

DiWINEtaste

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The Great Power of Reds

Time changes and so does the tastes and preferences of people. Time changes and so does fashions and customs. As time passes by, wine is also affected by these changes and it is forced to adapt to people's tastes and preferences. About ten years ago, white wines were the ones which met, generally speaking, the taste of people, first there was the success of Chardonnay, then arrived the turn of Sauvignon Blanc, then of Pinot Gris, a moderate return to Chardonnay and then, strangely to see, the interest for white wines dropped considerably. Nowadays, in any discussion about wine, people implicitly refer to red wine every time they say the word "wine". Even ladies, who generally prefer aromatic white wines, changed their mind and moved towards the charm of the powerful and prominent red wines.

Wine producers, both because they promoted this kind of wine and because of the need to adapt to new consumers' preferences and therefore for not being excluded from market, introduced in their production considerable quantities of red wine; even those which historically were tied to the production of white wine had to adapt and started making red wine. Did you notice that? When a winery announces the release of a new wine, most of the times it is a red wine. Even in the many wines guides the best rated wines, the ones which get higher scores and better results are generally red.

Even in restaurants can be found more or less the same trend: a quick look to wine lists make us realize the ratio between white wines and red wines is most of the times in favor of red wines. Is this a consequence of the gastronomical needs and the majority of foods of modern cooking require the matching with a red wine? Apparently this does not seem to be the cause. Even though we consider restaurants where fish cooking is exclusively served, usually matched, as a matter of habits and for common sense, with white wines, that should make us believe this is not the real cause. Anyway it should be noticed that in certain restaurants where they serve fish cooking, it is getting more and more common to see red wines in their wine lists, even though in modest quantities, probably for commercial reasons but, maybe, even because in certain recipes based on fish red wine can be successfully matched with these foods.

By visiting wine shops, as well as any other shop where wine is sold, confirms this general and new trend. A quick look at the shop's shelves makes us realize red wine is the one present in greater quantities. Is it really declining the preference for white wines? The market seems to confirm this hypothesis. In case we consider the habit, or maybe the natural custom of aging red wine

in casks, by giving wine more or less accentuated wood aromas, it is funny to see that in the last ten years there has been a production of white wines where wood aroma is practically the only perceivable smell. Is this a try in order to make white wines appear as red wine and therefore to make it more commercial? Maybe consumers are not interested anymore in fresh fruit and flower aromas typical of white wines? Maybe it is just a matter of taste and the typical crisp taste of white wine is not liked anymore? However, It should be noticed that, generally speaking, red wine usually has a higher price than white wine, most of the times they cannot even be compared; maybe it is just a commercial reason adopted just for speculative reasons and for market opportunities? To tell the whole story, it should be noticed that production of red wine, in particular when casks are being used and which have a considerable impact on costs, generally requires higher investments and therefore it is sold at higher prices.

There are so many white wines, very rich in aromas, having great elegance and refined, wonderfully agreeable, that can be, in many cases, better than thousands of red wines. Anyway it is red wine which is what it is sold the most now and it is the one people is interested in. Maybe red wine is generally better than white wine or maybe it is difficult to make very good and interesting white wines? Not to mention the subjective preference for taste, a subject which is indisputable and every hypothesis does not help at all, it is rather daring to say red wine is better than white wine and vice versa. Maybe the most probable reason is

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that it is just a consequence of a fashion, full of prejudices and speculations, where red wines are the only characters of the play, in particular those red wines which are referred as full bodied and robust, the ones which are usually defined as "important". Maybe it is because of the frequent use of this adjective associated to red wine which made white wines appear as having lesser quality and being less interesting. Maybe, in the aim of giving a simple reason, it is just one of the many fashions which is part of the world of wine and will probably be demolished and replaced by another, as soon as they will realize the necessity of creating something new in order to keep people interested in this beverage. Maybe that will be the cause for the return, once again, of white wines.

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.

In a bottle of sparkling wine I recently had, I noticed in the label the indication of "Methode Charmat". What does that mean?

Luisa Giarrone – Palermo (Italy)

It is a more rapid and less costly method, if compared to classic method, for the production of sparkling wines. The method was invented by the French Eugène Charmat in about 1910, however it is probable he based this system according the ideas of the Italian Federico Martinotti. The method makes use of large pressurized containers (tanks) where the wine is allowed to ferment while keeping carbon dioxide. Every phase of the process, from fermentation to bottling, is done under pressure. Sparkling wines made this way are generally less elegant and complex than the ones made with classic method, however there are good examples of "Methode Charmat" even though the complexity and quality of the ones made with "classic method" is certainly higher.



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I have been told Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine is made with 13 different kind of grapes. Is it true?

Manfred Weninger – Eisenstadt (Austria)

Châteauneuf-du-Pape is an important wine area belonging to Rhône Valley and is located near Avignon and the most renowned wine style there is surely red. In the area are produced, even though in modest quantities, white wines as well. Production disciplinary for Châteauneuf-du-Pape AC allows the use of 13 different grapes and precisely, for red berried grapes, Grenache, Cinsaut, Cunoise, Mourvèdre, Muscardine, Syrah, Terret Noir and Vaccarese, and for white berried grapes, Bourboulenc, Clairette, Picardan, Roussanne and Picpoul. These grapes can be used, at least in theory, for the production of wines of the area, white grapes for the production of white wines, red and white grapes for red wines. Most of red wines from Châteauneuf-du-Pape are produced with Grenache and sometimes Mourvèdre and Syrah are added as well. However there are producers who cultivates all thirteen grape species and use them all for making red wines.

ABC WINE

Germany

In the country of beer are produced great white wines, often considered as true reference models of worldwide enology

When a beverage is to be associated to Germany, it is almost impossible not to think about beer, anyway this country is to be considered, undoubtedly, among great and superior quality white wine producers. German white wines, thanks to their acidity, as well as to the high quantity of sugar, are among the few wines belonging to this category which are suited for a long and surprising aging in bottle. Talking about vine cultivation in Germany it would almost seem a paradox; a cold climate, apparently hostile to vine, here vineyards are usually located in an area between the 49th and the 51st parallel, an area located to the limit of vine's surviving, it would make think about a wine produced in critical conditions and with lower quality materials, however the best wines produced with Riesling of the world are made in this country and there also are good surprises among the wide selection of sweet wines.

In conditions like those it is necessary to get out the most from both soil conditions and climate conditions; to benefit the most from sun, for example, it is an advantage no German viticulturist would dare to ignore. For this reason, vineyards are usually located in hills or slopes facing towards south, preferably near rivers and water flows in order to benefit from milder conditions and from sun rays reflected by water. Little sun means, first of all, to produce wines with less alcohol, German wines usually have an alcohol by volume between 7% and 11%, while having a good and pleasing crispness, a factor which allows German white wines to be among the more longeval ones of the world.

However, wines from Germany, as opposed to the ones produced in other areas of the world, are delicate, refined and elegant, factors which undoubtedly make this country as one of the best quality white wines producers of the world. Germany does not just mean dry wines, delicate and transparent, here there also is a vast selection of sweet wines, syrupy, thick, rich of charming aromas and intense flavors, produced in a pretty unusual way, by leaving the bunches on the vine and harvesting them in winter time when vineyards are covered by snow and ice.

Viticulture in Germany was introduced by Romans about the first century B.C. and since then the cultivation was mainly done in the left side of Rhine river and along the course of Mosel river. According to some chronicler of that time, it seems that red wines were pretty common in Germany during Roman times; a rather interesting fact according to the current production of the country which is practically and completely devoted to white wines. Until the times of Charles the Great, the cultivation of vine was mainly concentrated in the western side of the Rhine river, from Alsace to the area where it is currently located the city of Koblenz.

The spreading of enological traditions was continued by Christian monks and it was pretty certain that in 750 a.D. the viticulture in the Mosel area was done by monastic foundations which followed Roman traditions. Monks also introduced viticulture in the areas of Franconia and Bavaria where this activity was very common during the middle age as well. During the time of Carolingian empire, Charles the Great worked hardy in order to spread and regulate viticulture, mainly in favor of the spreading of Christian religion and, as well as in other European countries of that time, the main cultivators and producers of wine were monasteries and churches. It was in this period that were planted the most famous vineyards of Germany, mainly in the area of *Rheingau*, and they are still productive and renowned. Viticulture in Germany developed rapidly from 1 000 a.D. to the sixteenth century, the production of wine was an activity done both in monasteries and in churches, as well as in nobles' properties and by simple bourgeois. The most cultivated grapes species at those times which were pretty common include *Elbling*, *Räuschling*, *Silvaner*, Muscat and *Traminer*. The first written information about the cultivation of Riesling, certainly the most



Fig. 1: Germany

famous grape of Germany, are dated about 1435, particularly in the *Rheingau* area.

From 1550 on, viticulture and production of wine in Germany began to decline, particularly because of the “thirty years war” in the beginning of the seventeenth century, which had devastating effects on vineyards. Viticulture recovered slowly and in many areas the recover lasted until the beginning of the 1700. During these years were promulgated many laws in favor of the production of quality wines imposing on viticulturists the cultivation of specific grape species and in specific areas were in force particular laws that forced viticulturists to uproot their vineyards and to replace them with Riesling grape. In 1800’s the concept of quality production was one of the main goals of German producers. During this time they started to pay attention to the level of ripeness of grapes and to their contents in sugar, a factor that still today greatly influences the quality system of Germany, which forces producers to harvest grapes in different times and according to the level of ripeness. In the middle of the 1800’s, viticulture was considered as an important activity and many enology schools were established in many German cities, during this period were also founded many producers associations with the explicit goal of promoting quality production. This favorable time of German enology was stopped, just like in any other European country, by the appearing of phylloxera which officially appeared in Germany in the Ahr valley in 1881 and subsequently spread all over the country.

The first half of the twentieth century was a period of serious crisis for German enology, mainly because of the two world wars which imposed rigid restrictions to the economy of the country. Between 1950 and 1990, German viticulture underwent a considerable development, mainly working on the spreading and selection of vineyards as well as promulgating laws in favor of quality production.

German quality system

German quality system is particular in many aspects, having laws and norms which are hardly found in disciplinary of other wine countries. Because of its geographical position, to the north and to the limit of surviving of vine, one of the main problems for the production of wine in Germany is climate and this, of course, directly influences on the level of ripeness of grapes and therefore on the quantity of sugar. Alcohol, as it is known, it is produced by the fermentation of sugar, therefore, the more the sugar, the more the alcohol. A grape having a low level of ripeness will produce a wine having little alcohol, that is also why German wines are among the least alcoholic ones of the world. According to this, the German system for the production of quality wines is highly focused on the concept of “level of ripeness of grapes”, a characteristic which makes this system pretty unique.

The German quality system is regulated by a specific law of the 1971, modified in 1994 in order to make it more adequate according to the European Union’s directives, defines specific categories and precisely: table wines, divided in *tafelwein* (table wines) and *landwein* (regional wines), and quality wines divided in *Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete* (quality wines from

a specified region), abbreviated as *QbA*, and *Qualitätswein mit Prädikat* (quality wine with distinction), abbreviated as *QmP*.

In Germany harvests are usually done in different times in order to allow grapes to reach different levels of ripeness according to the kind of wine to be made. A viticulturist could harvest certain bunches of grape, in order to make a specific kind of wine, while leaving the other bunches on the vine in order to allow them to ripen further and therefore harvested for the production of other styles of wine. Grapes which are not perfectly ripe usually make lighter wines with little alcohol, whereas the ones which reached a full maturation make full bodied wines having more alcohol, because of the higher quantity of sugar. The quality system of Germany recognizes six different levels of ripeness for grapes and every one corresponds to the same number of styles of wine. A producer can, by harvesting grapes of the same vineyard in different periods, make wines belonging to all of the six categories.

Levels of ripeness are allowed for quality wines only, however it should be noticed that levels of ripeness, and therefore the quantity of sugar, does not have any connection with wine's sweetness; this means that a wine, belonging to one of the six categories of level of ripeness, can also be dry or semi-dry, according to the production method used. Dry wines always have the indication *trocken* written in the label, whereas semi-dry ones always have *halbtrocken* written in the label. The level of ripeness is measured according to the *Oechsle* method, invented in 1830 by German scientist Ferdinand Oechsle. The method consists in measuring the *specific gravity* of the must before being fermented. Specific gravity indicates the ratio of any given substance's density, such as grape must, to water's density measured by a special instrument called *hydrometer*. A liquid having water's density is said to have a value of 1, in case it is more dense it will have values greater than one, in case it is less dense it will have values ranging from 0 to 0.999. A similar method is used in France (*Baumé*) and in the United States of America (*Brix*).

The majority of wine produced in Germany, about 95%, belongs to quality categories (*QbA* and *QmP*) whereas the rest is destined to wine table. Wines belonging to the categories *Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete*, or *QbA*, and *Qualitätswein mit Prädikat*, or *QmP*, must come from one of the 13 German areas of denomination. *QbA* wines can be corrected by means of *chaptalization*, that is by adding sugar to the non fermented must in order to increase the production of alcohol, a process that, it should be observed, has no connection with wine's sweetness as it just depends on the production method used to make a wine. Wine belonging to the category *Qualitätswein mit Prädikat*, or *QmP*, represents the higher quality level of German production and *chaptalization* is not allowed. *QmP* wines can belong to one of the following categories, from the lowest level of ripeness to the higher:

- **Kabinett** - wines produced with grapes harvested during the normal harvesting period. These wines are usually light, have little alcohol and are dry. *Kabinett* wines are usually consumed during meals
- **Spätlese** - (literally *late harvest*) wines produced with late harvests and are usually more intense and structured than

Kabinett. These wines can be both dry and semi-dry. These wines usually have a pretty high quantity of acid, therefore any possible sweetness is usually covered because of the effect of acid

- **Auslese** - (literally *selected harvest*) wines produced with very mature grapes and bunches are manually selected in the vineyard before being harvested. *Auslesen* wines are usually produced in the best years which had particular and favorable climate conditions and warm temperatures
- **Beerenauslese** - (literally *harvest of selected berries*) wines produced with bunches which have been accurately and manually selected. Grapes used for the production of wines belonging to this category, abbreviated as *BA*, are affected by noble mold (*Botrytis Cinerea*), a characteristic which give them richness in aromas and structure
- **Eiswein** - (literally *ice wine*) particular wines produced with frozen grapes. Grapes are left on the vine in order to overripe and are harvested in winter time, when grapes are frozen because of the low temperature which cannot be, at the time of harvesting, higher than -7°C (19.4°F). Grapes are pressed soon after harvesting and the result is a very concentrated must, rich in acid and sugar, by separating it from ice, and therefore water, contained in the berries. The resulting wine has a very high quantity of acid and sugar, however it is very balanced
- **Trockenbeerenauslese** - (literally *harvest of selected dried berries*) wines belonging to this category certainly are the most rich, sweet and expensive among German wines. These wines, abbreviated as *TBA*, are produced only in the best years and with dried grapes affected by noble mold (*Botrytis Cinerea*). The must produced by these grapes is so rich in sugar which sometimes makes the fermentation process difficult and the alcohol by volume for these wines is usually of 6%.

In the less favorable years, with little sun and not particularly warm, the high acidity of grapes cultivated in Germany can represent a serious problem. As it is commonly known, one of the fundamental factors which defines quality in a wine is balance. A wine having too much acid, that is having too little alcohol and sugar, would be pretty unpleasing to taste because of this unbalance, and the high acidity would not be properly balanced by those elements which can equalize its effect. For this reason German producers are allowed to make proper corrections to the final product, in order to make it balanced and to diminish the effects of acid, by adding little quantities of the so called *süssreserve*, that is grape juice produced from the same harvest, properly clarified, preserved and unfermented in order to keep its natural sweetness. *Süssreserve* is not being used to make a wine sweet, it is simply used in order to balance a wine and to mitigate acidity; the added quantity does not affect wine's dry taste. However, it should be noticed that *süssreserve* is added to wine in particular and unfavorable years only; in the best years, when the wine already has a natural balance and does not need any correction, *süssreserve* is not used at all.

Moreover, German quality system allows the use of special terms in the labels in order to state specific characteristics of the wines. The following list contains the most common terms which can appear on labels:

- **Trocken** - dry wine having a content of residual sugars less than 9 grams per liter
- **Halbtrocken** - semi-dry wine having a content of residual sugars less than 18 grams per liter. It should be noticed that because of the high acidity of German wines, *halbtrocken* wines practically have a dry taste
- **Sekt** - quality sparkling wine produced with grapes not particularly mature, typically produced in the northern areas of Germany. *Sekt* wines can be produced both in tanks (Charmat method) and by refermentation in bottle (classic method) and can also be produced with grapes coming from any region

Production Areas

Despite the fact Germany is considered as a little producer, the area cultivated with vine is about the 8% of the one of France, and despite the fact the geographical position, near the 51st parallel, to the limit of vine's surviving and adaptability, in this country are produced among the best white wines of the world, characterized by finesse and elegance, and this is the land where the Riesling grape, particularly esteemed, gives the best of itself.

Vine cultivation is mainly done in Germany along the course of Rhine river, from the area south from Bonn to the French border down to the Swiss border near Basel. Other cultivation areas are located along the course of the Mosel river, west from Koblenz, in the area east from Frankfurt, near Stuttgart and, lastly, little production areas are located near the cities of Dresden and Leipzig, east from the main area.

Grapes cultivated in Germany are mainly white, red grapes are seen as an exception mainly because of the climate conditions which does not allow grapes to reach full maturation. White grapes mainly cultivated in Germany are Müller-Thurgau, Riesling and Silvaner. Other white berried grapes include Bacchus (crossing between Silvaner and Riesling), Ehrenfelser (crossing between Riesling and Silvaner), Elbling, Faber (crossing between Pinot Blanc and Müller-Thurgau), Gewürztraminer, Gutedel (name with which Chasselas is known in Germany), Huxelrebe (crossing between Gutedel e Courtillier Musqué), Kerner (hybrid produced from Trollinger and Riesling), Morio-Muskat (crossing between Silvaner and Pinot Blanc), Optima (crossing between Silvaner and Riesling with Müller-Thurgau), Ortega (crossing between Müller-Thurgau and Siegerrebe), Rieslaner (crossing between Silvaner and Riesling), Rüländer (Pinot Gris), Scheurebe (crossing between Silvaner and Riesling) and Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc). The main red berried grapes are Portugieser, Spätburgunder (name with which Pinot Noir is known in Germany) and Trollinger (name with which Schiava is known in Germany).

German wine production is mainly oriented to white wines, however there are modest productions of rose wines and red wines, and lastly, sparkling wines, the so called *sekt*, usually produced with the Charmat method. Germany recognizes 13 quality wine production regions (*anbaugebiete*) as follows: Ahr, Baden, Franken, Hessische-Bergstrasse, Mittelrhein, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Nahe, Pfalz, Rheingau, Rheinhessen, Württemberg, Saale-Unstrut and Sachsen.

Franconia

This typical production area is located east from Frankfurt, bordering the northern area of Bavaria, and the cultivation of vine is mainly done along the coasts of Main river. The most cultivated grape in this area is Silvaner which here is capable of giving the best examples of wines of Germany produced with this grape. Even Riesling is cultivated in Franconia, however there are few areas of this region, because of the difficulty for grapes to reach full maturation, capable of producing excellent wines from this grape. A typical white berried grape of this region is *Rieslaner* which is used for the production of interesting wines having good aromas and usually resemble Riesling. In Franconia are also produced red wines with Spätburgunder and Portugieser grapes.

A distinctive mark of the wines produced in this region is the typical *bocksbeutel* bottle which must be used by law for the bottling of wines produced in this region.

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

This region, certainly among the most renowned ones of Germany for the elegance and finesse of its wines produced with Riesling grapes, is located along the course of Mosel river, from the French border to the point where the Mosel river joins Rhine river. The region also includes areas around the two tributaries of Mosel: Saar and Ruwer. The grape which is mainly cultivated in this region is Riesling, which represents alone more than 50% of the area dedicated to the cultivation of vine, followed by Müller-Thurgau and Elbling.

Cultivation of vine in this region is rather difficult and here are found the most sloped vineyard of the world, steep slopes with inclination of even 70%. Vineyards are usually planted in slopes facing towards south in order to completely benefit from the effects of sun and therefore allowing grapes to reach full maturation. Despite the fact cultivation and harvesting of grapes is rather difficult, Riesling wines from Mosel are characterized by an excellent balance, an evident and however balanced acidity, a factor which allows these wines to be aged in bottle for many years and by getting surprising results in the complexity of aromas and flavors. A characteristic of Mosel wines is the kind of bottle used, the so called *flute* or *Rhine bottle*, having a green colored glass, whereas in the other areas of Germany bottle's glass is brown.

Pfalz

The region of Pfalz goes along the western side of Rhine river up to the border of Alsace, south from Frankfurt. The region is not affected by the influence of Rhine river, as opposed to other areas, as vineyards are usually located at about a distance of 5 kilometers from the river's bank. Because of its geographic and climate position, grape usually reach full maturation easily with no particular problems, something which is pretty uncommon in other German areas. As a result, wines from this area have lower acidity and riper grape allows the production of *auslese*, *beerenauslese* and *trockenbeerenauslese*, here produced in considerable quantities.

The most cultivated grape of this region is Riesling and in this area is capable of giving wines with fruit aromas and sometimes with hints of spices. In Pfalz region are cultivated many species of white berried grapes, a characteristic that differentiate this region from the other German regions which are usually specialized to few varieties. In this area are cultivated Gewürztraminer, Weissburgunder, Rüländer, Spätburgunder, Müller-Thurgau, Kerner, Morio-Muskat and Scheurebe, the latter to be considered among the best grapes of Pfalz capable of producing interesting wines.

Rheingau

This region is considered as the best area of the world for the production of wines made of Riesling and here represent more than 80% of the cultivated grapes. This tiny area is located west from Frankfurt and goes along the northern and southern banks of Rhine river. Riesling wines produced in this region are different from the ones produced in Mosel of Pfalz: they are very aromatic, usually of fruit and flowers, more round and structured, rich and well balanced, with a more mitigated acidity. The secret of "success" for Rheingau, often considered as the key reference by every Riesling producer of the world, consists of its favorable climatic and geographical conditions, as well as the providential effects of Rhine river capable of reflecting the light and the warm of sun, ensuring a higher reliability and constance for the maturation of grapes. These favorable conditions for grape's maturation allow the production of extraordinary *auslese*, *beerenauslese* and *trockenbeerenauslese* wines.

The most important grape of this region, besides Riesling, is Spätburgunder used to make good red wines having aromas which resemble spices and bitter almond.

Rheinhessen

The Rheinhessen is the larger wine region of Germany and is located south from Rheingau, going along the course of Rhine river. The production of this region is generally oriented to ordinary wines, usually not much expensive, mainly produced by cooperatives with Müller-Thurgau grape or other German crossings, such as Bacchus, Kerner, Morio-Muskat and Huxelrebe. However in the region are also produced excellent examples of wines made from Riesling grapes, even though in modest quantities.

Other Production Areas

Among quality regions of Germany, besides the ones already cited, there also are other that, even though they are not very famous, often are capable of surprising with their wines. The Ahr region, among the most northern wine regions of Germany, mainly produces good wines with Spätburgunder grapes. The Baden region, divided in two parts, one located in the central area of Germany, east from Alsace, and the other in the vicinity of lake of Constance, near the Swiss border, benefits of a warmer climate and produces wines rich in alcohol and poor in acid, very different from the ones produced in Mosel. The most cultivated grapes of this region are Müller-Thurgau, Rüländer, Gutedel, Silvaner, Weissburgunder, Gewürztraminer, Spätburgunder and Riesling.

Another interesting area is Mittelrhein which is located to the north, near the city of Bonn, and its best production is made near the city of Koblenz. The region produces ordinary wines with Müller-Thurgau grape, however there also are good examples of wines produced with Riesling as well as *sekt* sparkling wines. Lastly, it should be also mentioned the Nahe region, which goes along the course of the river having the same name, south from Mosel, which is often considered as the join of wines from Mosel and wines from Rheingau. The grapes which are mainly cultivated in Nahe are Riesling, Silvaner and Müller-Thurgau, and the best wines are the ones produced with Riesling.

WINE TASTING

Secrets of Quality

At the end of the three organoleptic evaluations, there are plenty of information to define the real quality of a wine

The organoleptic evaluation of a wine is done in distinct phases in order to properly identify, and with proper attention and care, its characteristics according to visive, olfactory and gustatory analyses. In every phase the taster evaluates the single aspects of wine and according to them determines its level of quality and its typicality. Wine is made of hundreds of chemical and organoleptic elements, and each element must be present in proper quantity, according to the wine's style, without prevailing, covering or diminishing others. Quality of a wine is essentially determined by precise balances which are constituted by every single element, a critical condition which makes a wine great or just modest.

Harmony and balance of elements which make things, not just wine, is a characteristic that, even though it should be considered as subjective, influences in a determinant way on agreeability and pleasantness. Inadequate elements, either lacking or excessive, give things a less pleasurable and less harmonious aspect, therefore it will be judged in a more or less negative way just because of these worsening conditions.

Balance in wines, represented by the right quantity of gustatory elements, is considered as one of the fundamental factors

which make quality. Despite the fact this characteristic is determinant, alone is not enough to make a wine pleasing, agreeable and therefore a quality wine. Other factors which work for the determination of quality are also aromatic balance, that is the elegance and the finesse of the olfactory profile, the olfactory-gustatory correspondence, that is the perception of flavors related to the aromas perceived to the nose, persistence, that is the quantity of time the gustatory-olfactory sensations are being perceived after the wine has been swallowed and, lastly, the harmony of the single characteristics of wine related to the others.

Aromatic Balance

The evaluation of aromas in a wine anticipates its level of quality and tasters pay particular attention on the analysis of this very important organoleptic aspect. A wine which has a pleasing aroma, as well as positively predisposing to the evaluation of other characteristics, is considered as a quality factor, provided the other organoleptic characteristics are found to be of quality as well.

Aromatic characteristics of a wine depend on the grape or grapes used for its production, the cultivation area, climatic and meteorological conditions, production methodologies as well as the level of ripeness of grapes. Every grape has proper aromatic characteristics, more or less intense and more or less agreeable, and its aromas can be accentuated, attenuated or covered by other factors, in particular, by production processes.

When a wine's olfactory profile is being evaluated, it will be pretty difficult to just perceive a single aroma, in the majority of cases are perceived a group of aromas and with different intensities. Often the quantity and intensity of aromas are considered as a quality factor, however it is necessary that every aroma is in *harmony* with the others, in particular there must not be invading aromas which tend to cover in a pretty evident way the other ones. Wines which evidence a single, although pleasing, aroma, in particular when this aroma has no connection with the grape used to make the wine, it cannot be considered as a quality factor. A typical example of this condition is represented by the exaggerated use of wood aromas. No matter personal preferences are to be considered, which certainly are indisputable, a wine which main aroma is just that of wood, while covering primary and secondary aromas of wine, cannot be considered neither balanced nor of quality. Balance in this kind of wine is compromised by the excessive presence of just one characteristic which, moreover, is not connected to grape. Wood aromas are certainly pleasing and the use of casks is surely useful in wine making, however, as it is often said, the best wines aged in wood are the ones where the wood is not noticed, that is the ones which have wood aromas in perfect balance with all the other aromas.

A particular consideration should be made for wines produced with the so called "aromatic" grapes, such as Muscat Blanc and Gewürztraminer. The aromatic characteristic of these grapes, in case they are vinified alone, is always intense and recognizable in every wine. However, any taster who pays sufficient attention will notice the aromatic mark is not the only aroma to be perceived, indeed, great wines produced with aromatic

grapes always have other aromas, even though with lesser intensity, and that contribute to balance and to make more elegant and interesting an aromatic wine.

Lastly, it should be remembered that it is the richness and the balance of aromas which make interesting the olfactory evaluation of a wine and that certainly makes it elegant. A wine having just one kind of aromas is not considered as interesting just because it is not capable of catching attention; after having smelt it few times, any interest for its aromas is lost.

Balance

When balance in a wine is considered, without making use of any other indication, it is uniquely referred to gustatory balance, that is to the balance among specific gustatory sensations. The determination of balance in wines mainly depends on the category to be evaluated, therefore the determination of balance in white wines is different from red wines as well as for sweet wines.

Balance is determined by the right quantity of the single elements in order not to be too much or too few according to the overall gustatory profile of a wine. Substances which are considered for the determination of the balance of a wine are sugars, alcohol, acids, mineral salts and, in case of red wines, tannins. These substances have the property of accentuating, neutralizing or opposing specific gustatory sensations and it is the result of these effects which makes balance. In order to better understand the relation and effects of every substance in the determination of balance, it should be considered what follows:

- Sweetness balances acidity
- Sweetness contrasts bitterness and salty
- Sweetness attenuates astringency of tannins
- Alcohol accentuates the sensation of sweetness because of its taste
- Acidity and astringency exalt one each other
- Bitterness and astringency exalt the sensation of acidity and salty
- Carbon dioxide accentuates acidity and astringency
- Carbon dioxide attenuates sweetness

By considering these rules it is possible to define the gustatory balance in a wine according to the substances contained in it. It should be noticed alcohol, besides being cause of a pseudo-caloric sensation, has a taste which is fundamentally sweet and therefore contributes to balance just like any other sweet substance.

Temperature at which a wine is being served also influences the perception of organoleptic qualities and therefore on balance as well. It should be noticed that a wine lacking balance may "appear" better when tasted at a proper temperature, however this factor alone will not make it better. Temperature can influence balance of a wine according to the following factors:

- High temperatures accentuate the perception of sweetness while attenuating bitter and salty tastes
- Low temperatures accentuate the perception of bitter and salty tastes while attenuating sweetness
- Perception of acidity does not change with temperature however it should be remembered an acid beverage is more agreeable when served at low temperatures
- Low temperatures accentuate the perception of astringency of tannins

White Wines

Balance in white wines is more easy to determine than red wines because it is mainly defined by two factors: acidity and sweetness. By considering the lower number of factors which determine balance in white wines it is advisable, for beginners, to make practice with the study of balance with this kind of wines before considering red wines.

White wines are produced in different styles (dry, sweet and sparkling) and although the rule of balance for these wines is practically valid in all cases, it is necessary to evaluate each kind by itself as well as the substances contained in it and their effects on balance. The graphic shown in figure 2 illustrates the relation of the elements according to balance in white wines. Substances present in white wines are essentially four: sugar, alcohol, acids and mineral salts. These substances are ideally positioned in opposing sides, sugars and alcohol to one side, acids and mineral salts to the other, and in the center is positioned the balance point represented by the exact quantity of sweet substances capable of contrasting acidity and salty. An excessive quantity, either on one side or the other, tends to accentuate the dominating side while attenuating the opposing one, which is also in lesser quantity, therefore creating unbalance. It should be remembered sweetness contrasts, that is balances, acidity and vice versa.

In dry white wines, or however wines having a negligible quantity of residual sugars, balance is determined by alcohol and acids. It should be observed that white wines, usually having more acids than red wines, must also have a *tolerable* quantity of acid in order not to excessively irritating the gustatory apparatus as well as balance; a sour wine, having a high quantity of acid, does not improve by adding a quantity of alcohol in order to reach balance, the result will be anyway an alcoholic wine and, worse of them all, sour and unpleasing. The following list shows the many cases, and the relative organoleptic quality, according to the excess (+) or lack (-) of one of the two substances. It should be noticed that greater the excess or lack, greater the effect will be accentuated.

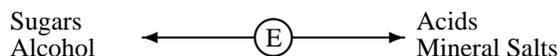


Fig. 2: Balance in White Wines

- **-Alcohol, -Acid** light wines, thin and fundamentally sweet
- **+Alcohol, -Acid** wines having vinosity, round, soft and boring
- **-Alcohol, +Acid** light wines, thin and sour
- **+Alcohol, +Acid** alcoholic wines, hot, vinous and sour

In the determination of balance in sweet white wines, or wines having a certain quantity of residual sugars, can be used the same rules applied to dry white wines, however higher quantities of sugars need a proper balance in order not to appear as “mellow” or “sickly”. Balance can be obtained, in this very case, by a proper quantity of acids or by a higher quantity of alcohol in order to contrast a condition which would get too sweet and unbalanced. For this reason, generally speaking, sweet white wines and “passito” have an alcohol by volume pretty high.

The presence of carbon dioxide in sparkling wines, because of its natural tendency to accentuate acidity and to attenuate sweetness, as well as having a fundamental acid taste, will need a proper quantity of alcohol, in case of dry sparkling wines, or a proper quantity of sugar, in case of sweet sparkling wines.

Red Wines

The determination of balance in red wines is based on the presence of another sensation which is usually absent in white wines: astringency. This sensorial factor is originated by tannins which presence is determined both by the maceration of skins in the must and for any possible aging in cask. For this reason, balance in red wines follows a proper rule, different from the one applied to white wines and, instead of opposing elements in two different sides, the many substances usually found in red wines are ideally positioned in three opposing sides where in the center is found the point of balance, that is the presence of substances in right quantities in order to balance all the other ones and in the proper way. The graphic shown in figure 3 illustrates the existing relation among the many substances which are considered for red wines.

In practical terms, the quantity of alcohol contrasts acid and astringency because, it should be remembered, acidity and astringency exalt one each other, therefore a very astringent wine cannot have lots of acid and vice versa. In any case it is the alcohol which determines the balance by contrasting these two elements. Acidity in red wines is tolerable only when astringency is low, such as for *nouveau* wines, whereas full bodied and austere wines, aged in casks and macerated for a long time in skins, have a clearly perceptible astringency and an acidity pretty low, with a proper quantity of alcohol, in both cases, in order to determine a proper balance. Likewise a red wine having little acid and little tannins will need a quantity of alcohol pretty low in order to be balanced.

A final consideration should be made for fortified and sweet red wines. While the indications provided so far for balance are applicable, in particular, sweetness, besides attenuating astringency, slightly slows down the perception of this organoleptic characteristic.

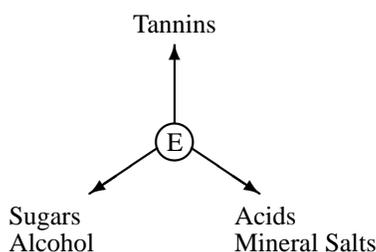


Fig. 3: Balance in Red Wines

Persistence

Gustatory persistence is one of those factors which determine, just like balance, the quality of a wine. This characteristic, sometimes defined as “length”, is defined as the quantity of time in which gustatory-olfactory sensations of wine continue to be clearly perceived after the moment the wine has been swallowed or expelled. Persistence is mainly determined by the quality and quantity of aromas perceived during the gustatory evaluation, their tenacity of permanence in mouth, and therefore in taste buds, allows the stimulation and the perception of flavors and aromas even though the wine is not present in the mouth anymore.

Persistence is measured in seconds, sometimes indicated with the French term *caudalie*, and it is the quantity of seconds in which the gustatory-olfactory perception is measured that determines quality. A wine is defined as *persistent* when this quantity of time is from 10 to 12 seconds, sometimes even 15, any higher time is an exclusive prerogative of great wines and, as it can be easily realized, it is pretty hard to find.

Premises for the evaluation of persistence begin as the wine is introduced in mouth; during the evaluation of wine’s characteristics it will be paid attention on the more intense flavors and aromas and on them will be paid attention and concentration at the very moment the wine is swallowed or expelled from the mouth. In this case flavors are exclusively intended the ones of aromatic origin, such as flavors of fruit, and not fundamental tastes, such as acidity or sweetness, not even tactile sensations such as astringency or alcohol strength, factors which usually have an appreciable duration, therefore persistence, which is usually higher than any other aromatic flavor of wine. In case a wine denotes in the mouth sensations of acidity, sweetness, astringency or alcoholic, instead of other aromatic flavors, it cannot be considered as persistent. Attention must be paid on the more intense aromatic flavor and therefore measure the quantity of time this flavor is perceivable before disappearing completely.

Harmony

Harmony is what makes things pleasing and agreeable. In the sensorial evaluation of wine harmony is represented by the

proper relation and correspondence of the three phases which make the whole examination: visive, olfactory and gustatory. A harmonic wine must have a good aspect, elegance and quality of aromas, a good balance, both aromatic and gustatory, and, last but not the least, a good correspondence of aromatic flavors with the aromas perceived to the nose.

Every element of a wine must be adequate for its structure, in a sense, it must be dressed up with the suit which is suitable to it, without heavy or light details which would just be disturbing elements. To make this concept clearer, it would be like seeing a robust person dressed up with very tight clothes or a thin person dressed up with very large clothes. Harmony in wines, just like balance and persistence, is a prerogative of great wines and it takes quality materials, as well as considerable skill and capacity of the wine maker, in order to be properly and correctly expressed.

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



Alhué Sauvignon Blanc Chardonnay 2002 Finca Alma (Argentina)

Grapes: Sauvignon Blanc (60%), Chardonnay (40%)

Price: \$ 9,50

Score: ◇◇◇

The wine shows a soft straw yellow color and nuances of greenish yellow, very transparent. The nose is very elegant and refined with evident typicality of the grapes used to make this wine. The wine’s olfactory style is mainly of fruit with evident aromas of pineapple, litchi, pear, peach, grapefruit as well as elder flower, sage and acacia. The mouth has a good correspondence to the nose, it is intense, crisp and well balanced by alcohol. The finish is persistent with pleasing hints of peach and elder flower. A well made wine. This wine is produced with fermentation and maceration of skins at a controlled temperature.

Food match: Spiced fish, Risotto and pasta



**COF Chardonnay Ronc di Juri 2000
Girolamo Dorigo (Italy)**

Grapes: Chardonnay

Price: € 36,80

Score: ◇◇◇◇★

The wine shows a beautiful and brilliant straw yellow color with nuances of greenish yellow, very transparent. The nose reveals a great personality with elegant, clean and refined aromas as well as evident aromas of wood however not excessively disturbing other aromas perception. There can be perceived intense and clean aromas of apple, pear, peach, banana, lemon, grapefruit, yeasts and vanilla as well as hints of flint and coffee. The mouth denotes good crispness well balanced by alcohol, it is intense and full bodied, very good balance and good correspondence to the nose. The finish is persistent with pleasing and elegant hints of pear, apple, vanilla and grapefruit. A well made wine. This Chardonnay is fermented in barrique and aged on lees until few days before bottling.

Food match: Pasta and risotto with fish, Roasted fish, Crustaceans, White meat



**Ghiaie della Furba 1999
Tenuta di Capezzana (Italy)**

Grapes: Cabernet Sauvignon (60%), Merlot (30%), Sirah (10%)

Price: € 25,00

Score: ◇◇◇◇★

The wine has a beautiful intense ruby red color and nuances of garnet red, little transparency. The nose denotes a clean and prominent personality: intense, clean and well defined aromas of black cherry, plum jam, raspberry, bilberry which are pleasingly followed by aromas of cocoa, eucalyptus and vanilla. The mouth reveals a full body and intensity of flavors, powerful and prominent, with agreeable tannins well balanced by alcohol which is also present in good quantity. Excellent correspondence to the nose. The finish is persistent with clean and evident hints of black cherry, plum jam, bilberry and vanilla. A very well made wine. Ghiaie della Furba is produced in steel containers and is

aged for 16 months in barrique followed by bottle aging for at least 6 months.

Food match: Hard cheese, Roasted meat, Game, Braised meat, Stewed meat



**Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 1999
Fattoria di Palazzo Vecchio (Italy)**

Grapes: Sangiovese (87%), Canaiolo Nero (10%), Mammolo (3%)

Price: € 13,00

Score: ◇◇◇◇★

The wine shows a brilliant ruby red color, little transparency. The nose is elegant, refined and of good personality with intense aromas of black cherry, ripe cherry, bilberry, plum and black currant followed by aromas of chocolate, fennel, thyme and violet as well as hints of vanilla. The mouth reveals good correspondence to the nose, it is intense, full bodied and has a tannic attack balanced by alcohol. The finish is persistent with hints of black cherry, plum and bilberry. A well made wine.

Food match: Roasted meat, Broiled meat and barbecue, Game, Hard cheese



**Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Le Balze 1997
Novaia (Italy)**

Grapes: Corvina (50%), Corvinone (20%), Rondinella (30%)

Price: € 31,20

Score: ◇◇◇◇★

Interesting example of Amarone. The wine shows a beautiful intense ruby red color and nuances of garnet red, little transparency. The nose denotes a clean and strong personality and richness of clean and elegant aromas. There can be perceived clean and intense aromas of black cherry jam, mulberry jam, peach jam, plum jam, ripe fruit, dried rose and dried violet followed by aromas of vanilla, cocoa, candies and nutmeg. The mouth has a pretty alcoholic attack, however well balanced by tannins as well as the full body. Good correspondence to the nose with intense and agreeable flavors of jams. The finish is persistent with pleasing and long hints of black cherry jam, plum jam and mulberry

jam. A very well made wine which will give great emotions with a further aging in bottle. This Amarone is aged in barrique for 27 months followed by a bottle aging of 7 months.

Food match: Game, Braised meat, Stewed meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese



**Barbera d'Alba Superiore I Filari de I Maschi 2000
Le Vigne di Canova (Italy)**

Grapes: Barbera

Price: € 9,60

Score: ◆◆◆

The wine shows a beautiful aspect and a ruby red color with nuances of purplish red, moderate transparency. The nose reveals intense aromas and good personality, mainly of fruit, such as raspberry, mulberry and plum followed by elegant and interesting aromas of coffee, chamomile, chocolate and hints of toasted. In the mouth the Barbera express its typicality with a crisp attack, however well balanced by tannins and alcohol. Good correspondence to the nose and good intensity of flavors. The finish is persistent with pleasing hints of plum and raspberry as well as chamomile. This wine is produced with maceration of skins for 14 days followed by an aging in cask for about one year.

Food match: Roasted meat, Broiled meat and barbecue, Hard cheese



**Radici Taurasi 1998
Mastroberardino (Italy)**

Grapes: Aglianico

Price: € 16,55

Score: ◆◆◆

The wine shows a ruby red color with evident nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency. The nose reveals a series of

fruit aromas such as black cherry, cherry, bilberry and plum followed by pleasing hints of black pepper, dried rose, toasted and vanilla. A clean and pleasing nose. The mouth has pleasing tannins well balanced by alcohol with slight flavors of black pepper, very pleasing. The finish is persistent with evident hints of black cherry, plum and bilberry as well as hints of black pepper. Radici Taurasi is aged for 24 months in cask followed by an aging in bottle for at least 12 months.

Food match: Hard cheese, Braised meat, Broiled meat and barbecue, Roasted meat



**Moscato TerrAntica
Casano (Italy)**

Grapes: Moscato Bianco

Price: € 5,00 (\$ 5.00)

Score: ◆◆◆★

The wine shows a deep amber yellow color with nuances of amber yellow, transparent. The nose denotes the typical characteristics of the grape with intense and pleasing aromas of dried apricot, anise, candied fruit, caramel, dried fig, marzipan and raisins. The mouth corresponds to the aromas perceived to the nose and reveals a pleasing roundness and sweetness as well as a good alcohol. The finish is very persistent with long and pleasing hints of dried apricot, dried fig, candied fruit and aromatic hints of Muscat.

Food match: Confectionery, Piquant cheese

WINE PRODUCERS

Castelinho

In the Douro region, homeland of the renowned and excellent Port wines, Castelinho devotes its passion to grape and land, producing excellent wines, from outstanding still wines to magnificent Ports

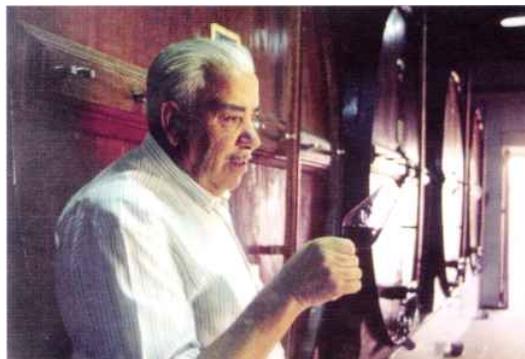
Thinking about Portugal it is almost impossible not to think about Port wines, the renowned fortified wines known for their excellent elegance. Portugal wines are not just Port and Port also means Douro, one of the best quality wine areas of Portugal. In this area, besides Port, are also produced excellent wines with local grapes which are sometimes rich, full bodied and elegant. Castelinho Vinhos is devoted to both Port style wines and still wines, a combination which is capable of proving the high quality of this winery.

Quinta do Castelinho, the former name of the winery which is still used for their Port style wines, has always been known as a high quality wine producer and is currently associated to the Saraiva family. The winery is headed today by Manuel António Crúzio Saraiva who runs the company and continues the work that was started by his father, in the 1960's, in the name of Port wines greatness. Nowadays Quinta do Castelinho is one of the biggest producers of Port wine as a result of their efforts in promoting their own brand name. Castelinho Vinhos is located after Cachão da Valeira and benefits of a privileged geographical condition, with a micro climate influenced by both Atlantic and Mediterranean conditions, schistose soil which allows constant heat concentration, well positioned slopes in the region with generous and balanced amounts of sunlight and a careful selection of the best Portuguese grape varieties such as *Touriga Nacional*, *Touriga Francesa*, *Tinta Barroca* and *Tinta Roriz*. Castelinho's vineyards and winery are located in the S. João da Pasqueira area, in the heart of Cima Corgo, classified as "A", the highest classification given by regulating authorities. Sheltered by the basin formed in the region, Quinta do Castelinho region consists of approximately 120 acres, 50 of which are vineyards.

Quinta do Castelinho is located inside the Douro valley, the first demarcated region in the world by Marquês de Pombal who ordered in 1757 that the borders of the valley be marked with solid granite markers. The past of Quinta do Castelinho accom-



Quinta do Castelinho



Mr. Manuel António Saraiva (father)

panies the history of Port wine; the early days of the winery coincide with the coming down of the stone boulders that crossed the Douro river and made it possible to navigate from Oporto to Barca d'Alva. From October 22, 1789 all farms located before Cachão da Valeira, including Castelinho, could finally progress. In 1848 Quinta do Castelinho linked Quinta do Padrão, Quinta da Azenha, Quinta do Vau and Quinta do Pelão, all indicated on Baron Forrester's map. In 1903 Quinta do Castelinho belonged to Mr. A. P. Ferreira Múaze and at that time, with a perimeter of 11 Km, was considered to be quite extensive. Around 1939 Mrs. Berta Damasceno Ribeiro Meda was in charge of the property, being then passed onto Mr. Mário Alberto Milhano and finally to Manuel António Saraiva, father of the company's current chairman of the board. When Quinta do Castelinho was acquired in 1969, Manuel Anónio Saraiva (father) was responsible for the transportation of Port wine through his transportation company located in Pinhão. At that time, all wine produced on properties in the Douro region was then transported to export companies located in Vila Nova de Gaia. In 1986, with the establishment of the Douro Trading Center, Quinta do Castelinho launches its own brand name and is nowadays well positioned in the Port wine business. In 1990 the company changed its name to Quinta Castelinho and in the same decade changed it again to Castelinho Vinhos. Three years later Castelinho Vinhos S.A. became one of the first producers of Port wine to export directly from the demarcated region of Douro and, in the following years, acquired Quinta de S. Domingos, where they built a warehouse to stock and to age wine, along with the main administrative office and a reception center for tourism.

Symbolizing the excellence of Portugal, Port wine, as we know it, first came into the market in 1820. Because of its unique taste, this sweet and fine wine captivated the English bourgeois in the beginning of the century, making one of the most appreciated wine in the world. Port wine is a fortified wine which is obtained by stopping the fermentation process by adding brandy from grapes. There are two types of Port: red and white. White Port is exclusively made of white grapes and follows wine making procedures similar to red Port wine production. Whit an alcohol level from 9% to 22%, they are characterized by sweetness from very sweet (the so called "*Lágrima*"), to sweet ("*Doces*"), semi sweet ("*Meios Doces*"), dry ("*Secos*") and extra dry ("*Ex-*

tra Secos”). As for red Ports, there are two major groups: the ones produced from non dated lots, made up from a mixed lot (Ruby, Tawny, 10, 20, 30, 40 years older and even older) and dated Ports (Vintage, *Late Bottled Vintage* or LBV in short, and Dated Ports). Because of the number of years in which Port wine age as well as the container (wooden barrel or bottle), it acquires a great variety of aromas and flavors which are complex and rich.

Quinta do Castelinho produces a complete range of Port wines, from standard wines to special categories. Standard categories consist of delicately fruity young wines ideal to drink daily. Standard Port wines produced by the winery include White Port, Tawny, obtained from lots aged in casks and usually has an average age of 3 years, and Ruby, a young and fruity Port wine obtained by blending recent wines. Special category Ports, that is superior quality Port wines, include Tawny Port, released as Reserve, 10, 20, 30 and 40 years old and dated, Ruby colored Port, released as Vintage Character, LBV and Vintage. Among Port wines, the ones which certainly are considered the best are the glamorous Vintages which are produced only in the very best years, in limited quantities, and with the best grapes. Quinta do Castelinho has produced great Vintages throughout the 1990's, namely in 1991, 1994, 1996 and especially in 1997. Vintage Ports are intended to be saved in cellars in order to allow their astonishing and astounding development, something that can be tasted by the ones who are patient and want to very best from Vintage ports.

Quinta do Castelinho is also excellent still wines. Although the fame and prestige of Port wines has throughout the century overshadowed the quality of Douro table wines, nowadays the Douro still wines, being recognized as *Denominação de Ori-*



Mr. Manuel António Crúzio Saraiva, Chairman of Castelinho Vinhos

gem Controlada (Controlled Denomination of Origin), in short *DOC*, are a great venture for the region and it is where Quinta do Castelinho has one of its greatest assets. In order to achieve this, Quinta do Castelinho selects the most adequate grapes of its property, as well as obtaining the best grapes of some neighboring farms in the Cima Corgo region. All the conditions exist in its wine making center to produce high quality Douro wines, white and red, including an area where wine ages in new French and American oak barrels. The following wines produced by Quinta do Castelinho have been very successful at a national and international level: Douro Castelinho Colheita, Castelinho Reserva and Lagar dos Saraivas. Most recently Castelinho has extended its activity to some of Portugal's best wine regions, bottling wines from the Alentejo, Dão and Vinho Verde with their own brand names. At the same time they have expanded their product line to include a Bagaceira brandy and a very old wine brandy, aged in oak casks for more than 35 years.



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



Quinta do Castelinho Porto Vintage 1999 Castelinho Vinhos (Portugal)

Grapes: Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca, Touriga Francesa

Price: € 13,57

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine shows a ruby red color and nuances of purplish red, little transparency. The nose reveals pleasing aromas of black berried fruit such as black cherry, cherry macerated in alcohol, bilberry and mulberry as well as an intense and very pleasing aroma of violet followed by hints of vanilla. The mouth denotes good balance, intense, full bodied and good correspondence to the nose, good tannins well balanced by alcohol and good roundness. The finish is persistent with clean and pleasing hints of violet and black cherry. A very good Port which will certainly improve with some more bottle aging.

Food match: Hard and fermented cheese, Fruit tarts, Confectionery



**Quinta do Castelinho Porto LBV 1997
Castelinho Vinhos (Portugal)**

Grapes: Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca, Touriga
Francesa

Price: € 5,93

Score: ◇◇◇◇★

The wine has a ruby red color and nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency. The nose reveals intense and persistent aromas, clean and very elegant with great personality. There can be perceived aromas of black cherry, cherry jam, strawberry jam, bilberry and mulberry as well as as intense and pleasing aroma of violet. In the mouth is round, soft, balanced with good correspondence to the nose, good balance between alcohol and tannins. The finish is very persistent with clean and very long hints of violet and cherry. Excellent Port which will be capable of giving great emotions with a further aging in bottle.

Food match: Hard and fermented cheese, Fruit tarts, Confectionery



**Quinta do Castelinho Porto Tawny 10 Anos
Castelinho Vinhos (Portugal)**

Grapes: Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca, Touriga
Francesa

Price: € 7,40

Score: ◇◇◇◇◇

Excellent 10 years old Port. The wine shows a deep orange red color and nuances of orange red, transparent. The nose is rich, intense and of great personality, with clean and elegant aromas of black cherry jam, cherry jam, almond, licorice, cocoa, leather, dried fig and and elegant touch of dried violet and vanilla. In the mouth is rich, complex and has good correspondence to the nose, soft tannins well balanced by alcohol. The finish is very persistent with very long, elegant and pleasing hints of dried violet, dried fig and cherry jam. A great Port, very well made and

elegant which will give rich and intense emotions even when enjoyed alone.

Food match: Hard and fermented cheese, Dried fruit



**Quinta do Castelinho Porto Tawny 20 Anos
Castelinho Vinhos (Portugal)**

Grapes: Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca, Touriga
Francesa

Price: € 10,34

Score: ◇◇◇◇◇

Magnificent 20 years old Port. The wine shows a deep amber yellow color and nuances of amber yellow, transparent. The nose is rich, elegant and of great personality with intense aromas, clean, complex and harmonious. There can be perceived aromas of caramel, fig jam, plum jam, chocolate, leather, mushrooms, almond, rhubarb and cinchona as well as hints of vanilla sugar. In mouth reveals an excellent correspondence to the nose, rich, intense and complex, harmonious and well balanced. The finish is very persistent with pleasing, elegant and very elegant hints of caramel, fig jam and plum jam. A great and magnificent Port, rich in emotions which can be tasted alone in complete meditation.

Food match: Hard and fermented cheese, Dried fruit



**Douro 1999
Castelinho Vinhos (Portugal)**

Grapes: Tinta Roriz, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Barroca

Price: € 1,84

Score: ◇◇◇◇

The wine shows a ruby red color and nuances of purplish red, moderate transparency. The nose reveals pleasing aromas, clean and elegant, mainly of fruit, such as black cherry, strawberry, raspberry and mulberry followed by eucalyptus, violet and

vanilla. In mouth has good correspondence to the nose, full bodied and good balance between tannins and alcohol. The finish is persistent with evident hints of raspberry, strawberry and black cherry.

Food match: Game, Braised meat, Stewed meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese



**Douro Reserva 1999
Castelinho Vinhos (Portugal)**

Grapes: Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca, Touriga Francesa

Price: € 3,24

Score: ♦♦♦♦★

The wine shows a brilliant ruby red color and nuances of purplish red, little transparency. The nose denotes elegance with clean, refined and intense aromas of black cherry, raspberry, bilberry, plum and black currant followed by licorice, violet and vanilla. In mouth reveals full body with good correspondence to the nose. The attack is pretty alcoholic however well balanced by tannins. The finish is persistent with hints of black cherry, plum and black currant. This wine is aged in American oak barrels until it is being bottled.

Food match: Game, Braised meat, Stewed meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese



**Douro Lagar dos Saraivas 1999
Castelinho Vinhos (Portugal)**

Grapes: Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa

Price: € 13,28

Score: ♦♦♦♦♦

Simply a great wine. This wine has an intense ruby red color and nuances of purplish red, little transparency. The nose reveals great personality with clean, elegant and refined aromas. There can be perceived aromas of black cherry jam, bilberry and black currant followed by licorice, eucalyptus, coffee, vanilla and toasted. The mouth denotes excellent correspondence to the

nose, excellent balance and full body. The finish is very persistent with long and pleasing hints of black cherry jam and black currant. Exceptional wine.

Food match: Game, Braised meat, Stewed meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese

Castelinho Vinhos S.A. - Quinta de S. Domingos, Apartado 140 - 5054-909 Peso da Régua (Portugal) Tel. +351 254 320 100 Fax +351 254 320 109 - **E-Mail:** castelinho@castelinho-vinhos.pt - **WEB:** www.castelinho-vinhos.pt

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

Wine Glasses

Wine's appreciation is also expressed by a correct use of the glass, a fundamental element that, together with the other ones, is capable of revealing wine's qualities

Wine glass is that precious container made of glass or crystal which makes possible the evaluation and appreciation of every organoleptic aspect of wine, from appearance to aromas, as well as exalting its flavors properly. Every wine has different characteristics from every other else and every one, in order to better express the best of itself, needs both adequate service conditions, such as temperature, and adequate glasses having specific shapes and characteristics for the evaluation of its aspects.

Characteristics

Glasses for the service of wine come in different shapes and materials, having different characteristics and, sometimes, with useless decorations which surely make the glass more pleasing to see but are detrimental for the appreciation of wine. One of the fundamental characteristics for a good wine glass is that it must allow the proper appreciation of wine's aspect, therefore it must be colorless, transparent, with no decorations or facets.

Wine glass must preferably be made of crystal, however half-crystal or superior glass are more than acceptable. Despite the fact crystal glasses are charming and attracting, because of their typical fragility, as well as because of their high cost, they are often bought or given just to be shown in wine lover's houses: the idea that they can easily break, mainly during washing, it is a preoccupation many persons have. No matter the kind of material glasses are made of, crystal or superior glass, it is important for them to be thin, possibly less than one millimeter. A greater thickness, besides being unpleasing when in contact with lips, would influence the perception of some tactile sensations.

Wine glasses should always have the typical stemware shape, a sufficiently large base in order to keep them vertically stable, a long stem and the shape of body capable of exalting each style of wine. The importance of these characteristics being present in a wine glass is essential because they allow to appreciate a wine better and to alter it the least possible. A long stem avoids, for example, the hand to be in proximity of the body of glass with the risk of altering the temperature of wine as well as being closer to the nose and therefore influencing the perception of aromas. For this reason wine glass must always be held to the base, or at least to the lower part of the stem, never to the body. Lastly it should be remembered a glass must be filled no more than one third of its total volume.

Types and Shapes

Every wine has proper organoleptic characteristics which are different from any other, for this reason, every wine should be served in a proper glass capable of exalting its characteristics. Wine glasses come in different shapes and characteristics, sometimes considered as "extreme" because of some producers who tend to make specific shapes and styles, not only for certain wines, but also for specific wines made of certain grapes or coming from certain areas. In case anyone would really buy everything made by wine glass producers as well as everything available on the market, every wine lover would need a proper room to be destined for keeping glasses, a condition that, probably, just few can afford.

However it must be said that the shape of glass helps a wine to express better and every glass usually is the result of specific studies and researches, both on the organoleptic perception of aromas and flavors, as well as on characteristics and physical conditions that favor their perception. Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7 show the most common used wine glass shapes for the service of this beverage. This does not mean every wine lover must have all these kind of glasses, having just four or five of them suitable for

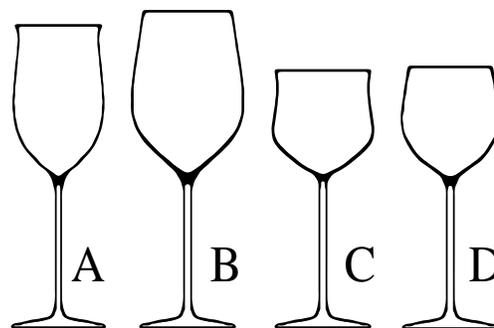


Fig. 4: Glasses for White and Rose Wines

every wine style is surely acceptable.

Glasses for White and Rose Wines

Figure 4 shows some types of glasses suitable for the service of white and rose wines.

- **Young and Crisp White Wines** (Fig. 4.A) - The main characteristic of this glass is the shape of the opening which tends to enlarge in respect of the body. When a wine is introduced in the mouth, this particular shape directs the liquid mainly to the tip of the tongue, more sensitive to sweetness, and therefore to the sides of the tongue, more sensitive to acidity. This glass is also suitable for young and crisp wines having a certain quantity of residual sugars that should be emphasized. The shape of the glass also allows the concentration of aromas towards the nose while emphasizing the perception of delicate and fruit aromas of young wines.
- **Bodied and Mature White Wines** (Fig. 4.B) - The larger body and a greater opening will allow a better perception of complex aromas of mature white wines. Structured and mature white wines will be properly emphasized in the mouth because of the straight opening which will direct the wine to the sides and to the back of the tongue, and finally reaching the tip in order to properly evaluate its roundness.
- **Young and Crisp Rose Wines** (Fig. 4.C) - In this kind of glass are valid all the considerations expressed for young white wines' glass; the enlarged opening directs the wine to the tip of the tongue, more sensitive to sweetness, in order to make the wine appear more balanced. Another characteristic of this glass is the large body which allows an adequate oxygenation and therefore a correct development of aromas.
- **Bodied and Mature Rose Wines** (Fig. 4.D) - In this kind of glass are valid the considerations expressed for structured and mature white wines. The larger shape of the body allows an adequate oxygenation of wine as well as the development of aromas.

Glasses for Red Wines

Figure 5 shows some types of glasses suitable for the service of red wines.

- **Young Red Wines** (Fig. 5.A) - This glass is fundamentally the same used for bodied and mature white wines, as a matter of fact it can be used the very same glass. This kind of wine, having rather aggressive tannins, when present, must mainly stimulate the inner parts of the mouth while avoiding, at least in the initial phase as the wine is introduced in the oral cavity, the contact with gum because the astringency would originate an unpleasing tactile sensation. The body of the glass must also be large in order to allow an adequate oxygenation and development of aromas.
- **Bodied or Mature Red Wines** (Fig. 5.B) - The considerations expressed for the previous glass are also valid for this one. The differences are to be found in the height and width of the glass, in this case greater, as well as the opening which is narrower in order to concentrate complex aromas, originated by the aging of wine both in bottle and in cask, towards the nose.
- **Full Bodied and Very Mature Red Wines** (Fig. 5.C) - The characteristic of this glass is its large size, with a rather wide body in order to allow a proper oxygenation of red wines aged for a long time in bottle and with tannins that reached a milder and rounder state. The wide shape of this glass also allows to avoid, when possible, the decanting of wine, thanks to its width it makes possible a proper oxygenation of wine while developing complex and tertiary aromas which will be concentrated towards the narrow opening. Moreover, the opening is tall and straight in order to direct the wine to the back of the mouth, exactly for the very same reason applied to every other glass for red wines. Because of its characteristics, this glass is to be used for wines produced with very robust grapes such as Sangiovese or Cabernet Sauvignon.
- **Full Bodied and Very Mature Red Wines** (Fig. 5.D) - This glass represents a variant of the previous one and the difference is to be found in its opening which tends to en-

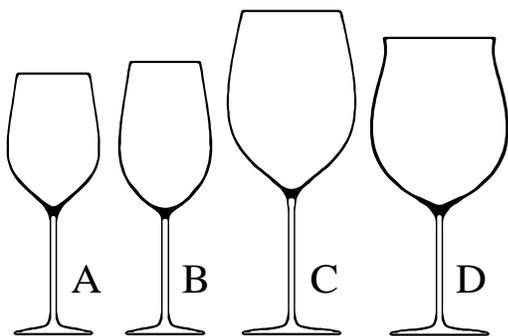


Fig. 5: Glasses for Red Wines

large. This characteristic directs the wine towards the tip of the tongue, more sensitive to sweetness, and is useful for those wines that after a long time of aging tend to exalt their acid component, such as Pinot Noir or Nebbiolo.

Glasses for Sweet and Fortified Wines

Figure 6 shows some types of glasses suitable for the service of sweet and fortified wines.

- **Sweet Wines** (Fig. 6.A) - This glass has little size having a wide body and a narrow opening in order to exalt both the development of aromas and their concentration to the nose. The reduced size suggests the service of a tiny quantity of wine which is also a common habit for these kind of wines. The straight opening allows the wine to be directed towards the back of the oral cavity in order not to excessively exalt the sweetness and therefore avoiding the wine to appear “sickly”.
- **Fortified Wines** (Fig. 6.B) - As opposed to the previous glass, the height of the body is greater and the opening is accentuated, however the size of this glass is rather little. Its longer height allows a better development of complex and intense aromas of fortified wines, such as Marsala, Sherry (Jerez), Porto and Madeira. The accentuated opening makes this glass particularly suited for dry fortified wines because the liquid will be directed to the tip of the tongue, more sensitive to sweetness, in order to better contribute to wine’s balance.

Glasses for Sparkling Wines

Figure 7 shows some types of glasses suitable for the service of sparkling wines.

- **Method “Charmat” Wines** (Fig. 7.A) - This glass, called *demi-flûte*, has a narrow and tall body in order to encourage the development of *perlage* in sparkling wines. Its height, which is shorter than a regular *flûte*, makes this glass suitable for dry sparkling wines produced with the *Charmat* or

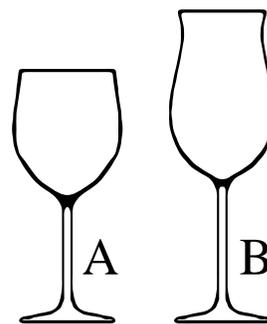


Fig. 6: Glasses for Sweet and Fortified Wines

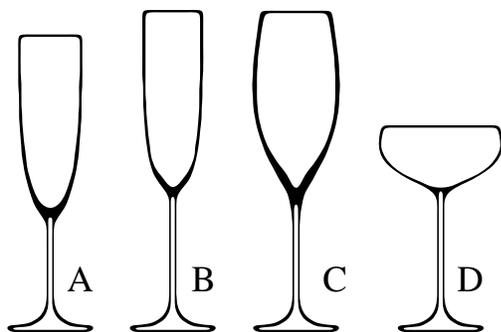


Fig. 7: Glasses for Sparkling Wines

Martinotti method, which usually have a less refined *perlage* with coarser bubbles. The very narrow diameter favor a slow and continuous development of carbon dioxide as well as allowing a good concentration of delicate aromas towards the nose.

- **Classic Method Wines** (Fig. 7.B) - This glass, called *flûte*, has a narrow and tall body in order to favor and appreciate the development of the refined *perlage* typical for this sparkling wines produced with the classic method. Its narrow diameter also promotes the perception of fresh and delicate aromas, therefore this kind of glass is suitable for young and non vintage classic method sparkling wines.
- **Mature and Vintage Classic Method Wines** (Fig. 7.C) - This is a *flûte* having a larger body and narrow opening, characteristics which allow the oxygenation of wine and therefore a proper development of complex and tertiary aromas of the mature and vintage classic method sparkling wines, without compromising the development and the appreciation of *perlage*.
- **Aromatic Sweet Wines** (Fig. 7.D) - This glass, simply called *cup*, is particularly suited for aromatic and sweet sparkling wines, such as Asti Spumante. Because of the aromatic richness of these wines, it is better to serve them in glasses having very large opening, instead of *flûte*, in order to mitigate the aromatic strength of the grape while allowing other aromas to develop. These sparkling wines, usually produced with the *Charmat* method, does not have any particular qualities of finesse in the *perlage*, therefore this is a factor that can be neglected. The opening of the glass, which slightly tends to narrow, will direct the wine to the tip of the tongue in order to exalt wine's sweetness.

Care and Maintenance

Glasses, as they are washed and wiped, must be kept in vertical position and sheltered from dust and intense aromas, it is essential that the glass, at the moment of its use, does not have any "extraneous" odor and must be clean with no stains, lints or dust. It is advisable, as well as every time it is needed, to wipe

and clean the glasses with a towel before disposing them on the table.

Glasses can also be washed in a dishwasher, provided strong smelling soaps are not being used as well as provided they are thoroughly rinsed in order to eliminate any soap residual that would compromise both the visive and olfactory analysis of wine. Particular attention must be paid in case crystal glasses are being washed in a dishwasher: make sure the glasses are sufficiently distant one from each other in order to avoid any possible contact that could break them. The best thing, in case a dishwasher is being used, is not to use any soap at all, unfortunately not every condition or circumstance allow this practice, especially hygienic conditions required for restaurants and bars.

The best way to wash glasses is however hand washing, by using warm water and rinsed with cold water, promptly dried and wiped with a lint-free towel.

NOT JUST WINE

Pasta

The renowned food of the Mediterranean people is capable of creating savory dishes and it is essential for a correct and balanced nutrition

History

Many centuries before Christs, when man abandoned nomad life, he started sowing and harvesting. The history of men accompanied the history of wheat, from generation to generation, man learned better and better to cultivate land and to make use of wheat, to mill it, to make a dough from it by using water, and to cook it over fire. Etruscans and Greeks were known to be consumers of pasta. "Leganon" was the Greek word which meaning was sheet of pastry cut in stripes, from which the Latin word "Laganum" originated, it was cited by Cicero and Horace 100 years before Christ. Slowly this new food began to conquer the empire. A more precise reference about pasta is dated 1154, when the Arab geographer "Al-Idrin", in a kind of touristic guide, he mentions "a food made of flour and string shaped" called 'Triyah' (from the Arab word Itrija) which is exported from Palermo in casks all over the peninsula".

In some writing of the Genoese notary Ugolino Scarpa describing the inventory of a dead sailor, we find a paper where there was written "a cask full of macaroni", it was 1279. This date is important because we know Marco Polo came back from China in 1295, therefore this contradict the legend which says "he was the one who introduced pasta to the western countries". Moreover this legend is not believable because the pasta known in China had nothing in common with the one known in Italy which was made with durum wheat.

It is believed pasta, in the form of macaroni, originated from Sicily where "it was prepared a food in the shape of strings". The fact that in the Arab language existed a word to refer to this

food, makes think it was an Arab invention. Unfortunately no document can prove this, indeed the word “macaroni” has not a precise etymology. Until 1700 there is lot of confusion, the many styles of pasta are classified as macaroni, until Neapolitans, which consumed a lot of pasta, made use of this term and used it to identify long string shaped pasta. The first pictures of the 1800’s depict “macaronari” at the sides of streets being very busy on big pots while cooking and selling pasta seasoned with cheese and pepper.

From this moment on macaroni, referred as long string shaped pasta, round and solid, will be called spaghetti and everyone in Italy will call this pasta like that, not just Neapolitans. It should be observed that pasta, in its simpler form, is a very ancient food which had rather independent origins. It seems not to be correct to talk about an invention, indeed it was just a normal use of a raw material. The “inventors” of the drying process were the Arab people living in the desert, as they had no plenty of water in order to make pasta everyday, they invented a way to pack it in cylinders and to subsequently dry them, in order to prolong its preservability.

One of the most ancient cookbooks certainly is the one written by “Ibn ‘al Mibrad”, in the ninth century, where it is cited a very common dish among Berber tribes, which is still known in Syria and Lebanon, called Rista, a sort of pasta seasoned with lentils. In 1474 Bartolomeo Sacchi, historian and prefect of the Vatican library, wrote a cookbook where it is cited a drying technique in order to better preserve pasta.

While in the regions with a dry and windy climate pasta was dried by leaving it in open air, in the northern regions of Italy they were “forced” to invent the “carousel”, a tool made of wood, placed in a warm room and wheeled by means of hydraulic force or by an animal, in order to dry pasta. In the 1500’s masters of pasta began to associate and established corporations in the Italian cities where this activity was not flourishing and pasta makers could ally with bakers; these corporations became very powerful and they succeeded in imposing fines and body penalties to anyone who sold pasta and was not a baker. Another historical information, which is useful in understanding the spreading and the importance of this food, is found in a papal paper where Urbano VIII imposed a minimal distance of 24 meters (26 yards) from one pasta shop to another. It was 1641.

Until 1700 pasta was produced without using any machinery, feet were the tools used to knead water and flour, and it was Ferdinand II, king of the Two Sicilies, to hire the scientist Cesare Spadaccini to create a mechanical process. Around the half of the 1800’s were introduced hydraulic presses, steam machines and hydraulic force machines, but it was only in 1930 that was introduced the very first machine that could do all the work for the productive process. As the time passed by, the process of making pasta has drastically changed, however the product remained the same. In Italy fresh pasta is mainly made with wheat flour, whereas dried pasta is exclusively made with durum wheat flour. The difference between wheat flour and durum wheat flour is fundamental because only durum wheat flour contains the proper gluten which allows dried pasta to not overcook and to remain “al dente”.

The literature often mentions pasta, among the many: “. . . and there was a mountain of ground Parmesan cheese and on it were a lot of people and the only thing they made were macaroni to be cooked in capon broth, and then they were throwing them down. . .”, from Boccaccio’s Decamerone; moreover, “besides good manners, however, the aspect of those monumental pasta pies was worth of the best admiration. The browned gold of the outside, the fragrance of sugar and cinnamon coming out from it, were just the prelude of the delicious sensation coming out from the inside, when the knife cut the crust: a dense smoke full of aromas came out first and then there could be seen chicken livers, hard eggs, ham, chicken and truffles in the unctuous mass, very hot, and short macaroni, to which meat extract gave them a precious deer color”, from Giuseppe Tomasi from Lampedusa’s “Il Gattopardo”. Another interesting work is also the “Li macheroni di Napoli” (The macaronis of Naples) by Antonio Viviani. This poem is dated 1824 and it narrates in a poetic language, among the many things, the many phases of the pasta making and gives a good idea of the real Neapolitan situation of that time. It is important to notice that in this poem, for the first time, it is found the word “spaghetti”.

In the beginning of the 1900 the literature is not interested in macaroni anymore, both as a literal argument and as a term, commonly replaced by words such as “pastasciutta” or “spaghetti”.

In the 1500’s pasta goes beyond the Italian border and starts spreading aboard. France was one of the first countries, also thanks to Caterina de’Medici and Platina who contributed to spread the cooking traditions of Italy. It is not clear how pasta arrived in England, however it is mentioned in a dictionary of that time. In the 1700’s pasta was so spread and was used to title the comedy “the macaroni”.

In the 1700’s pasta also arrives in America and it is said statesman Jefferson, after a journey in Italy, wanted to buy the needed machineries for making pasta in order to have it known in its country. It is more likely that were Italian emigrants who stowed ships with spaghetti and macaroni to introduce pasta in that country. The spreading was very rapid and the main character of the 1700’s ballad “Yankee Doodle” is depicted with a macaroni in the hat. Nowadays there are a number of “Spaghetti House” in America as well as a number of recipes made of pasta.

What is Pasta

The kind of wheats used to make pasta are two: durum wheat (*Triticum durum*) and wheat (*Triticum vulgare*). The first one is milled in order to produce durum wheat flour and is mainly used to make pasta. The second one is milled and the flour is used to make homemade egg-pasta, as well as other recipes. At the sight these two kind of wheats does not show big differences, durum wheat’s grain is a little longer and is more opaque, whereas the grain of wheat is opaque and rounder. Durum wheat grows in the sunny lands of Italy, whereas the other kind prefers a wet and calm climate such as the one of the Po Valley of north Italy. This is probably the reason why dried pasta is most consumed in south Italy whereas in the northern area egg-pasta is consumed the most.

Until 1700 mills remained practically the same, it was used a millstone made of two flat stones, the lower was fixed to the ground and the upper, having a hole in the center, was wheeled. Wheat was poured on the central hole of the upper stone, it was wheeled and from its sides was obtained flour.

The most important machine of the pasta factory was the kneading-machine. It was made of a round tank of wood and a vertical millstone which was wheeled, in the inside was put flour and lukewarm water and then the kneading process was started, in the beginning by hand and subsequently by means of this machine. This kind of machine had a defect: it crushed flour's grains and made the dough too elastic and scarcely resistant. In Naples another technique was used instead: the flour and hot water were initially kneaded by feet, then the process was continued with the kneading-machine. The next phase consisted in putting the dough in a container having a long pole in it, one side was in contact with the dough and on the other side were sitting 2 or 3 men, and by following the rhythm of a song, they stood up and sat down in order to lower and raise the pole which pressed and released the dough. This bizarre method allowed the flour's grains to tie one each other without any damage, and giving the dough the right granularity and softness which made it a superior product. The dough, no matter the way it was produced, was divided in little parts and put in a press where they were forcibly pressed against the die-plate, a bronze disc with holes according to the style of pasta to be produced, and the dough passed through it and was shaped accordingly.

The consumption increase stimulated brilliant minds in order to find new solutions in order to help man in the process of production. In the 1800's were introduced the first kneading-machines, which replaced the work done by feet. The old presses that were manually wheeled were replaced by those operated by hydraulic force. However there still was a problem: the press, as it was emptied, when it reached the end of the course, it had to be pulled back and refilled. The problem was solved in 1917, when a certain Sandragné, by applying the technique used to make bricks, built a machine that, instead of using a piston to press the dough against the die-plate, made use of a continuous screw that, by working inside the dough, it could take it and press it without interruptions. Anyway it was the continuous press that was considered as the real step forward for the production of pasta, introduced in 1930, it allowed the kneading and the pressing of pasta against the die-plate without interrupting the production process.

Even after these revolutions and improvements, the process still remained at an artisan level. The drying process was done by expert workers, by exposing or withdrawing, according to the meteorological conditions, the spaghetti that were hanged in long poles. Pasta factories located in regions having favorable climate conditions had, of course, an advantage over the other ones. In order to go beyond the artisan process and reach the industrial stage, we must wait for the artificial drying process to be invented. Only at this point pasta could be produced in every Italian region.

Kneading-machines, presses and poles are not found in modern pasta factories anymore. A modern pasta factory is aseptic, with huge machineries and few persons in charge of controlling

the production process which is done by robots that process wheat, from milling to the finished product, in order to obtain spaghetti and macaroni ready to be consumed. Modern production processes have little or nothing to do with the older ones. Flour produced by the mill is "hydrated" with pure water, then the kneading process is done in a vacuum environment in order to prevent the formation of air bubbles in the dough and to obtain a softer and more brilliant dough. In this way starch and proteins melt with water and therefore gluten is being formed, a proteinic chain which keeps together hydrated starch grains. The dough therefore gets its typical aspect.

At this point the dough is being pushed against die-plates where spaghetti are therefore obtained, they are grouped and hanged in poles ready to be transferred in drying rooms. The drying process lasts about 8 hours, until the humidity lowers to about 12.5%. The drying process varies according to the style of pasta to be made, it is very important because it gives pasta higher preservability, moreover stabilizes the raw materials while exalting organoleptic properties, as well as optimizing its characteristics for a good cooking. The process consists in ventilating pasta with a hot air stream, followed by a cooling process in order to have pasta at a room temperature. At this point pasta is ready to be packed.

Because of the increasing diffusion pasta had, every region developed own recipes, with seasonings going from simple and light to more elaborate and rich. Pasta basically is a neutral ingredient and therefore is well suited to be used with seasonings of many styles, from sweet to salty, however there are some rules to know: long shaped pasta, thin and round are better suited for robust seasonings based on oil; short shapes pasta or egg-pasta is fine for sauces which make use of bechamel or heavy-cream.

Properly cooking pasta is not difficult, provided some basic rules are being followed. Use a proper pan that must be sufficiently large. The height should be greater than the width and large enough to contain the right quantity of water, at least one liter (33.8 fl.oz.) for every 100 grams of pasta (3.5 oz), however it is better to use a greater quantity of water in order to allow pasta to open up and not to remain massed, moreover as the pasta is cooking, it needs a constant quantity of heat, and this is more easy to obtain with the proper quantity of water. As far as salt is concerned, the standard quantity is 10 grams (0.35 oz.) for every liter of water, to be added only when the water starts boiling. Before pouring pasta, wait for the salt to be completely dissolved and water to resume boiling. Cooking times, besides being a matter of personal preferences, vary according to the shape and the thickness of pasta. Pasta must be poured at once and in the center of the pan, stirred from time to time by using a wooden spoon or a carving-fork. As the pasta is properly cooked, before draining, it is better to pour a glass of cold water in the pan in order to stop cooking. It is better to serve pasta "al dente" because it is more digestible and it is preferable to add sauces and seasonings while it is still hot.

The bad habit of cooking pasta in two different phases is to be avoided: the first cooking and the subsequent final cooking before being served will make pasta to lose elasticity and brillianess.

How to recognize good pasta? Qualitative factors are: hygiene of the packing, the area of origin of wheat, any possible additive, the characteristics of wheat and the production process. A good quality flour must have evenly sized grains and not excessively thin, because during the production process, as water is being added, a too thin flour would compromise the proteinic structure and therefore the consistency and the capacity of being cooked properly.

A production phase apparently just connected to an aesthetic aspect is drawing which represents a very important process. Today many producers tend to replace the classical bronze die-plates with modern steel or Teflon die-plates. The final result is that a pasta drawn in bronze die-plates has a proper roughness that will keep sauces, a characteristic that cannot be obtained with steel or Teflon die-plates, which usually tend to exalt the brillianess of the product.

Times and methods for the drying process vary from six to eight hours, from 40° to 80° C. (104°-176° F). Currently there is the tendency to increase the drying temperature because it was observed that the overall structure of the product is improved and gets a better consistency during cooking.

Before buying pasta, it is better to remember that a good dry pasta must be kept in a perfectly whole package, it must have a straw yellow color, there must not be white or black stains, the aspect must be homogeneous, there must not be any air bubble, it must have a pleasing taste and aroma, there must not be any molds, there must not be any larvae or parasites as well as extraneous bodies, and the pasta package must be kept in a cool and dry environment.

A certain stickiness can be a sign of an imperfect production technology or a mixed flour made of wheat and durum wheat.

Some Nutrition Facts

One hundred grams of pasta (3.5 oz.) has an energetic value of about 360 Kcal and contains about 73% of complex carbohydrates (starches), about 12% of proteins, about 12% of water, 2-3% of fibers, a negligible contents of fats, as well as vitamins B1, B2 and PP and mineral salts. Pasta does not contain any fat and this characteristic makes this food a source of healthy energy for the body. Other elements not present in pasta are vitamins A, C and D, this is something our ancestors knew already, and for this reason they used to eat pasta with legumes, such as beans and chickpeas, fish and aromatic herbs rich in vitamin C. Pasta is advised to anyone who wants to lose weight because provokes satiety and it is a good regulator of the bowel functions.

Pasta is the ideal food to be consumed before doing a heavy physical activity as it is rich in carbohydrates capable of giving the necessary energy to the whole body, moreover it is a food easily digestible.

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	➤ Semillon Sauvignon 2001, Cape Mentelle
2	▲ Masseto 1998, Tenuta dell'Ornellaia
3	↔ Chardonnay 2000, Planeta
4	➤ Château Lynch-Bages Pauillac 2000
5	➤ Capo di Stato 1998, Conte Loredan Gasparin
6	➤ Teroldego Rotaliano Granato 1998, Foradori
7	▲ Muffato della Sala 1999, Castello della Sala
8	▲ Château Pontet-Canet Pauillac 2000
9	▲ Rioja Reserva "Pagos Viejos" 1997, Bodega Artadi - Cosecheros Alavares
10	↔ Château Laroque Saint-Émilion Grand Cru Classé 1998
11	➤ Zinfandel Barrel Select Mendocino County 1999 - Fetzer Vineyards
12	☆ Sauvignon Blanc 2000, Cakebread
13	☆ Trentino Bianco Villa Margon 2000, Fratelli Lunelli
14	☆ Shiraz 2000, Plantaganet
15	▲ Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 1995, Fattoria dei Barbi

Legend: ➤ up ▲ down ↔ stable ☆ new entry

Classified

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