the year. Production of wine in the United States is mainly focused in California, about 90% of total production, whereas the rest of production is made by other wine producing states. In the United States of America there are two different kind of vines cultivated: native

ones, where the most common one is the *Vitis Labrusca* species, and the *Vitis Vinifera* species, whose origin is European, that is the most common vine used for making wine all over the world. The former species are indigenous of the United States, whereas the latter was introduced to the country by emigrants or by local viticulturists who wanted to make wine in the “European” style.

Even though the majority of wine produced in the United States and which is exported outside the country is made with grapes of European species, production of wine using local grapes is pretty common, particularly in those states where wine production is considered as a marginal activity. Wines produced with local grapes have very particular and typical flavors and aromas, usually referred as “animal” or “foxy”, and Europeans do not usually like these kind of wines, maybe because of the habits and customs they have about associating the aroma and the flavor of wine to the ones produced with European vines.

History of wine production in the United States began as a consequence of the settlements of European people, about 1500 A.D., that started colonizing these new lands. Those colonizers of the “New World” were attracted, from the very beginning, by the American grapes species and started making wine from them in the hope to obtain the same famed product that Europeans were accustomed to. Very soon they realized the result that could be obtained with American vines was very different and not much appreciable according to the expectations of the European taste. Therefore they started importing plants of *Vitis Vinifera* from Europe in the aim of planting them in the United States and in the hope to obtain a product much like the one made in the “Old World”.

In order to be successful in this new “challenge”, they chose the state of Virginia as the best place to be used for the cultivation of the vine and about 1619 A.D., they planted the very first vineyard of European vines. This first “experiment” was repeated in other areas of the east coast of the United States as well where they planted many species coming from the most famed and renowned wine areas of Europe, anyway, they always got the same disappointing result: a complete failure. With no apparent reason, every time they tried to cultivate European species, the vineyards always got destroyed and it seemed almost impossible to cultivate European species in the United States. In the beginning, American viticulturists blamed themselves for not being able to cultivate vines, and as they could not explain nor understand the exact causes and remedies, after a very long series of failed attempts which did not lead to any good result, they gave up and decided to pay their attention somewhere else. Indeed, it was not viticulturists’ fault. The real causes, which remained unknown for many

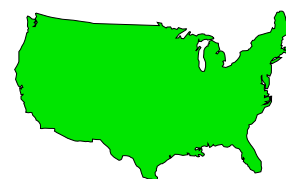


Fig. 1: The United States of America

centuries, were to be found in the American's soil which was full of true and terrible vine's devastators, diseases and parasites, the most fearful of them all was phylloxera, for which the European species had no form of defense at all and therefore they were unrelentingly destroyed by this true "flagella" that, unfortunately, two centuries later devastated most of the vineyards of Europe as well. The incredible effort of cultivating the European vine in the lands of the "New World" was also conducted by European experts that moved to the United States with this specific goal. Experts from France, Germany, Spain, Greece and Italy tried many times to cultivate the European vine, they also brought some plants from the place of their origin with them, but every attempt had the very same unsuccessful result because of the parasites and diseases that affected the European vine.

Because of the results they got in those lands, they started to invest their time and efforts in new directions and in new opportunities. The best results were achieved by crossing the indigenous American species with the European ones, a practice that gave origin to a number of hybrids still popular in all the United States of America. The first and most important result was achieved in Pennsylvania with the hybridization of a vine that was named as *Alexander* and the creation of this new hybrid started, in the beginning of the 1800, the very first enological commercial success of the United States. The results achieved with the hybridization gave new hopes to the local viticulture and set a new direction for the enology of the country, gave origin to a number of hybrids which are still very popular and cultivated in the whole country, in particular, to the states of the east coast. In Cincinnati, Ohio, were established the first wine industries of the United States, they were subsequently forced to move towards north, mainly in the area of Lake Erie, because of the diseases and the contaminations that affected the vineyards.

The beginning of the success for California as a wine producing state, started in the second half of the 1700 because of the work of some Franciscan missionaries; in this place they had, without the viticulturists of the east coast to know it at all, the very first successes in cultivating the European species. The so called "gold rush" moved lots of people towards west and with them the cultivation of vine and the production of wine as well; this event will drastically contribute to the success and to the development of wine production in California. The flourishing development of the wine industry in California and in the other states, was drastically stopped by the sadly famed "eighteenth amendment" of the constitution, which set the beginning of *prohibitionism*. The amendment was introduced in January 16, 1920 and stayed in force until December 5, 1933, for almost 14 years. This law actually forbade the production and the commercialization of any alcoholic beverage, a law which annihilated the commercial production and gave a strong boost to the home and clandestine production. The only wines to be legally allowed for production were the ones destined for the service of the Mass or for liturgical purposes, as well as the beverages that were considered as pharmaceutical remedies or tonics; one of the wines that was considered as special was the Marsala wine. When prohibitionism ended, wine industry of the United States tried to recover from the long inactivity, and during this time hundreds of new wine industries were established, however because of the period of

strong economy recession as well as of the negative influence of the prohibitionism, wine was considered as a useless luxury good and therefore it never became much popular.

The real and ultimate boost to the wine production of the United States, particularly the one of California, began in the early 1970 and the interest for wine production in the country increased even in those states of the east coast where the first experiments of the 1600 were conducted. Despite the fact wine production of the United States has now reached a level of quality equal to the one of the European wine producing countries, wine consumption has never had a relevant place in the customs and the habits of American people, maybe because of the effect of prohibitionism still present in the country and this probably denies a better and just position. Even nowadays the country has, although in different ways but still having the very same prejudicial and precautionary forms, disapproving behaviors towards the consumption of wine. The most famous and evident one is the imposition for producers to write in wine labels a warning which reminds consumers about the risks for health as a consequence of wine consumption.

The American Quality System

The definition and the introduction of a quality system for wine production in the United States of America is a relatively recent matter. The process of definition of rules in order to safeguard of quality production of wine, began in 1978 and the regulation of the system was entrusted to *BATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms)* which gave origin to a system called *AVA, American Viticultural Areas*. Compared to other legal quality systems, such as the French AOC or the Italian DOC, the American AVA is more lax, generic and permissive; the main factor guaranteed by the system is the area of origin of a wine. The most criticized aspect of the American quality system is that, in regard to other appellation systems, it does not give any indication or guideline about wine making practices, such as the permitted grapes varieties, the maximum yield permitted and other kind of indications usually found in other quality systems regulations, such as the ones in use in some European countries. It seems that quality and safeguarding of products is completely dependent on producers' discretion and initiative, indeed, they can legally use any wine making practice or technique and any kind of grape they wish, provided it was cultivated in an area designated as AVA.

The current number of AVAs recognized by the American quality system is a little more than 140 and they define production areas spread in many states. The system, besides defining proper and specific viticultural areas, also defines and introduces other generic denominations as follows:

- **American or United States** - defines varietal wines, which are produced with a single grape species, as well as assembled wines, which are produced by mixing more kind of wines, whose origin can be from any place of the country. These wines cannot have the year of the vintage written in the label
- **Multi-State Appellation** - defines a wine whose composition is made of wines from two or three bordering states. The percentage of every wine coming from a specific state must be indicated in the label

- **State Appellation** - defines a wine produced in a specific state and that was produced with at least 75% of the grapes cultivated in the appellation state, the rest of the grapes can be from any other state
- **Multi-County Appellation** - defines a wine produced with wines coming from two or three bordering counties. The percentage of every wine coming from a specific county must be indicated in the label
- **County Appellation** - defines a wine produced in a specific county and that was produced with at least 75% of the grapes cultivated in the appellation county, the rest of the grapes can be from any other county

Any wine produced in a specific area designated as AVA, must have at least the 85% of the grapes used from the designated area, whereas varietal wines, that is wines produced with a single grape variety and whose indication must be written in the label, must be produced with at least the 75% of the named grape, however it should be noticed that in Oregon this value has been increased to 90% with the exception of Cabernet Sauvignon grape that can be at least 75%, as usual. In case the year of vintage is indicated in the label, at least 95% of the wine must be of the named year.

Every label of wine produced or imported to the United States must have a warning that should advise consumers about any potential risk for health in consequence of alcohol consumption. The disastrous effects for health, not because of moderate consumption of alcohol, but for the abuse of alcohol, which is evidently not the same, are well known in every country of the world. However this warning, that could be considered as a real and true deterrent, does not say it is the abuse of alcohol which is cause of indisputable and serious health problems, indeed, it simply says alcohol consumption can be cause of potential health problems, this could make one think that even a single sip of wine could be cause of devastating health problems. What is advised in American wine labels actually seems to be in perfect opposition with what the many and modern scientific researches, conducted everywhere in the world, say about the evident and beneficial effects a moderate consumption of wine can have on health. American wine labels also say wine contains sulfites, and this is true, of course, as sulfites are naturally produced during alcoholic fermentation and sometimes they are added to wine during the making process, but it should be also reminded that the quantity of sulfites contained in wine are far lesser than the quantity of sulfites the food industry deliberately adds to the foods we eat every day.

Production Areas

The United States of America are, according to the year, the fourth or the fifth wine producer of the world. The most important state concerning wine production is California which produces more than 90% of the total country's production. Besides California, in the west coast of the United States there are other wine producing states which proved to have, in recent times, good vocation for the production of quality wine, in particular, Oregon and Washington. In the east coast of the country we have a different condition where indigenous grapes and hybrid varieties are cultivated the most and the wine made with these grapes is added with sugar at the end of the making

process. However the east coast is rich of nice "surprises" and in many states they make wine from European species as well, in particular the states of New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Despite the fact the United States of America are by now considered among the most important wine producing countries of the world, domestic wine consumption is not that high like the one of other European countries. Other beverages and, last but not the least, the many prejudices on wine and alcoholic beverages, still strong in the whole country, does not allow the nectar of Bacchus to have a better and proper consideration among the preferences of the people. If we consider the most important state for wine production of the country, California, the average yearly wine consumption per capita is less than 10 liters (about 2.64 gallons) whereas in France or in Italy, the European countries where the wine consumption is the highest in the world, the yearly consumption per capita is more than 50 liters. (about 13.2 gallons)

European grape varieties cultivated in the United States include the so called "international" varieties, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, however, in recent times, many Italian species have been introduced in the country as well such as Sangiovese, Nebbiolo and Barbera. A special mention goes to a red berried species, considered as local, Zinfandel, whose origins are not certain: some researches conducted on its DNA would show that this grape actually is the Primitivo, a species cultivated in Apulia, Italy, whereas other researches would show this grape is Plavac Mali, a grape cultivated in Dalmatia. The only certain thing is that this grape was imported from Europe but it is now so well established in the the United States, mainly in California, which is considered as a local grape.

California

California is by far the most renowned and important state of the country for wine production and here the production is more than 90% of total wine production of the United States. The quality of Californian wines is by now considered as excellent and this is mainly because of the drastic, but necessary, changes Californian producers introduced in the local enology in the beginning of the 1980, as a natural consequence of the changes introduced in the first years of the 1960. The most cultivated white grapes cultivated in California are Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling, whereas the main red varieties include Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sangiovese, Syrah and Zinfandel.

Among the production areas of California, the most important and renowned ones are Napa Valley, Mendocino, Sonoma and Carneros. Napa Valley, the most famed and renowned wine area of California, is located, like the other areas we just cited, north from San Francisco. The most cultivated grape in this area is Chardonnay followed by Cabernet Sauvignon, which are used to produce excellent wines, probably the most representative ones of Napa Valley. Wines produced with Zinfandel grape are interesting as well, and good and interesting examples are also produced with Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc. Napa Valley's enology is particularly known for the usage they make of wood both for fermenting wines, including white wines, and for refining wines; this is a sure sign of the successful cooperage industry of the area.

The area of Sonoma, after having suffered the prestige and notoriety of Napa Valley, which is not far to the east, has been successful in getting more and more renowned thanks to its high quality production, in particular with wines produced with Chardonnay, however here we also find excellent wines produced with Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel. Good examples of Cabernet Sauvignon are produced in the Alexander Valley as well, whereas the areas of Russian River Valley and Green Valley are particularly suited for Pinot Noir. Another interesting Californian area is Carneros, located at few kilometers north from San Francisco, thanks to its particular climatic conditions, also favored by the vicinity of San Pablo Bay, here we have, besides sunny days, beneficial streams of cool air and fog, factors that allow the grape to slowly mature and develop elegant aromas. The main grape cultivated in this area is the Chardonnay followed by the Pinot Noir, a combination of grapes that, besides producing interesting white and red wines themselves, allow the production of quality sparkling wines, a condition also favored by the particular and cool climate conditions.

Mendocino and Lake County areas, north from Sonoma and Napa Valley, produce interesting examples of wines made of Chardonnay as well as Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer and Riesling. In these areas are also produced interesting wines made of Zinfandel and Petite Syrah as well as sparkling wines of excellent quality. Other interesting wine areas of California include Sierra Foothills, Livermore Valley, Monterey County, Carmel Valley and Paso Robles.

Oregon

The state of Oregon, located north from California, has a wine production far less than the one of California, just like any other American state, however here are produced the most interesting wines made from Pinot Noir of all the United States of America. Oregon's climate conditions are cooler than the neighboring California and are well suited for Pinot Noir, the most representative grape of Oregon. The most cultivated white grapes in this state are Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and Riesling, whereas, like we said already, Pinot Noir is the most cultivated red grape.

The most interesting area of Oregon is certainly Willamette where, thanks to its climate conditions, cooler than in any other place in the state, excellent examples of wines made of Pinot Noir grape are produced, and they are often compared for their quality to the ones produced in Bourgogne. Other interesting areas are Umpqua Valley, Rouge Valley, Columbia Valley and Walla Walla.

Wine production laws in Oregon are slightly different from the rest of the other states. Mono varietal wines where the grape is named in the label, must contain at least 90% of the named variety instead of 75%. Wines produced with Cabernet Sauvignon are an exception to this because they can have the very same percentage as determined in other states, that is 75%. In case a wine has indicated in the label the name of the place or area of origin, the wine must be entirely produced in the named area.

Washington

This state is progressively getting better and better results with its wines produced with Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, and it is by now considered among the most important wine producing states of the United States of America. Wine areas of Washington, which is located north from Oregon, are all located in the eastern side, warmer than the western side and does not suffer from rains. The most important white grapes cultivated in this state are Chardonnay, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc, whereas among red varieties we find Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot which actually represent the most important production of the state. The most important wine area of Washington is Yakima Valley, followed by Columbia Valley and Walla Walla, which is actually an area belonging both to Washington and Oregon state.

New York

The state of New York, located in the east coast of the United State, produces excellent wines from European species and recently it is getting more and more famed among the most interesting wine producing states of the country. In this state the production is divided between wines produced with European species and wines produced with hybrids and local varieties, a custom which is widely spread in every wine producing state of the east coast. Among the most important hybrids varieties of the state we find the white berried Cayuga, Niagara, Seyval Blanc, Vidal Blanc and Vignoles, whereas red varieties include Baco Noir, Catawba and Concord. The white hybrids varieties are mainly used to produce sweet dessert wines, whereas Vidal Blanc and Vignoles are used to produce interesting examples of "ice wines". European white grape species cultivated in the state of New York include Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer and Riesling, whereas Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are the most cultivated European red grapes.

The most important wine areas of the state are Hudson River Valley, Finger Lakes, Long Island and Lake Erie, this latter area is shared with the states of Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Texas

Texas is one of the emerging states of the American enology and has a very ancient tradition about wine making; the first attempts to cultivate the vine in this state are dated back to about the second half of the 1600 and they were conducted by some Franciscan missionaries. Recently the attention of the Texan enology has been focused on European species, with interesting results, in particular on the so called "international" grapes and which are the most cultivated European species in the United States of America. The main white species cultivated in Texas include Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and, in a lesser extent, Riesling. Among red species we find Cabernet Sauvignon and, in lesser quantities, Merlot.

Climate conditions of Texas force viticulturists to harvest the grapes in advance, usually at the end of July, two months in advance before the harvest takes place in California. The main wine areas of Texas are High Plains, located to the north of the state, Trans-Pecos and Texas Hill Country, both located to the south side.

Virginia

The state of Virginia can be considered as the precursor of the enology in the United States of America. In this state were conducted the very first experiments about vine cultivation, with the specific purpose of making wines, in the beginning of the 1600. At the end of the 1800, Virginia was the most important wine producing state of the nation, the flourishing wine industry was subsequently annihilated by prohibitionism, and only in the beginning of the 1970 the local producers started investing on quality production again. Currently, the production of wine is mainly focused on Chardonnay, the grape which is capable of giving the most interesting wines of Virginia. In this state are also produced wines with local varieties and hybrids, just like in the other states of the east coast. Among the most cultivated white hybrids in this state we have Seyval Blanc, Vidal Blanc, whereas Norton and Chambourcin are the red hybrids most cultivated here. European species cultivated in Virginia are practically the same cultivated in the other states: Chardonnay, Riesling and, in lesser quantities, Viognier for white species, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Barbera for red species.

The most important wine production areas of Virginia are Eastern Shore, Shenandoah Valley, Northern Neck, North Fork of Roanoke, Rocky Knob and Monticello.

Other Production Areas

Almost every state of the country produces wine, however there are some which deserve a better attention instead of others. Arizona certainly is one of them and here they make excellent examples of wines produced with Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc as well as other wines which resemble the style of the French's Rhône Valley. In Missouri are produced good wines with the Norton grape, a red berried American hybrid. Among the states which deserve a particular attention we also have Pennsylvania where interesting wines produced with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are made. The very same grapes are also capable of giving interesting wines in Rhode Island, where the Gewürztraminer is cultivated as well. Lastly, a special mention goes to Ohio where in the north side of the state, particularly in the Lake Erie area, good and interesting examples of wines are produced with Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Riesling.

WINE TASTING

Wine's Appearance Evaluation

This month we will start making friends with wine and to understand its many aspects. This evaluation reveals the charm of its face and this is what we look at before meeting the soul of wine.

As the wine has been poured in the glass, the time to begin its evaluation has finally come. The analysis of wine is a process made of different and specific phases and the first one is about its appearance. Wine's appearance evaluation is, per-

haps, the evaluation phase that takes little time if compared to others, and it probably is the phase where one pays the least attention, this is probably because it is considered as an examination having little importance. Indeed the evaluation of wine's appearance can reveal interesting aspects of a wine, it does not just allow to determine the typology of wine being examined and its relative correspondence, it allows the taster to determine a preliminary analysis about the grapes used to make it and about the wine making techniques used to produce that particular wine. Moreover, wine's appearance evaluation can also show some and possible defects and faults as well as determining their causes, last but not the least, it can tell about wine's age, even though in a quite approximate way, as well as about the overall state and development.

As the evaluation of the appearance is the first analysis conducted on wine tasting, that is the phase that allows us to "make friends" with wine, it is essential to pay the proper attention to this in order to prepare the taster to have the right predisposition and concentration for the following phases. It should also be noticed that wine's appearance, that is the result of this evaluation, can negatively or positively influence the taster's predisposition towards the wine itself: a wine which is considered to have a bad appearance, or anyway not having those characteristics that would meet taster's expectations, negatively predispose the taster to all the others phases, in a sense, this is what happens when one sees something aesthetically pleasant and as a consequence of this psychological gratification, it will be positively influenced and predisposed. However, a professional taster must not be influenced by what he or she sees, at least not completely, he or she must consider the appearance evaluation as a necessary phase in order to express an objective and honest response. In order to make things clearer, we can give an example that could better explain what could happen during the evaluation of a red wine's appearance. Usually, an average wine consumer would expect the color of a red wine to be pretty dark and dense and its transparency to be low, indeed, it should be considered that not every grape is capable of giving full colored wines as well as giving wines having different levels of transparency: this does not mean, of course, that light colored and transparent wines are of lower or bad quality, this simply means that they belong to a determined and specific category. Lastly, it should be reminded that it is not a suit that makes a person elegant and refined, at least, not all the times.

How to evaluate wine's appearance

Before starting to set the proper and right conditions for properly evaluating wine's appearance, let's understand what we are expecting to find out in this analysis. Just like the other analysis achieved during a wine's organoleptic evaluation, the goal of the evaluation of the appearance is to determine wine aspect's quality as well as the correspondence with the typology the wine belongs to. Moreover, the appearance of a wine can tell a lot about other aspects as well, usually confirmed by other evaluations, such as consistency and body, or structure. Wine's appearance evaluation has the purpose of determining wine's "aesthetical" characteristics by means of the analysis of limpidity, transparency, fluidity and color. In case of sparkling or lightly sparkling wines, the evaluation of the foam will be done as well and, in this particular case, the evaluation of

fluidity will be omitted.

One of the main factors that allow a proper wine's appearance evaluation is how the environment is illuminated. For this purpose are to be avoided rooms and places scarcely illuminated or dim-lighted, such as a cellar. A scarce illumination would not allow, as it can be obviously thought, a proper, efficient and reliable evaluation of wine's appearance, and this is particularly true for color. The room or environment where the wine's appearance evaluation is being achieved, that is the place where the whole evaluation will take place, must have a proper illumination and this means there must be plenty of light and a good illumination. Indeed, the problem of illumination is more complex than how it can seem. Light has the property, besides of illuminating, of altering and influencing the colors of the surface where it is being reflected to, as well as of gas or liquid masses, such as wine, for example. Perhaps the best light one may instinctively think of and that could be considered as ideal would be the one of the sun. Indeed, even using this kind of light could be cause of some problems. Let's consider the sunlight in a perfect clear day and the light of a cloudy day: it is evident both lights, even though they are both natural, are different and make colors appear differently. Moreover, there are other evident differences between the morning light and the afternoon light, this is even more evident is we consider the twilight. Unfortunately geographical conditions influence the quality of natural light as well: it is said that the light of the northern hemisphere is more suffused than the one of the southern hemisphere.

Artificial light could be a valid and good alternative, however, it has disadvantages and drawbacks anyway. A candlelight, often associated to the many situations where wine is involved, is scarcely useful for this purpose: it is not enough strong and scarcely diffused. Other alternatives concerning artificial lights could be fluorescent light and incandescence light. Fluorescent lights will make white wine's color appear more yellow than it really is, whereas they will make red wine's color appear less red than it really is. The same is also true for incandescence light, however this effect is less evident and less pronounced. Talking about color's alteration by means of light, natural light of a cloudy day will make white wines appear more yellow and red wines less intense. By observing a red wine through the blue light of a perfect clear and sunny day, the wine will improperly appear with some brownish hues in its color. The best solution, although not perfect, as every light has the property of altering colors anyway, is to make use of a "sunlight" or "artist's" incandescence light, that is that lamp whose bulb is blue and that "simulates" natural sunlight or, as a last resort, an incandescence light having a clear, transparent and colorless bulb.

Another fundamental factor is played by the environment's color where the wine's evaluation is done. Experiments conducted on color's influence in taste, showed that certain colors favor or give the illusion of perceiving determined and specific flavors. For example, green can make a wine taste more acid, blue accentuates bitter flavors, red usually has the property of making a wine more pleasant and agreeable. The best solution would be to achieve the wine's evaluation in proper booths which isolates the taster from external factors; a condition possible only in laboratory tests and in some wine contests. A good trick that will allow a reliable and proper analysis

of the wine's appearance is to have a white surface to be used to contrast the wine contained in the glass. A white sheet of paper can also be used for this purpose and it will be put on the table where the wine's evaluation is to be achieved. This white surface will allow light to be reflected without being altered and will allow a proper evaluation of the majority of wine's appearance factors.

The evaluation of wine's appearance begins by evaluating the limpidity, or clarity, of wine, then its transparency, color and finally its fluidity or viscosity. In case a sparkling or lightly sparkling wine is being evaluated, this latter analysis will not be achieved and the evaluation of effervescence and foam will be achieved instead. In the course of the single phases of the analysis, particular attention will be paid to any possible presence of faults and defects; this would be a sure sign the wine has been altered by some negative conditions and this will surely have a direct influence on the other organoleptic qualities of wine.

The wine's appearance analysis is divided into three different phases, in particular, the wine will be observed in three different positions, each one of them will allow to determine specific characteristics of the wine. The glass will be put on the table and, by contrasting it with a white surface, such as a sheet of paper, the content of the glass will be observed from the top by looking straight to the liquid's surface: it must appear brilliant, smooth and reflective, just like a mirror. In case the surface will appear opaque or faded, this could be a sign of the presence of defects and faults which developed during wine's bottle storage. In this phase limpidity, intensity and hue of color, any possible trace of carbon dioxide in the surface and in the bottom of the glass as well as the presence of any possible sediment will be examined as well. After that, the glass will be taken with the hand, always held by the base, and it will be tilted in order to allow the wine to reach the edge of the glass (see figure 2) and the content of the glass will be observed by contrasting it to a white surface. During this phase the color of wine being in the bottom of the glass will be examined, that is the point where the wine mass has a bigger thickness. This evaluation will allow the determination of the main tint of wine as well as its intensity. Therefore the wine will be observed in proximity of the edge of the mass, this part is usually called as "rim", in order to determine, because of the lesser thickness, shades and nuances of the color. During this phase limpidity and transparency will be evaluated as well. Finally, the glass will be held in vertical position and, still holding it by the base, it will be raised to eye level and the surface, and its proximity, will be examined in order to find any trace of carbon dioxide and, lastly, the glass will be swirled in order to evaluate fluidity or viscosity.

Limpidity

Limpidity is the property a wine in good conditions must always have. A limpid wine is a wine that has no extraneous suspended particles and this property must not be confused with transparency. The evaluation of limpidity is done by observing the wine in the glass directly through a light source. This simple operation will show any suspended particle in the wine, and in this case, the wine cannot be considered as limpid. A wine which does not have any extraneous and visible sus-

pended particle will be defined as limpid, whereas a wine that besides being limpid also seems to emit light as to make it appear as exceptionally limpid, will be defined as crystalline.

Every trace or clue of suspended particles should make ponder the taster about wine's good health. Thanks to modern wine making technologies, it is highly improbable that a wine would not appear as limpid, however the presence of suspended particles that would make the wine appear turbid, and in this particular case the wine will be considered as "cloudy", a factor that would signal flaws or defects in the wine possibly developed in the bottle during storage. One of the causes that may be origin of "cloudiness" in a wine include a secondary fermentation in bottle, flocculation or the alteration of some wine's components and that make the wine appear as turbid. However there are cases where the presence of suspended particles are not a sign of a defective wine. Let's consider a wine aged for a long time, a red or port wine, which stayed in the bottle for a number of years and developed a natural sediment and, at the time of being served, it would have not been properly decanted: in this case the presence of particles is not a sign of defects or faults in the wine. Some of the causes that make a wine turbid or cloudy include: excessive contact with the air for a wine not properly stabilized, excessive and sudden temperature changes between cold and warm, prolonged exposure to light, non sterile bottle, presence of traces of copper or iron, coloring substances or unstable tannins, bacteriological or microbiological infections, presence of yeast's residuals or proteins.

Transparency

Transparency, which is not to be confused with limpidity, is the property that allows light to pass through the wine. This characteristic is directly connected to the quantity of coloring substances dissolved in wine, therefore we could have a perfectly limpid wine having little transparency. The examination of transparency is achieved by observing the content of the glass by directly exposing it to a light source, the same as for limpidity. As the wine is in contrast with light, a pencil or a finger can be put between the glass and the light source. The easiness an object will be seen through the wine will determine the level of transparency in a wine. Another method that can be used to evaluate transparency is to tilt the glass on a sheet of written paper: a transparent wine will allow to read the content of the sheet. However, it should be noticed a turbid wine, that is not limpid, will also be not much transparent and this is the only factor that could connect transparency to limpidity. Suspended particles in a wine will obstruct the passage of light and will make the wine appear not transparent.

Transparency is a characteristic always present in white wines in good conditions, whereas it can have variable characteristics in red wines. In this specific case, transparency can vary according to the kind of grapes used to make that specific wine, there are grapes more or less rich in coloring substances, as well as of the wine making techniques used, in particular the time the grape's skins, rich in coloring substances, have been macerated in the must. Red wines can be transparent as well as "impenetrable" to light. Transparency in red wines is also an indicator for body and structure. A red transparent wine will indicate a very low quantity of solid substances, particu-

larly coloring substances, whereas an impenetrable to light, indicates a very high quantity of colorants and solid substances. This factor will also be useful in the preliminary determination of the structure of a wine that will be subsequently confirmed by the gustatory analysis.

Fluidity

This aspect of wine, that is also defined as "viscosity" or "consistency", is the characteristic that, more than any other else, divides the opinions of tasters and producers, and it has been, and it probably still is, origin of confusion. Often it is heard that fluidity is directly connected to wine's structure, in particular to the quantity of glycerine contained in a wine, indeed, researches showed that this component is not responsible with what is considered as a factor of fluidity. The evaluation is achieved by swirling the glass in order to have the wine to wet the inner sides of the glass. After a variable quantity of time has passed, from one to more seconds, colorless "tears" will be noticed to flow down along the side of the glass to the surface of the wine. This phenomenon is also called as "legs"; the development of these tears is directly connected to the quantity of alcohol contained in the wine: the more the alcohol, the more, abundant and tight the tears will be.

This phenomenon is caused by the so called "Marangoni effect". Alcohol has a greater volatility than water and in the upper side of the glass and in the surface, a thin layer of liquid having a lesser quantity of alcohol is formed and therefore it has a greater surface tension. Because of the effect of capillarity, this liquid tends to flow up along the sides of the glass and by doing so, the surface tension increases and as a consequence, colorless tears will be formed and they will flow down along the sides: this will form the so called "legs". This phenomenon has been cause of a lot of confusion on this subject, for many the formation of tears is just a sign of a "fatty wine" because of the quantity of glycerine contained in it. Even worse, many believe that "tears" in a wine are an indisputable sign of quality.

Effervescence and Foam

The analysis of effervescence and foam is achieved for lightly sparkling and sparkling wines only. Effervescence in a wine is produced by the presence of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and according to the quantity dissolved in the wine, it will produce different effects. However it is necessary to remind that carbon dioxide is naturally produced during fermentation and therefore is present in the majority of wines, even though the quantity is not evidently perceivable in wine's appearance or taste. The presence of abundant carbon dioxide in a still wine is a sign of some defects and faults, such as an unwanted secondary fermentation in the bottle. Sometimes can be noticed in the bottom of a glass, some tiny bubbles of carbon dioxide in still wines; this is not to be considered as a defect or a flaw, in particular for white wines, rose wines and young red wines, because this gas, once again, is naturally produced during alcoholic fermentation. The presence of bubble of carbon dioxide in the bottom of glasses is however a non appreciable factor in wines which have been aged in bottle for a long time.

The presence of carbon dioxide, therefore of effervescence and foam, is a wanted characteristic for lightly sparkling wines and sparkling wines. The evaluation of foam begins as the wine has been poured in the glass. The quantity and quality of foam in a wine are dependent on many factors, in particular to the quantity of colloid substances dissolved in wine, the wine making technique used to make it, the temperature and the quantity of time the wine was in contact with yeasts. In particular, sparkling wines produced with rapid fermentation techniques, such as the "Charmat method" or "Martinotti method", the foam will tend to disappear more rapidly than in wines produced with the "classic method". Moreover, foam tends to disappear more rapidly in dirty glasses or glasses which have traces of soap. Foam in a sparkling wine should not be very thick or very creamy, as well as not being like the one of beer, if must be fine and dry, it will disappear in few seconds leaving a slight ring on the surface of wine in correspondence to the side of the glass. Moreover, a little quantity of foam will naturally form in the surface and in correspondence of the points where the carbon dioxide is freed.

Effervescence is evaluated according to the development of bubbles of carbon dioxide flowing up to the surface. It should be noticed that using an ISO tasting glass can drastically alter the evaluation of this aspect because its wide surface will favor a rapid dispersion of carbon dioxide, provided the glass has been properly modified, that is a tiny emery point has been created in the bottom of the glass. The first aspect to be evaluated in the effervescence will be the quantity of bubbles that develop from the bottom of the glass as well as their dimension: lesser the dimension of bubbles, better the quality of wine will be as well as the production techniques. Bubbles of the best sparkling wines have a dimension as thin as a pin-point, in coarse and lower quality sparkling wines, this dimension can be as big as one millimeter, more or less the dimension of bubbles in a sparkling water. Another factor which is a sign of quality is the persistence of effervescence, that is the time which passes before the "perlage", that is the continuous chain of tiny bubbles flowing up to the surface, disappears. The longer this time, the higher the quality of the sparkling wine: this indicates carbon dioxide is released in little quantities and it also indicates the usage of a production process of high quality.

Color

A wine having a pleasant color positively and pleasantly predisposes the taster to its agreeability, last but not the least, pleases the taster while he or she looks at it. The color a wine, just like the aspect of things in general, has the capacity of influencing the judgment of a wine and, most of the times, negatively or positively predisposes to its evaluation. A wine having a least attractive aspect will predispose the taster to notice the negative aspects of a wine, sometimes in a prejudicial way, a wine having a pleasing aspect will predisposes the taster to exalt its positive characteristics and he or she will spend less time in noticing defects and faults. This premise, which could make one thinks about a possible "danger" dependent on color's evaluation, should warn the taster so that he or she will remember not to allow the color influence too much his or her judgment about positive or negative factors. Some re-

searches showed a direct connection between color perception and flavors. It was noticed that a green color can make a wine taste more acid than it really is, blue accentuates bitter flavors, whereas red generally has the property of making a wine more agreeable. By assuming a wine is being evaluated in a proper room, an environment which does not have factors and colors that could disturb the process of analysis, we should pay our attention to the fact that we can be conditioned by the red color, such as, for example, the one of red wines. If it is true that red color generally make a wine more agreeable, every time a red wine having a pleasing color is being tasted, it may happen that the judgment would be less reliable and it may also happen that judgment could be expressed in an exaggerated positive way; the wine could have been judged better than it is in reality. What we said so far has the sole purpose of warning the taster about the easy conditioning a color can play on the result: a good taster is the one that after having evaluated a specific aspect of a wine, goes on to the next phase without being influenced or conditioned in order not to compromise the objectivity and reliability of the analysis. One solution to this problem would be to taste a wine by hiding the content of the glass in order not to see the color of the wine. Unfortunately this is not a good solution and it is logically wrong because color has a fundamental importance during the evaluation of wine's appearance.

The evaluation of wine's color represents a phase of primary importance because it can give important indications about the typology of the wine as well as its characteristics. The first and more evident information that can be obtained by observing the color is the typology of wine; a fundamental characteristic that will allow to determine the correspondence and the quality of the next analysis according to the typology, such as gustatory balance, a concept which varies according to the typology of wine being evaluated. As we will see in the next paragraphs, color also allows to determine, most of the times with a good level of approximation, the age of a wine, as well as the typology of grape used to make it. Every grape has a quantity of colorant substances different from the others and, therefore, a wine produced with, for example, Pinot Noir will show a lighter color and a higher transparency than a wine produced with Sangiovese. During the aging process, color in a wine evolves in a way more or less known and this characteristic will allow, as we will see later, to determine the age of a wine. Lastly, color will also allow to notice any possible presence of defects or diseases, a condition that could also determine the interruption of the organoleptic analysis of a wine.

Before illustrating the methods used to evaluate the color of a wine, let's understand the reason why wines have different colors and, especially, the reason why a certain wine has a particular color. Wine is produced by alcoholic fermentation of must which is produced by pressing grape's berries. The color of grape juice, no matter the variety or species, has always the same color, more or less a gray-greenish color. The part of the grape which is rich in colorant substances is the skin that, by means of maceration, passes this substances to the must with the effect of coloring it. The coloration of must depends on many factors, first of all the quantity of the colorants contained in the skins, the quantity of time the skins are being macerated in the must as well as the temperature of the must during the maceration. Moreover the color of wine can also be determ-

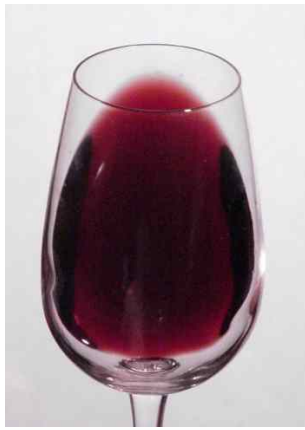


Fig. 2: The color of a red wine in a tilted glass

ined by the area of production and by the kind of soil in which the grape was cultivated, the cultural techniques, by the effects of some wine making techniques done to the fermented must in order to stabilize it or refine it as well as because of filtering. The next paragraphs, expressly dedicated to the specific typologies of wine, will explain in detail the origin of color for each one of them and how color evolves with time.

The color of a wine is evaluated by observing it from two different positions. The color's tint and intensity are evaluated by observing the surface of the wine from the top as well as holding the glass tilted; in this specific position the nuances and shades of color will be evaluated as well. (figure 2) The definition of the color's characteristics is expressed by means of terms which can tell, in the best explicit way possible, all of its qualities. As an example, let's suppose we are about to evaluate the color of a red wine and we defined that color as "*deep ruby red with nuances of garnet red*". The color "*ruby red*" represents the tint, "*deep*" is referred to intensity, whereas "*garnet red*" is the color's nuance. As another example, this time using a white wine, we could define this wine's color as "*dark golden yellow with shades of straw yellow*". In this case "*golden yellow*" is the tint of the color, "*dark*" is the intensity and "*straw yellow*" represents the color's shade. Terms used to indicate tints of colors as well as its shades or nuances are being illustrated in the next paragraphs according to every wine's typology, whereas the most frequently used terms to define color's intensity, no matter the typology are: *opaque, full, light, dark, deep, dense, concentrated, impenetrable, vivid, bright, brilliant, intense, soft*.

White Wines

Color in white wines is, in many aspects, still full of mysteries. First of all the contradiction of its definition: we call "white wine" what in reality is, as anyone can easily see, a yellow liquid. Another mystery about white wines is, in regard to some of its aspects, the origin of its color. The most common theory is that white wine's color originates from certain phenolic components, known as "flavones", which have a yellow color, as well as from chlorophyll, which is evidently green. These components are contained in the skins of grape as well as in pips, anyway, the mystery still remains as many white wines are produced without even macerating grape's skins in

the must, a factor that would make anyone think about the production of colorless wines, this would be, of course, impossible and it is evidently untrue as white wines have a color anyway. However, we have more information about how the color in white wines evolves with time. Its color tends to get darker with time, both for the effect of oxidation and because of the polymerization of its components. Young white wines usually show, in variable quantities, yellow colors with nuances of green, more or less evident. As the time passes by, the green component tends to disappear and the yellow color will get darker, a color which resembles the one of straw, and therefore it gets even darker by assuming a golden yellow color and finally amber colors.

Full ripe grapes usually produce white wines with tints of straw yellow, whereas the ones produced with less ripe grapes will give wines where the green color will be more evident. Another component that influences the color in white wines is the refinement in cask. When a white wine is fermented or refined in a cask, its colors will usually be more dense and intense, a color between straw yellow and golden yellow. White wines having light colors, almost colorless, with rare exceptions, are usually produced with very vigorous and stressful techniques and they usually are the result of a drastic filtration process. Also consider that white wines produced in warm areas usually have darker colors and intensity more deep than the ones produced in cool areas: this is an indicator that could tell, even though in an approximate way, the area of origin of a wine as well as the climatic conditions of the year.

Rose Wines

Color in rose wines mainly depends on the must being in contact with the skins during the maceration process and, even though this is done in shorter times, this is a characteristic we also find in red wines. Causes which determine the color in rose wines are the same of red wines, even though the process does not last as much as in red wines, colorant substances contained in the grape's skins are responsible for the color in these wines. We will see later, in the paragraph dedicated to red wines, how this process takes place.

Rose wines are usually drunk when they are young, therefore the color does not usually have a direct connection with age, excepting in particular cases. Color in rose wines is mainly an indicator of the typology of grape used for its production as well as the quantity of time the skins have been in contact with the must. However, when a rose wine shows brownish colors, more or less evident, this is usually a sign of oxidation, an improper storage, or it can also be a rose wine which has passed its best condition of agreeability, that is, the wine has got too old. Determining a color scale for rose wines is pretty hard as the variety of colors that can be observed is amazingly wide and rich, despite the fact these wines are unjustly considered as being not really interesting and considered as lesser wines. Colors found in rose wines usually range from soft or light pink, orange-pink, pink, salmon pink, onion's skin, light or soft red. The presence of brownish nuances are always to be considered as negative factors.

Red Wines

Color in red wines is determined by particular chemical pigmented components, known as phenolic compounds, which are contained in the skins of the grape's berries, where the main groups are formed by anthocyanins and tannins. These components are being extracted from the skins during the maceration in the must, both for the effect of water and of alcohol, as well as for the effect of temperature. The quantity of these components, which directly determine the color characteristics of a wine, varies according to the grape's species, its ripeness and the quantity of time for maceration. The color of anthocyanins is purple whereas tannins usually have orange, amber and yellow colors. A young wine contains both anthocyanins and tannins and it is because of the presence of anthocyanins that its color appears to be purple-violet red. With time the molecules of tannins tend to polymerize, that is they aggregate and form bigger and insoluble components, therefore precipitate and become part of the sediment sometimes found in red wines aged for a long time. The two kinds of phenolic compounds have different time of polymerization and this process is more rapid in anthocyanins that, by polymerizing, tend to diminish their coloring effect by leaving the other tannins to reveal better. This is the reason why a young wine, having a purple-red color, gets a ruby red color in a relatively short time. The polymerization process continues for tannins as well, even though with a slower pace, and make the color turn from ruby red to garnet red and finally to orange-red or brick red. The velocity at which the polymerization of the phenolic compounds takes place varies according to the species of the grape, the area of origin and the year of vintage.

Speaking in general terms, we usually are more exacting in the color of red wines than in the color of white wines. We usually expect the color of a red wine to be dense, dark and impenetrable because we usually expect a wine having such color will also have rich and exceptional flavors and tastes. However it should be noticed that a red wine having a light color and being very transparent can indicate a very high yield, a grape not fully ripe, a very rainy year or the usage of an improper, drastic or energetic wine making process as well as an improper maceration. We also have to remind that every grape typology has different quantities of colorant substances and, therefore, not all wines can have dense and dark colors. Moreover, the intensity and the richness of color in a red wine is not always a sign of quality or of richness in flavors. There are conditions where an excessive extraction of colorant substances from certain grape varieties, in order to produce a wine having a deeper color, can indeed produce a wine having coarse and ordinary organoleptic characteristic as well as having an excessive astringency.

Passito, Sweet and Fortified Wines

Determining and defining the possible colors in passito and fortified wines is pretty complicated; the richness in colors, the many nuances and tints always give every wine its own color personality, practically every wine is different from another. However the colors most frequently found in these wines, produced with white grapes, vary from golden yellow to deep amber yellow, sometimes assuming mahogany colors, whereas the ones produced with red grapes, can usually have colors from ruby red to brick red, sometimes mahogany. The evol-

ution of the color in these wines is based on the same causes known for white wines and red wines, according to the typology of grape used for the production. However it should be noticed that in some fortified wines, as well as in some passito wines, a variable quantity of concentrated must or cooked must can be added and this inevitably turn the color into darker and deeper tints. Oxidation processes, a wanted and essential condition for many wines, such as Jerez (Sherry) and Marsala, also influence and alter the color of a wine.

Wines of the Month

Score legend

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

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



Comte de M 1998 Chateau Kefraya (Lebanon)

Grapes: Cabernet Sauvignon (65%), Syrah (35%)

Price: € 25,51 (\$ 25,00)

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine has an enchanting and intense ruby red color with nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency. In the nose denotes, from the very beginning, a refined and elegant personality, clean and with well defined aromas and well perceivable. The bouquet has intense and agreeable aromas of fruit such as black cherry, plum jam and black-currant jam in a perfect balance with aromas of toasted wood and vanilla, followed by good aromas of leather, cocoa, menthol, underbrush, violet and coconut. The wine also expresses a very good personality in the mouth, it is intense with flavors of fruit; alcohol is perfectly balanced by tannins as well as by its full body. The finish is persistent and elegant with nice flavors of black cherry and plum jam. A great wine, very well done that could also be rich of nice surprises with some years of refining in bottle. The wine is aged for 12 months in new barriques.

Food match: Game, Roasted meats, Braised meats, Stewed meats, Broiled meats, Hard cheese



Chateau Kefraya Rouge 1999
Chateau Kefraya (Lebanon)

Grapes: Cabernet Sauvignon (39%), Mourvedre (18%), Carignan (18%), Cinsaut (14%), Grenache (11%)

Price: € 11,94 (\$ 11.70)

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine shows a beautifully brilliant ruby red color with nuances of garnet red, little transparency. At the nose denotes a distinct and agreeable personality, mostly oriented to fruit aromas. The main aromas to be perceived are those of black cherry, cherry macerated in alcohol, strawberry jam, raspberry and blackberry. As the wine is in the mouth, a very good balance is noticed even though of a tannic attack, well balanced by the alcohol which is present in good quantity. The finish is persistent with flavors of strawberry jam and raspberry. This wine is produced by maceration in skins for 4 weeks followed by 12 months of refinement in stainless steel containers.

Food match: Hard cheese, Broiled meats, Roasted meats



Salice Salentino Rosso Riserva 1999
Leone de Castris (Italy)

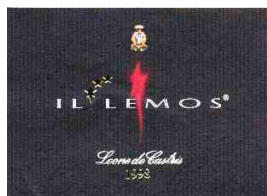
Grapes: Negroamaro (90%), Malvasia Nera di Lecce (10%)

Price: € 7,50

Score: ◇◇◇◇★

The wine has a beautiful ruby red color with nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency. The nose denotes a good richness of aromas, intense, clean and elegant. The aromas that can be perceived in this wine are of ripe cherry, black cherry jam, plum jam, blackberry, black-currant, licorice and vanilla with hints of cocoa, coffee and light aromas of tar and leather. In the mouth has a good correspondence with the nose; the attack is intense and fruity with a good balance between alcohol and tannins. The finish is persistent with pleasing flavors of blackberry and black cherry jam. This reserve wine is produced with maceration at controlled temperature followed by refinement in cask.

Food match: Roasted meats, Hard cheese, Braised meats



Il Lemos 1998
Leone de Castris (Italy)

Grapes: Primitivo (50%), Negroamaro (10%), Montepulciano (20%), Merlot (20%)

Price: € 19,50

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine shows a beautiful ruby red color with nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency. The nose is rich and intense, very clean and elegant. The main aromas that can be recognized in this wine are black cherry, plum jam, black-currant jam followed by aromas of wood, vanilla, leather, chocolate and toffee. The mouth has good elegance and personality with a good correspondence with the nose. Intense and full bodied, alcohol in good balance with tannins and with sapidity, this wine has a persistent finish with flavors of black cherry jam and plum jam. A good and well done wine. Il Lemos is aged in cask for about 18 months.

Food match: Stewed meats, Roasted meats, Hard cheese



Pierale 2001
Leone de Castris (Italy)

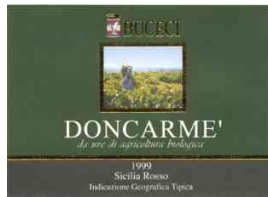
Grapes: Moscato Bianco (Muscat Blanc)

Price: € 9,50

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine shows a beautiful deep straw yellow color, very transparent. The nose has a very rich and intense series of Muscat's typical aromas as well as aromas of apricot, banana, candies, fruit candy, litchi, marzipan and peach followed by nice hints of mint. The mouth has a distinct sweet flavor and a nice roundness, well balanced, it is intense with a good correspondence with the nose. The finish is persistent with evident and pleasing flavors of litchi, peach and grape as well as a little sweet flavor. The grapes used to make Pierale are allowed to dry in the vine and the must obtained is fermented at a low temperature.

Food match: Pastry, Cream tarts, Fruit tarts



Doncarme' Rosso 1999 Buceci (Italy)

Grapes: Sangiovese (60%), Syrah (40%)

Price: € 4,40 (\$ 4,60)

Score: ◇◇

Wine's appearance has a brilliant ruby red color, moderate transparency. At the nose denotes an aromatic profile distinctively oriented to aromas of fruit where the main perceived aromas are black cherry, cherry, raspberry and plum. In the mouth has good body and good balance. The finish is pretty persistent with flavors of black cherry. This is an organic wine.

Food match: Sauteed meats, Moderately hard cheese

WINE PRODUCERS

Monte Schiavo

In the heart of Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi's area (Marches, Italy) this winery produces excellent white wines as well as surprising red wines

Talking about Marches, an enchanting region of center Italy, the Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi is surely one of the first wines that come to mind, it surely is not the only one, but among the most representative grapes and wines of the region Verdicchio surely has one of the most prominent positions. It is in the heart of the production area of this excellent wine, encircled by pleasing hilly spurs, that we find the headquarters of Monte Schiavo, a winery that produces white wines, including the famed and renowned Verdicchio, as well as red wines such as Rosso Conero, Rosso Piceno and Lacrima di Morro d'Alba.

We met the managing director of Monte Schiavo, Mr. Gianluigi Calzetta, who illustrated and introduced us to the winery: «Monte Schiavo was established in 1978 as a cooperative business because of the will of many members and the most important of them was represented by Pieralisi family. In 1995, as a consequence of some disagreement among some members, the cooperative was quit and Pieralisi family bought the winery that currently is called as "La Vite S.p.A."».

Like we said, the winery is located in the area of production and of controlled denomination of origin (DOC) of Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi and this wine, as well as the grape used to make it, represents an important aspect for Monte Schiavo, as said by Mr. Calzetta: «Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi represents 60% of our total income and it surely is the most important product for our winery. Verdicchio is one of the most ancient vines for which historical evidences can be found and when it is cultivated and processed properly, it is capable of producing extremely important products. Verdicchio is a very versatile grape which allows the production of many typologies of wine,

it is an important and robust vine and it can withstand to cold climate very well. Thanks to the grape's versatility, we produce many styles of Verdicchio and precisely Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classic, Superior, Reserve, Passito (sweet) as well as a sparkling wine made by using the Charmat method. The grapes used for the production of base Verdicchio are harvested from September 20 and the first days of October, whereas grapes for the Superior Verdicchio, reserve and late harvests, are harvested later. Passito is produced by allowing the grapes to dry in the vine, in the hope of having favorable meteorological conditions, as recently we had bad weather here.»

Monte Schiavo does not mean Verdicchio only, of course. The winery pays particular attention on local grapes as well as on the traditional products of these lands, particularly on Lacrima di Morro, a local grape that was recently reevaluated and it is widely appreciated and highly esteemed by the winery. Concerning this aspect, Mr. Calzetta illustrates the other products of Monte Schiavo: «our winery is located outside the DOC production area of Lacrima di Morro d'Alba and we are among the few wineries that produce this wine. We produce Lacrima di Morro d'Alba since a very long time, even before the area was designated and entitled as area of controlled origin. In order not to penalize the historical wineries that produced Lacrima di Morro and that are located outside of the DOC area, a special derogation has been specifically granted and therefore we can continue producing this wine. Lacrima di Morro is a very ancient grape, unfortunately it is currently not widely known. Unfortunately it is not properly reevaluated, even by producers of Marches and they usually use this grape in order to add color and aromas to a wine, and it is scarcely used by itself in order to make wine. Fortunately there are some wineries that reevaluated this grape and worked hard in order to produce wines exclusively made with this grape and this has been a striking success. Our winery, also thanks to our decennial experience in producing wine with Lacrima di Morro, is by now one of the most important producers for this wine. To be honest, we are not the only ones to be acclaimed for having reevaluated the Lacrima di Morro, the merit of this revaluation



Monte Schiavo's cellar for bottle refinement

also goes to Mancinelli winery who strongly believed in this grape.»

Among the red berried grapes found in the Marche, a prominent position is for Sangiovese and Montepulciano, the grapes used to produce the Rosso Piceno and Rosso Conero. Talking about Rosso Piceno produced at Monte Schiavo, Mr. Calzetta says: «we have vineyards that produce both Sangiovese and Montepulciano and this allows us to produce Rosso Piceno. These vineyards are located in the Rosso Piceno DOC area. We cannot produce Rosso Piceno Superiore from these vineyards because the grapes must come from a very delimited and small area in the province of Ascoli Piceno. However, thanks to the support of our wine maker, we produce in his winery, located in the province of Ascoli Piceno, Rosso Piceno Superiore as well, therefore in our production we have both Rosso Piceno and Rosso Piceno Superiore. This is an important wine, unfortunately it is not widely known, but it is rapidly emerging on the scene and it is giving us lots of satisfactions. This wine certainly suffered the notoriety of the neighboring Rosso Conero, last but not the least, the fact that the province of Ascoli Piceno has been for a very long time ignored as a wine producing area, however I believe in the forthcoming years Rosso Piceno will be highly revaluated and it will probably become one of the most important wines of the region.»

The area of Castelli di Jesi, the area where Monte Schiavo's headquarters are located, inevitably make us talk about Verdicchio: «the view of this area is wonderful, this valley, that begins from the mountains and is extended as far as the Adriatic sea, is particularly suited for the cultivation of vine; many historical documents say the grape as well as its cultivation was present on this territory since some thousands years. The area is named as "Castelli di Jesi" because every town of the area still has its own "castello", (Italian for "castle") a feature that was the reason why they decided to name this area like that. This is a valley where it is very pleasing to work in, both for the opportunities of the territory's products and for the joy of living in a such beautiful view. Verdicchio is a wine not really considered and esteemed for what it is in reality, maybe this is also because of our faults. Verdicchio is a great grape and this is demonstrated by the fact that it allows us to produce many typologies of wine, which are particularly versatile and can be matched with many foods, not just with fish, but also with certain foods where red wines are usually matched to. According to some recent scientific researches, it seems that Verdicchio is among the white berried grapes having a high contents in phenolic compounds, just like red wines, so the analogy with this kind of wines may be obvious. In case this theory is going to be confirmed, we could also end up supporting the idea that Verdicchio has the very same beneficial effects of red wine for health.»

Talking about production aspects in Monte Schiavo, Mr. Calzetta says: «in this moment the quantity of grapes harvested in the vineyards of our property allows us to completely satisfy our production needs. We currently have vineyards cultivated with Verdicchio for 105 hectares (about 259 acres), 10 hectares (about 25 acres) cultivated with Lacrima di Morro and 15 hectares (about 37 acres) cultivated with other red species. In recent times our winery's production has drastically increased and we estimate it will continue to increase: from 1996 to now,



The cosy Monte Schiavo's wine shop

our sales have increased threefold, therefore we believe we will probably need grape from other producers in the future vintages. Possible grape providers will be selected by our winery anyway and they will work on the vineyard according the directions of our agronomist, Dr. Capogrossi». Talking about production, let's focus on past productions of Verdicchio «in our cellar we still have bottles of vintages from 1995 to 2001 of "Pallio di San Floriano", just because we believe this particular wine has particular characteristics of aging and the majority of bottles are still in perfect conditions and confirm the great versatility of Verdicchio as well as its qualities.» Talking about this year's production, Mr. Calzetta express his anticipations: «despite this year has been characterized by unfavorable meteorological conditions, the 2002 will be a good year, after all. The good meteorological conditions we had during the harvest favored us, however to better take the opportunities of the period, we worked on the vineyard and thinned out the vines and we decided to take the risk of delaying the harvest. Our decision turned to be good and we have been successful in harvesting grapes which had a good content of sugar as well as good quality. Considering this year's meteorological conditions, I sincerely thought of having a very bad vintage, indeed, we will have a good vintage, surely not the best, but surely good anyway.»

Talking about countries where Monte Schiavo's products are sold, Mr. Calzetta says «our wines are present in the entire Italian territory and we are present in every continent of the world as well. Of course, there are countries where our presence is marginal. Our reference markets are Europe, United States of America and Japan. We are also present in China, Australia, New Zealand, South America and Center America. Verdicchio is favorably welcomed by the markets of the world because consumers are finally getting a better knowledge about wine. The best advantage of Verdicchio is the excellent quality to price ratio. When consumers realize a good Verdicchio can just cost about € 4,00 and this wine has nothing less than other and more expensive wines, they are pleasantly impressed and they appreciate it. After having been the most representative wine of Italy, Verdicchio has had a declining era, mainly because of some mistakes made by some producers, therefore the consumers and the market lost their interest for this wine.

With time we understood the most important thing in order to properly reevaluate Verdicchio is quality and this process must begin in the vineyard, nowadays, thanks to the renewed efforts, Verdicchio is a wine which is getting more and more back to its prestigious position.»

Let's see in detail Monte Schiavo's products: «“Pallio di San Floriano” is a late harvest and it classified as a Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Superiore. In the last four years, this wine has always been rated as the best one of its typology. The grapes used for its production come from the vineyards of Fossato and Tassanare, and we have a yield of 70 quintals per hectare (about 6.8 tons/acre) and it is not refined in wood. “Bando di San Settimio”, which is produced with the same base wine of “Pallio di San Floriano”, is refined in barrique, a characteristic that, according to our philosophy, cannot prevail over wine. One of our most important products is “Le Giuncare”, a Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Riserva produced with grapes harvested in vineyards at low yield, about 70 quintals per hectare, (about 6.8 tons/acre) and it is usually released on the market after two years from harvest. Recently we started producing a very limited quantity of unfiltered “Pallio di San Floriano” and the results we get have been truly encouraging and we are thinking about releasing it to the market the next year. Another important wine we produce is “Archè”, a passito (sweet) wine that can be matched with spicy cheese and pastry, it is produced in limited quantities and the grapes are allowed to dry in the vine. For the first time, this year we produced a Rosso Conero called “Adeodato”, the wine is named after the founder of the Peralisi group. This wine is produced with very low yields, 55 quintals per hectare, (about 5.4 tons/acre) and we only use Montepulciano grape. The result is a wine of great importance and high prestige, which gave us lots of satisfaction and made our efforts worth of it. Rosso Piceno Superiore “Sassaiolo” is produced with grapes cultivated in the Offida area and are processed by our wine maker in the province of Ascoli Piceno. One of our wines which is among the most looked for, is “Lacrima di Morro d'Alba”, a wine which is particularly liked by our consumers. This is a wine having intense aromas of red berried fruit and they can even be perceived as the wine is being poured in the glass. It has an intense pomegranate color and an unsuspecting full body, it is supposed to be drunk in its young age when its pleasing fruit aromas are well expressed and developed. Our winery is investing a lot on Lacrima di Morro d'Alba because we are convinced this wine will have a great future and we are even thinking of starting a new production winery expressly dedicated to this wine in the DOC area of Lacrima di Morro d'Alba.»



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



**Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Coste del Molino
2001**

Monte Schiavo

Grapes: Verdicchio

Price: € 4,15

Score: ◆◆◆

The wine shows a light straw yellow color with nuances of greenish yellow. At the nose denotes elegant and pleasing aromas, mainly intense aromas of fruits, where the main perceived aromas are of citrus fruits, pineapple, almonds, apple, pear and peach. Flower aromas follow such as hawthorn and broom. The mouth denotes from the very beginning a flavor of almond, typical of the Verdicchio. The wine has a good intensity of flavors as well as a good alcohol which is balanced by the wine's crispness and sapidity. The finish is persistent with evident flavors of apple and pear followed by a pleasing hint of almond.

Food match: Pastas, Risottos, Boiled fish



**Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Bando di San
Settimio 2000**

Monte Schiavo

Grapes: Verdicchio

Price: € 8,05

Score: ◆◆◆

The wine's appearance has a beautiful light straw yellow color with nuances of greenish yellow. At the nose denotes an aroma of vanilla because of the short aging in barrique, however this aroma does not cover or prevail over the typical aromas of Verdicchio. The wine's also has intense fruit aromas such as ripe apple, peach and litchi. The wine's bouquet is completed by a series of aromas of hawthorn, vanilla flavored sugar and a hint of sun warmed stone. The mouth has a good balance and intensity where the alcohol is well balanced by the wine's crispness and sapidity. The wine is also round and pleasing, having good elegance. The finish is persistent with pleasing flavors of peach and vanilla flavored sugar with a hint of wood flavors.

This wine is aged in barrique for 3 months and then a final refinement in bottle follows.

Food match: Broiled fish, White meats, Eggs, Fish soups, Stuffed pastas



Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore Pallio di San Floriano 2001
Monte Schiavo

Grapes: Verdicchio

Price: € 4,64

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine shows a beautiful and intense straw yellow color, very firm. The nose is rich and full, the bouquet has intense aromas of fruit such as apricot, apple, pear, peach and almond followed by pleasing flower aromas such as broom and hawthorn. The wine's bouquet is elegantly completed by hints of honey and rosemary. In the mouth the wine has an excellent balance and the alcohol, present in good quantity, is well balanced by the wine's crispness and sapidity. The mouth also has intense flavors of peach and apple as well as the typical Verdicchio's flavor of almond. The finish is persistent with flavors of apple, peach and almond followed by a very agreeable hint of rosemary. A very well done wine, a worth representative of the wines for its typology.

Food match: Pastas with fish, Fish, White meats, Soups



Lacrima di Morro d'Alba 2001
Monte Schiavo

Grapes: Lacrima di Morro

Price: € 5,70

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine catches the eye for its beautiful ruby red color with evident nuances of purplish red, moderate transparency. The nose denotes the typical aromas of the Lacrima di Morro, mainly fruity such as black cherry, strawberry and raspberry elegantly completed by an intense and pleasing aroma of rose flower. All the aromas are very clean and intense. The mouth has a good correspondence with the nose and it is intense, good balance between alcohol and tannins, delicate and elegant. The finish is persistent with evident flavors of raspberry and rose flower. This wine is refined in stainless steel containers for about one year and then it is aged for one year more in casks.

Food match: Meat appetizers, White meats



Rosso Conero Conti Cortesi 1999
Monte Schiavo

Grapes: Montepulciano, Sangiovese

Price: € 5,76

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine shows an intense ruby red color, moderate transparency. The nose denotes intense aromas of black cherry, blueberry and black currant followed by vanilla, licorice, chocolate and a hint of coffee. The mouth has a good correspondence with the nose. The attack is slightly crisp promptly followed by the effects of tannins, well balanced with alcohol. The finish is persistent with evident flavors of fruit, in particular black cherry and black currant. This wine is produced with a long maceration in skins followed by a refinement in casks and in bottle.

Food match: Stuffed pastas, Roasted meat, Broiled meat



Rosso Piceno Superiore Sassaiolo 2000
Monte Schiavo

Grapes: Sangiovese, Montepulciano

Price: € 4,21

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine has a beautiful and intense ruby red color, moderate transparency. At the nose are perceived pleasing and agreeable aromas of rhubarb which support intense aromas of black cherry, strawberry, blueberry and hints of chocolate and mint. The wine has a good body and the alcohol is well balanced with the tannins, well fused, and good correspondence with the nose. The finish is persistent with pleasing flavors of black cherry and rhubarb.

Food match: Braised meat, Broiled meat, Moderately hard cheese

La Vite - Monte Schiavo - Via Vivaio - 60060 Monteschiavo di Maiolati Spontini, Ancona (Italy) - Tel. +39 0731 700385
 Fax. +39 0731 703359 - **Winemaker:** Pierluigi Lorenzetti -
Established: 1978 - **Production:** 1 300 000 bottles
E-Mail: monteschiavo@puntoimedia.it
WEB: www.monteschiavo.it

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

Refinement and Aging of Wine

Tasting a wine in good conditions represents one of the fundamental factors for its best expression and allows the transformation of its lively youth into an austere and noble virtue that only the magic of time is capable of emphasizing

The wish of having lots of bottles, neatly arranged in a rack or shelf, sheltered from light and heat, to be uncorked in special occasions, after some years, is probably the dream of every wine lover. To own a cellar, an almost sacred room, where bottles of wine can be stored and left to rest, or better to say, to refine, that magic place to which entrusting young wines in order to be taken to a magic journey that will give us back more austere and mature wines, is a dream every wine lover has. The idea of taking a bottle of wine from our cellar, a bottle that was left to rest for some years, is just like meeting an old and dear friend that we do not meet since a very long time and it has a lots of things to tell and that we joyfully hear, enchanted by the wonders it met in the course of its journey.

The problem here is that dreams not always turn into reality, sometimes there are elements that make things hard and what we wish is not what we get. Indeed, when we talk about wine's storage, having a good cellar, even built with the best possible criteria, is not enough to ensure our wines a long and prosperous life. To be honest, the availability of a personal cellar, built according the best conditions and guidelines, is a luxury that not everyone can afford. Often, the majority of wine lovers arrange rooms of their houses in order to be used as cellars, after all, when nothing good comes, we take what we have at hand. However, we should consider something about storing wines: owning a cellar is not the only key for success, we also need proper wines, that is wines expressly produced with grapes suited for aging, as well as other factors that change every year, production area and, last but not the least, the ability and skill of the wine maker and, lastly, conditions set by Mother Nature. Often, wines suited for the refinement process are expressly built and made by producers with this specific goal in mind. Lastly, not every wine can be aged or refined for years in order to improve its quality, there are many wines, lots of wines, that cannot go beyond two years of aging, sometimes even less, even in case they were left in the best cellar. A cellar, a good

cellar, is not enough for the aging of wine, we need a wine suited for aging first.

The Refinement of Wine

As soon as a bottle of wine has been bought, the wine lover often ask himself or herself whether it would be good to drink that wine or it would be better to wait for some years instead. There is something that we can take for granted: there is no exact rule that can tell us the exact moment when the wine in a bottle has reached its very best refinement or aging condition in order to determine the best time possible for uncorking it. However, there are some factors that will allow a good level of expectation and approximation and will allow us to determine when uncorking a bottle in the vicinity of its best time; with a little of fortune as well, we will also be able to uncork a specific bottle in its very best time. The first thing to consider is that, generally speaking, wines are released by wine producers in the time they believe they are ready to be drunk, that is in the time wine producers think the wine already has good qualities and that can be enjoyed without any refinement time or aging. This is mainly true for white wines, because they generally do not stand long aging times, with few exceptions. The majority of white wines tend to lose their aromatic "freshness" when aged, their typical fruit and fresh flowers aromas, something which is welcomed and enjoyed in these wines, tend to flatten with time and they turn into less interesting and enjoying aromas of cooked fruit. Compared to red wines, which can stand to about longer aging times, white wines that can be successfully aged are just few.

In general terms, the main factors which determine the success of aging in a wine are:

- **Species of the grape** - Every species of grape has proper characteristics and different quantity of element from each other. This is also determined by the time of harvesting: a ripe grape is rich in sugar and poor in acids, an unripe grape is rich in acids and poor in sugar. Particularly, there are grapes which naturally have greater quantities of phenolic compounds than others, this factor is very important for a long and good aging. Wines produced with red grapes, having a greater quantity of phenolic compounds than white grapes, can stand, also thanks to this characteristic, to a longer aging time
- **Wine making techniques** - Wines that can stand a long aging time must be expressly created with this goal in mind and this is mainly the result of the wine making technique used to produce a wine. For example, long time of maceration of skins in must, gives a higher phenolic compound's extraction, as well as a more pronounced astringency, a factor that allows wine to stand a pretty long aging time but this also makes the wine unpleasing, to be precise, astringent, and it would be not really good in case it is drunk in its young age. Other factors dependent on wine making techniques and that could allow good aging conditions, include casks which add phenolic compounds, that is tannins, to the wine
- **Conditions of the year** - This factor, uniquely determined by the will and the goodness of Mother Nature, actually has a strong, and sometimes irremediably bad, influence on grapes' quality, it could make them exceptional or just very bad. However it should be noticed that the many improvements of enology allowed, in some extents, to minimize the unfavorable effects of the year and therefore there can be made "decent" products from very bad grapes. Of course, an excellent matter, that is good grapes, can make excellent products without using any excessive or vigorous remedies, obviously, this is truly beneficial to the quality of wine and, lastly, to its potential capacity of development and refinement with time

- **Storage conditions** - A good wine, made with the best intents and matters, as well as with the best techniques for a long aging time, can be easily ruined in case it is stored in unfavorable places and under unfavorable conditions. Light, excessive change of temperature, too high or too low, and oxygen are just few of the unfavorable factors that can determine a sure failure in storing a wine
- **Preservative components of wine** - Like we said for grapes, an essential matter for wine making, there are some components, naturally contained in grapes or voluntarily added during the wine making process, that can allow wine to stand longer aging times and therefore can allow the wine to better refine and develop. We already said phenolic compounds, that is tannins, are a factor that ensure a good storage and aging. Other components having a preservative effect in wine are sugar and acid. Passito (sweet) wines and late harvest, usually having high quantity of sugar, can stand longer aging times because of the preservative effect of sugar.

Speaking in more specific terms, also trying to offer some practical indications, there are few wines, compared to the total amount of wine produced in the world and released in the market, which is suited for refinement and to properly age in a cellar. The majority of wine is released in the market by producers in the time they think it is ready to be drunk in order to better appreciate its best characteristics. White wines and rose wines, with very few exceptions, are usually to be consumed as soon as possible, red wines can sometimes be refined and aged for some years. Concerning red wines, it should be noticed the producer itself could have been aged the wine for some years in its cellar, either because of some specific wine laws or because of the necessity of making a specific style of wine. However, wine can be bought with the specific goal of storing it in the cellar for some years in order to benefit from aging, once again, wines suited for aging must have specific characteristics, such as the kind of grape used to make them as well as proper wine making techniques that allow wine to begin the magic journey of aging. As an example, we can consider a wine produced with Cabernet Sauvignon grape. The average aging time that wines produced with this grape can stand to, can usually vary from 4 to 20 years. A wine produced with this grape, very high yield, short time of maceration of the skins, coarse wine making techniques, despite of the good longevity of Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine will not even stand to the minimal 4 years usually expected from this grape. On the contrary, a wine produced with Cabernet Sauvignon, very low yield, which gives a grape rich in components and matters, long times of maceration of the skins, that is a high extraction of phenolic compounds, proper wine making techniques, can give a wine that can age for more than 20 years, of course, in case it is stored in proper conditions. Obviously, a wine produced in this way requires higher costs for the producers and, of course, for the buyer too. It would be a good idea if producers, that know their products better than anyone else, would indicate in wine labels the suggested aging time or, at least, the number of years the wine can be aged before it declines. This kind of expectations are hard to express for everyone, including producers, however the producers, better than anyone else, could provide consumers these kind of information as a sign of honesty and in the sake of a better information and appreciation. Honestly, there are some producers that indicate in their wine labels the expected number of years the wine can be aged; we can just praise and admire these producers; however, these are just indicative information but they surely are something consumers can rely on as a reference.

Table 1 shows indicative aging times for some kind of grapes. However, it should be considered that times greatly vary according to the condition of the vintage, production area, wine making practices as well as storing conditions.

White Wines

Our knowledge about the way white wines evolve and develop with time is not very high: everything we know mainly depend on experience and by directly observing the wine instead of scientific investigations. The most evident factor that emerges in the development of white wines is the change of color, from straw yellow which can turn with time to amber and then to brown. This process is probably the result of a slow oxidation of the phenolic elements contained in white wine, even though in small quantities if compared to red wines. Occasionally white wines can also develop a sediment and this usually happens with a lesser frequency than red wines, as well as in small quantities.

The direct connection about the quantity of phenolic compounds and aging time, common in red wines, is scarcely applicable to white wines because, as an example, wines produced with Riesling grape are usually more longeval than the ones produced with Chardonnay grape, despite the fact the latter grape contains a higher quantity of phenolic compounds. However it should be noticed that Riesling contains a higher quantity of acid than Chardonnay and, like we said, acid favors longer aging times because of its preservative effect.

Moreover, it was noticed that white wines fermented in cask usually stand to longer aging times, this is probably because of the greater quantity of tannins and phenolic compounds transferred from wood to wine, if compared to the same wines produced with the very same grapes and fermented in stainless steel container and subsequently refined in cask. Late harvests, passito (sweet) wines, whose grapes are affected by *Botrytis Cinerea*, or noble rot, usually have surprisingly long aging times because of the high content of sugar which is a preservative.

Red Wines

The main factors noticed in red wines after long periods of aging are the change of color and the possible presence of a certain quantity of sediment in the bottom of the bottle. Both phenomena are dependent on the variation and change of phenolic compounds, responsible for the color in red wine, as well as for the effect of the acid contained in the wine and for the effects of oxygen. In these specific conditions and with time, phenolic compounds in wine tend to polymerize, that is to aggregate in bigger and more complex molecules. As the phenolic compounds molecules reach a specific size, their weight increases as well and, as they cannot stay in solution with wine anymore, precipitate to the bottom of the bottle and form a sediment. This process subtracts some colorant components to the wine and the color progressively turns into orange-red or brick color.

White Grapes		Red Grapes	
Grape	Years	Grape	Year
Arneis	2 - 3	Aglianico	4 - 15
Chardonnay	2 - 6	Barbera	4 - 10
Chenin Blanc	4 - 30	Cabernet Sauvignon	4 - 20
Cortese	2 - 4	Dolcetto	2 - 5
Gewürztraminer	2 - 10	Merlot	2 - 10
Grechetto	1 - 3	Montepulciano	3 - 10
Pinot Bianco	2 - 5	Nebbiolo	4 - 20
Riesling	2 - 30	Pinot Nero	2 - 8
Sauvignon Blanc	1 - 3	Primitivo	4 - 8
Sémillon	2 - 10	Sagrantino	4 - 15
Silvaner	1 - 5	Sangiovese	3 - 20
Trebbiano Toscano	1 - 2	Syrah	4 - 16
Viognier	2 - 5	Tempranillo	2 - 8
		Zinfandel	3 - 10

Table 1: Indicative aging times for some kind of grapes

During this process, the taste and the aromas of a red wine change and evolve to a more austere and complex qualities, this is also favored by the small and precious quantity of oxygen that gets into the bottle through the cork, as well as for the effects of reduction because of the small quantity of oxygen contained in the bottle. Technically, the processes that determine the development of these “new” aromas are also the result of the oxidation of aldehydes and to the development of esters because of the combination of the acids contained in the wine with alcohol. This is also the reason why a red wine aged for a long time is usually less acid than a young wine.

The velocity at which these phenomena take place and develop, depends on many factors, including the temperature of storage, the conditions of the cork, the quantity of oxygen contained in the bottle, wine’s acidity and the quantity of sulfur dioxide dissolved in the wine.

Sparkling Wines

Sparkling wines produced with the Charmat or Martinotti method should be usually consumed within one year from their purchase. Things are slightly different for sparkling wines produced with the classic method or “*méthode Champenoise*”. A sparkling wine produced with the classic method can age and improve its qualities, even for tens of years, until it is being “disgorged”, that is as long as the bottle it is not opened and therefore ending the long refining period of the wine in yeasts. The secondary fermentation in the bottle, as well as the increase of internal pressure, saturate the bottle with carbon dioxide and therefore there will not be any oxygen in it. In this condition oxidative processes cannot take place; the wine can be aged in this way for many and many years. As the bottle is being opened, carbon oxide is expelled and air gets in, that is oxygen, and it is subsequently trapped in the bottle as it gets capped with a cork. This oxygen, even though is in small quantity, starts a slow but inexorable process of oxidation. A sparkling wine produced with the classic method should be consumed within two or three years from its purchase, however it is good to wait for at least six months, even better one full year, from the date of disgorgement. Serious producers that make sparkling wine with the classic method always indicate the date of disgorgement in the label in order to give the consumer a precise information on when the bottle should be opened and therefore the wine can be appreciated at its best.

However there are exceptions to the above rule: there are cases in which some exceptional vintages of Champagne, Franciacorta and other sparkling wines produced with the classic method, were in perfectly good conditions and successfully developed even after many years from the disgorgement date. It should be noticed, however, that these kind of wines tend to lose their freshness with time, as well as their vivacity and effervescence. Oxidation processes, just like for white wines, change the color and transform it into golden yellow and the taste slightly flattens although it also gets indisputably more complex. This simply is, like always, a subjective matter of taste.

Negative factors for aging

Light, drastic changes of temperature, unfavorable temperatures of storage and oxygen are all factors that can deteriorate chemical and organoleptic qualities of a wine during its period of aging.

Long periods of exposition to direct light, in particular to sunlight, determine chemical and physical changes in wine, as well as changes in organoleptic qualities. Sunlight, because of ultra-violet rays, favors the development of free radicals in wine and this accelerates the oxidation process. Light also affects the taste of wine. The so called “reduced” aromas and tastes can be accentuated by the photochemical effect of light, this condition is also known as “taste of light”, “taste of sun” or “taste of bottle”. A wine that developed a “taste of light” can be easily recognized because of its aromas and flavors of garlic and sweat and, most of the times, the wine seems to have lost its frank-

ness. Wines which are particularly affected by this phenomena are mainly white, lightly sparkling wines and sparkling wines. Sheltering wine from light is therefore an essential factor for a proper storage and aging. The color of the bottle is essential in order to prevent the passage of light and in order to prevent any possible damage to the wine: the best bottles are the ones having a dark green or dark brown color because they may work as a filter for light. Deprecable is the usage of white, colorless and transparent bottles because they allow a full passage of light: it is funny to see this kind of bottle is mainly used for white and rose wines, that is those kind of wines that need the best protective condition against light rays.

Temperature greatly affects the preservability of wine. High temperatures accelerate the aging process and, even though this could be seen as a great advantage, the idea of being able to age our wines, for example, in half of the time could seem as advantageous, indeed, a wine which ages too fast also lose its best qualities and it will tend to be more coarse and it will deteriorate more rapidly. A long and slow aging is what makes a wine elegant, austere and exceptional, it is what allows wine to develop and evolve better. The slow and correct refinement is guaranteed by a proper temperature of storage, and it can usually range from 10° C (50° F) to 15° C (59° F), however it should be noticed that serious problems for wine begins at temperature higher than 25° C (77° F) because at these temperatures volatile components will be irretrievably destroyed. Storing a wine at very low temperature, below 0° C, (32° F) are unfavorable and dangerous as well. At these temperatures, particularly below -4° C, (24.8° F) light wines, the ones having small quantities of alcohol, begin to freeze and this will also increase the volume in the bottle and the cork will be expelled out.

Sudden and wide changes of temperature during the period of storage are to be avoided anyway: this may happen, for example, during the change of the seasons and in rooms having a bad or insufficient isolation from these events. As the temperature increases, the wine contained in the bottle will expand and will probably spill out from the bottle through the cork. As soon as the temperature gets lower, the wine in the bottle will contract and this will originate an internal depression whose effect will be to suck air from the cork. Every expansion of the wine, and the consequent spilling of wine from the bottle, actually decreases the quantity of wine in the bottle by increasing, on the contrary, the free space that will be occupied by the sucked air; this process will favor the oxidation of wine as well as accelerating the aging of wine and both effect will completely ruin the wine. Lastly, the expelled wine from the bottle because of a high temperature, will be trapped between the cork and the capsule and, because of its small quantity, this wine will rapidly oxidate and it can also be transformed into vinegar and therefore the cork will be contaminated as well as the neck of the bottle.

Even humidity plays an important role in the storage of wine. Storage rooms having a low level of humidity tend to dry corks and, as a consequence, they shrink and compromise their fundamental hermetic property therefore allowing the wine to get out as well as the passage of air. However a level of humidity too high would damage the labels of the bottles as well as developing molds between the cork and the capsule. The ideal level of humidity for a storage room should be of about 70%.

Lastly, the position at which the bottle is kept plays an important role in a successful aging and storage. Generally, bottles should be kept in a horizontal position in order for the wine to be in contact with the cork and to prevent the cork to shrink. In case the cork shrinks, it favors spillage of wine as well as favoring air to get into the bottle. However it should be noticed that fortified wines, that is wines having a high content of alcohol, could damage and disaggregate the cork within few years because of the effect of alcohol. This effect happens anyway in every wine which has been aged for very long period of times, 15 - 20 years, and that was kept in horizontal position. Talking about the position at which the bottles should be kept during the aging

period, there is a new theory that suggests not to keep the bottles in a horizontal position, but they should be kept in a slightly inclined position in order to allow both the wine and the internal bubble of air to be in contact with the cork. This position would allow the cork to be moistened by wine and would favor the expulsion of air from the bottle instead of wine in case the temperature gets higher.

NOT JUST WINE

Olive Oil

The most loved condiment for the Mediterranean people has a very ancient history. Good olive oil always succeeds in making precious every food.

Olive oil is the substance extracted by crushing olives, it is the typical ingredient of the Mediterranean cooking, and it is also used to preserve foods, in the past it was also used as a combustible for lamps.

The Olive Tree

Olives, from which the oil is extracted, are the fruits of the olive tree (*Olea Europea*), an evergreen plant, very longeval and that belongs to the family of *Olea* species. Flowers, after having been fecundated, generate fruits having a pulp rich in fatty substances: the olive. Olive tree is a plant having very ancient origins and it spontaneously grows in the entire Mediterranean area, however, nowadays we can consider this plant as cultivated just because man, since a very long time, has improved its cultivation techniques in order to get a rich and abundant harvest of fruits. The olive tree is more demanding in terms of climate than of soil, it has its ideal environment in the Mediterranean countries where summers are hot and dry and winters are rainy. The main purpose of the cultivation of the olive tree is the harvesting of fruits to be used in the production of olive oil, a condiment broadly used by the people of the Mediterranean which prefer this condiment to animal's fat, mainly used by the people of the northern areas of Europe.

Olive tree, its fruits and the oil produced with them, are part of the culture of man since the beginning of the history of humanity. It is supposed that the olive tree was cultivated in the Middle East since 8000 years ago. The first cultivations were probably done in Syria, Crete and Palestine where the most ancient oil presses were also found. Appreciated by Babylonians and Egyptians, the spreading of this wonderful tree in all the Mediterranean area was done by Phoenicians. Greeks were assiduous cultivators of olive trees, however were Romans that spread this tradition in all the empire. Sometimes, the tax revenue service of Romans wanted taxes to be paid in olive oil. The Romans were also the first ones to build the very first tools for olive crushing as well as improving the techniques for the storage of olive oil.

Olive tree is frequently cited in the Bible, in the Koran and in classical text of the Greek and Roman culture. In the course of some archaeological excavations conducted in the Mediterranean area, many tools for harvesting and crushing olives were found. Since ancient times, this plant has had a very important role: with olive man wanted to symbolize peace and the prosperity of people. The olive is a symbol of longevity, knowledge and beauty, it was used by Romans to ornate the head of the winners of games. It was also used in religious ceremonies.

Even now, olive has not lose its relevant importance, olive oil has a prominent role in the well known and renowned "Mediterranean diet", many experts agree on its many beneficial qualities for our health.

Production of Olive Oil

Olives mature in a very gradual way and this allows to organize the harvest in order to send olives at the oil press facility as soon as olives are harvested and to prevent their alteration. For more than 2000 years, the harvest of olives has practically not changed, they are usually harvested by hand, in order to guarantee the best quality of oil because, by doing so, olives are not damaged and, last but not the least, the plant does not get damaged as well. This is almost impossible in case nets are being used or, even worse, when olives are harvested as they fall from the plant to the ground. Technology also offers mechanical tools for harvesting olives. These tools shake the tree in order to detach olives from the plant and fall down. There also are tools, very similar to "vibrant combs", that when passed on the branches of the tree detach olives from the plant and fall down to a net and subsequently gathered.

The time of harvest greatly influences the physical and chemical characteristics of oil. Olives which are not fully ripe will give a green colored oil, having fruity aromas and slightly bitter flavors, whereas full ripe olives will produce a product having aromas of ripe fruit, fundamentally sweet and with a higher level of acidity. To determine the best time for harvesting olives, the following factors are being considered: color of olives, softening of the pulp, the quantity of oily substances and the resistance to detachment.

This first stage of process must not be underestimated because in case the olives stay for too much time in the branches, or are left in the ground for too long they could get damaged, and this would greatly compromise the production of a good oil. In order not to compromise the quality of olives, the best thing is to send olives to the oil press facility within 48 hours from the harvest. This incredible fruit is so delicate that a proper attention has to be paid even to the kind of container used to keep them. A plastic container having holes on every side, including bottom, will ensure a proper circulation of air and avoid fermentative and oxidative processes of the fruits. Sacks are to avoided anyway because olives would get crushed and this would start those processes that would irremediably damage them. Another container that should be avoided is a wood containers because it could be easily affected by molds.

As the olives are gathered they are promptly shipped to the oil press facility where they are selected, separated from any possible leaves or extraneous elements, washed, ready to go through the first stage of the process, the crushing process. The crushing breaks the oily cells contained in the fruit. In the past, when presses had a lower efficiency of those used nowadays, after having preliminarily crushed, hot water was added to the crushed paste in order to continue the



Olive Trees

crushing process and therefore to extract more oil with subsequent crushing phases; only the very first crushing could be legally called as “primary cold crush”. Nowadays all of the oil produced is extracted in a single crush and only the residual, called “husk”, is subsequently refined.

There are currently two crushing methods for olives. There are high velocity stone wheeled crushers and metal wheeled crushers. According to the type of crusher as well as the method used for crushing olives, depends the following stage: pressing. Alternatively, the crushing of olives can also be accomplished by using other types of crushers such as those having hammers, disks, cones or rollers. The usage of a proper crusher also ensures a good extractive yield. The strength at which the olives are being crushed influences the aroma and flavors of oil. As the olives are transformed into a paste, it is processed by a kneading-machine. During this phase, the tiny drops of oil get in contact one each other and form bigger and bigger drops that can be finally gathered. This phase is connected to the preceding one because the quality of the final product depends on the type and the temperature of the paste, as well as the quantity of time spent on the kneading-machine. This method of extraction is called “classic” or “discontinued” because it requires pauses during the process in order to allow the paste to be spread on filtering diaphragms and therefore forming the so called “pressing tower” which is subsequently processed by a pressure of 400-600 atmospheres. (5.6-8.5 ksi) This method of processing is sometimes replaced by the centrifugation process because it needs a continuous maintenance of the filters which are severely altered by the high pressures with the subsequent risk of passing some unwanted substances or aromas to the oil. The kneading process used in the “classic” method usually takes place at room temperature. (20-24° C - 68-75° F)

The centrifugation method, also known as “continuous process”, as it does not need any pause between the phases, is become very common nowadays. The olive paste is being processed by a centrifuging machine at 3500 rounds per minute, which produces an emulsified oil and a subsequent increase of the velocity ensures the water to be separated from the oil. In this case the working temperature is slightly higher, however it should never be higher than 30° C (86° F) in order not to favor peroxidizing and therefore damaging the oil’s organoleptic qualities as well as the preservability of the product itself. The residual, called “husk”, goes through a different kind of process and it is refined in order to be used for the production of other things.

Classification of Olive Oil

It should be said that olive oil lovers know very well that, just like for wine, the taste is greatly influenced by natural factors such as sun, climate and quality of harvest, it can have fruity aromas and flavors, spicy, sweet, bitter as well as having other organoleptic qualities. By pressing olives it is produced the so called “olio vergine” (Italian for “virgin oil”) also known as “prima spremitura” (Italian for “first pressing”), viscous and having a green-yellow color, rich in fatty substances. Subsequent pressings give oils of lesser value. Residuals of this process, called “husks”, still contain a quantity of oil of about 5 to 10% and that be extracted by means of pressing. Production technologies, physical and chemical characteristics, organoleptic qualities, as well as the quantity of acids, all determine the category to which an olive oil belongs to.

The categories of olive oil, according from the many processing methods, are:

- **Extra-virgin olive oil** - It is the best olive oil. It is virgin oil, not processed by any refinement or filtering technique, and its acidity (oleic acid) cannot be higher than 1%, that is not higher than 1 gram for every 100 grams. (0.03oz per 3.5oz) Its specific weight varies from 0.913 to 0.925, its point of solidification is from -2° C to 10° C (28.4° F to 50° F)
- **Ordinary virgin olive oil** - (also known as “pure”) It is the oil produced with mechanical systems and in thermal conditions that would not alter the product, they cannot be processed by any unconventional method except washing, centrifugation, filtering and decanting. The level of acidity is of about 2%
- **Fine olive oil or olive oil** - It is a refined olive oil to which is added some virgin olive oil in order to improve the taste. The maximum level of acidity is of about 1.5%
- **Husk oil** - It is composed by husk, that is the residual from the olives processing, refined with chemical solvents. When this oil is added to virgin olive oil it gives “husk olive oil”. The maximum level of acidity is of about 1.5%

Besides virgin olive oil and extra virgin olive oil, there are other classifications, however these oils cannot to be used for direct consumption:

- **Ordinary olive oil** - It is an olive oil having a maximum level of acidity of about 3.3%. Added to refined olive oil gives “olive oil”
- **Lampante olive oil** - (“lampante” is an Italian term indicating something which is suited for lamps, in this case means an oil to be used as a combustible for lamps) It is an oil having some defects and more than 3.3% of acidity
- **Rectified olive oil**

There also are other refined olive oils, obtained by the refinement of olive oils having a maximum level of acidity of 0.5%. Moreover, husk olive oil can be classified in the following categories: raw husk olive oil, refined or rectified husk olive oil and oil of olive’s husk.

It should be noticed that rectified oils are processed in a way that compromise the typical organoleptic qualities of olive oils; in the “olive oil” and “husk olive oil” there is no indication about the minimum quantity of virgin olive oil or extra virgin olive oil that was added to the final product. The European Union, in order to safeguard the quality of olive oil as well as safeguarding the quality of other products and their area of production, has created the *DOP* mark (Denominazione di Origine Protetta, Protected Denomination of Origin) which identifies the denomination of a product that was produced and processed in the geographical area designated and recognized by a committee. Another mark instituted by the European Union is *IGP* (Indicazione Geografica Protetta, Protected Geographical Indication), which identifies the origin of a certain product from a specific territory and requires that at least one of the production phases, or one of the transformation phases, was done in that specific geographical area.

The Health’s Ally

The determination of free acidity in an olive oil is an important factor that also determines the quality. As the acidity increases, a series of physical and chemical modification occur as well as the alteration of organoleptic qualities that would compromise the oil’s quality. An oil having a low quantity of acid will be considered the best, it can be easily preserved and will have superior organoleptic qualities. Unfortunately, the level of free acidity is not always indicated in the label. It is best to trust the producers who write this value in the labels and it would be best to prefer oils having a value of acidity lower than 0.3%. Lastly, price should be considered as well, excessively low prices should be distrusted, and excessively high prices should be avoided as well, after all it is olive oil anyway.

Each gram (0.03oz) of olive oil gives 9 Kcal, just like any other oil, and the belief that other oils have more calories than olive oil is therefore untrue. The quantity of fatty substances is the same for every oil (like to say, they make you get fat in the same way), however olive oil should be preferred because it is nutritionally superior, it is rich in anti-oxidants substances and vitamins as well as having good quantity of acids. The best way to store olive oil at home is to keep it from

light, in a clean room and at a temperature from 12° C and 24° C. (53° F to 75° F) The so called "smoking point" of olive oil, that is the tolerance to high temperatures, is very high, also thanks to the many anti-oxidants substances that preserve its composition. In consequence of this, the common belief that olive oil is not suited for frying foods is not true.

Olive oil is the only oil to be produced by the simple crushing of a fruit, without using any chemical substance, and it is mainly composed by monounsaturated fats and chlorophyll, lecithin, linoleic fatty acid, phenolic compounds, vitamin E, vitamin A, vitamin D and beta carotene. These anti-oxidants substances make olive oil very important for our health. It is scientifically proven that a constant consumption of olive oil favors the lowering of LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol) while favoring the increase of HDL cholesterol (the good cholesterol), as well as preventing vascular and heart diseases, particularly atherosclerosis, lowering the risk of arteries' blockage, as well as lowering stomach's acidity, blood pressure and the quantity of sugar in the blood. Extra virgin olive oil consumed in the morning, before having breakfast, seems to be a good remedy for constipation. Despite the fact the cultivation of olive tree is pretty common, consumption of olive oil is limited to the countries of the Mediterranean area, in other countries the most consumed oils are those of peanuts, colza-seeds, soybean and sunflower seeds. Olive oil is the best oil to be used for cooking and in particular to be consumed raw without any cooking process, however even when cooked it still remains one of the best oils for human nutrition. Other oils should be consumed, except for peanut oil, with some caution. Thanks to its proper characteristics and qualities, olive oil can be considered as one of the best oils.

Evaluation and Tasting

The best time of the day for tasting is the interval of time that precedes lunch, that is between 10:30AM and 12:00AM, because taste buds have not been altered by other factors yet and therefore are more sensitive and do their job better. Tasting temperature should preferably be of about 28° C. (82° F) Tasting olive oil consists in evaluating its color, its flavors and taste as well as its aromas. This can be easy to say but it certainly requires lot of experience and lot of practice in order to recognize and evaluate an olive oil. Moreover, it should be said that tasting techniques varies from taster to taster.

First of all a small quantity of oil is being poured in a glass container, that is a container that does not alter the contents with its possible flavors or smells. After the oil has been swirled in order to evaluate its fluidity, the color as well as the nuances are being evaluated: a limpid or cloudy color in a non filtered oil or young oil are factor of good quality; whereas a turbid aspect or, even worse, a orange-reddish color, indicates that an oxidation process is taking place. Smell the oil sample in order to evaluate all its aromas and the bad smells. Take a small sip, the quantity of a spoon will be enough, and vigorously inhale air in order to vaporize part of the oil in the mouth, without swallowing, and in order to stimulate the taste buds at best, keep the oil in the mouth for at least 10-20 seconds. Take a little break and then inspire air again while keeping the lips almost sealed and the tongue on the upper palate. Repeat the inhaling and vaporization phases more times and therefore expel or swallow the oil. While moving the tongue on the palate, evaluate the final flavors.

Aromas and flavors of mature fruit, particularly of apple, aromas of olive fruit, nuts, musk and undergrowth (in case this latter sensation is light it is considered to be typical for some areas), herbaceous, tomato leaf, artichoke, are all to be considered as positive factors; whereas bitter, pungent and sweet flavors, in case they are not excessively accentuated, can also be considered as acceptable and positive. Negative factors are sensations of sour, acid, metallic, mold, rancid and carbolic acid. Olive oil tend to absorb odors and smells of the room where it is being kept, therefore in case strange or funny smells that

would resemble the ones of some environmental conditions are all to be considered as consequence of a bad storage.

Lastly, the following list is a group of terms commonly used for the classification of the organoleptic qualities of olive oils.

- **Sweet** - it is said of an oil having gentle aromas and a final taste of almond without being excessively sweet or faint
- **Bitter** - is a negative factor because it reveals an oil produced with not fully ripe olives, bitter flavors can also be followed by flavors of leaves and wood. Only a slight flavor of bitterness can be considered as acceptable
- **Pungent** - is the typical flavor of young and fresh olive oil, the ones having a brilliant green color, and that tends to disappear with time
- **Harmonic** - it is an oil having no defects. Surely the best
- **Aggressive** - it is an oil having some components excessively intense and that cover all the other sensations
- **Oxidized** - it is an oil that was exposed to the air for a long time and that is going rancid. It is not edible
- **Limp** - it is said of an oil which is unctuous and lost its aromas
- **Mature** - an oil having fruity aromas, fundamentally sweet and having a golden color
- **Exhausted** - it is an oil which is getting old

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.

Rank	Wine, Producer
1 ↔	Château Pontet-Canet Pauillac 2000
2 ↔	Muffato della Sala 1999, Castello della Sala
3 ↔	Masseto 1998, Tenuta dell'Ornellaia
4 ➤	Cape Mentelle Semillon Sauvignon 2001
5 ➤	Rioja Reserva "Pagos Viejos" 1997, Bodega Artadi - Cosecheros Alavares
6 ➤	Gevrey Chambertin DB Boillot 1998
7 ↔	Chardonnay 2000, Planeta
8 ➤	Château Lynch-Bages Pauillac 2000
9 ➤	Champagne Ayala Brut
10 ↔	Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 1995, Fattoria dei Barbi
11 ☆	Capo di Stato 1998, Conte Loredan Gasparin
12 ➤	Meursault 1er cru 1999, Perrieres Louis Latour
13 ☆	Teroldego Rotaliano Granato 1998, Foradori
14 ➤	Terre Alte 1999, Livio Felluga
15 ➤	Monbazillac Cuvée Prestige 1996, Château Theulet

Legend: ➤ up ▲ down ↔ stable ☆ new entry

Classified

In this column we will publish your classifieds. Send your classified, with a length up to 255 characters, at the address Classified@DiWineTaste.com or fill in the form available at our WEB site www.DiWineTaste.com. The classifieds are published for free in three consecutive issues. Please specify the edition where you want your classified to be published (italian edition or international edition). Classifieds are required to be written in italian

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