

DiWINEtaste

Wine Culture and Information

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The Value of Sensorial Tasting

In the sensorial tasting classes I organize or in those where I am invited as a lecturer, as well as in DiWineTaste events or in those where I am invited as a speaker, one of the most recurring questions participants ask me is about wine tasting. In particular, many ask me what the sensorial and organoleptic evaluation of wine is for, that is why one should concentrate, almost obsessively, on the definition of its aromas and flavors. Many believe wine should mainly be seen as a mean to celebrate emotions, in a direct way and with no complications, away from technique and any other technological or analytical implication. Others believe wine should celebrate a land and its tradition, therefore it should be mainly enjoyed as the expression of these elements. Others insist on the fact wine should be appreciated in function of the stories of the places and the people who make it - as well as in function of production visions and philosophy - because this is its true expression.

My answer is always the same and I tell everyone it is a matter of *points of view*, in particular, it depends on what you are looking for or want to find in a glass of wine. Sometimes I see that, for some, wine is mainly the expression of the “stories” and “tales” used for its communication, enough to define it good or bad, right or deplorable, emblem of the saint or devil. There is no doubt wine is the expression of many factors, representing endless cultures and traditions and, as such, it is also seen and interpreted in an absolutely subjective way. It is therefore normal each one of us, no matter of the job or interest for wine, sees in the beverage of Bacchus something different and personal. In this sense, it is normal for those who do not work in the world of wine, like to say, technically, to be scarcely interested in analytic aspects, by even considering them not belonging to wine and far away from the *real nature of wine*.

As for me, my personal interest for wine is mainly of technical nature, therefore, when I do a sensorial tasting, I try to understand wine in a technical way. I am aware, indeed, I strongly believe and say, wine is also the result of countless factors depending on Nature, environmental and meteorological conditions, specific qualities of grape and soil. Likewise, I believe it is the result of the technique men use in cultivating

vine and how the grape is transformed into wine by means of chemical, biological and technical ways. Every product made by the intervention of man, in every form or expression, is the result of his genius and technique. In the specific case of wine, it is also the result of the interaction of man with Nature and what it gives him, by taking advantage of this and according to the goal he wants to achieve.

On this regard, the function of sensorial tasting becomes very important as well as fundamental. Not only a method used to assess the quality of wine, but also for the definition and evaluation of the whole process that from the land takes to wine. Sensorial tasting has a fundamental role and, in the winery - that is the place where a wine is being produced - it is a precious companion for the chemical and biological analysis, something every producers needs to do, either on his or her own or by asking an external laboratory. Not only an analytic method, done by using *human senses*, in order to verify the quality of the production process, as well as for the evaluation of the correspondence to type or style. To be honest, it would be quite superficial and incautious to bottle a wine without exactly knowing what is being put in a bottle. I am not talking about the organoleptic quality of wine only, indeed, I am talking about biological, sanitary and chemical conditions.

Wine sensorial tasting is a discipline taking a lot of commitment, continuous training and concentration. An extremely important tool for the analysis and the evaluation of wine, in particular, for the determination of faults, primary negative factors of wine agreeableness. Moreover, it is an evaluation method capable of telling the characteristics of a territory and its grapes, last but not the least, the way men use these factors in order to make their wines. The obsessive way, like to say, used to recognize wine aromas and to identify them by analogy to the aromatic characteristics of other elements, has a very important role. First of all, the correspondence and recognizability of grapes, territories, viticultural and wine making practices, not less important, mistakes or faults occurred during production. For example, in case we are perceiving in a wine made from Chardonnay the aroma of cherry, we should ask ourselves, at the very least, about the wine making tech-

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niques used for the production of that wine.

However, sensorial tasting is not an infallible discipline, as it is strongly affected by the skill and culture of the taster and, sometimes, by his or her personal preference and taste. Despite of this, it is a fundamental and important analysis in order to better understand a wine and the same is true for the tasting of food, tea, beer, olive oil and any other food or beverage. It is a useful practice to understand the potentials and specific characteristics of grape, territories, viticultural and wine making techniques, the skill and talent of man as a “vintner and wine maker”. On this regard, sensorial tasting leaves little room to emotions and the *romantic* side of wine, two aspects mainly focused on the subjective and *ephemeral* interpretation, mostly associated to the mood of the moment. In other words, it is about two ways to consider a wine and the context in which it is expressed, mainly determined by what one looks for or wants to see in a wine. The goal of sensorial tasting, among the other things, is also about the development and training of senses, including memory and the evocative sense, the same as music, painting, cooking and any other artistic expression. For this reason, based on my own experience of taster, last but not the least, being an explorer of sensations and emotions - of life, intellect, food or beverages - I do consider sensorial tasting an art.

Antonello Biancalana



WINE TASTING

Contrasts of Grignolino and Gaglioppo

Two red berried varieties so different in many regards, including the lands in which are cultivated and give wines from them: the former in Piedmont, the latter in Calabria

The richness of grapes cultivated in Italy has no equals in any other place of the world. From North to South, every region has its own indigenous varieties, sometimes found in other regions as well, sometimes even spread in large areas of the country. To these grapes should also be counted the so called *international* varieties, that is spread in many wine countries of the world and usually having a French origin. A huge heritage capable of making a countless number of wines, each being the expression of its land and the men who make them. If we then consider the wines produced by assembling different grapes, the combinations are virtually endless, in particular if we consider the many territories, men and wine making techniques. In order to understand the richness of the Italian land, the Italian Directory of Wine Grapes currently counts more than five hundred different varieties.

This month we are going to examine two varieties very different one from each other, even distant, geographically speaking. Grignolino, a red berried variety of Piedmont, and Gaglioppo, the queen red grape of Calabria, will be compared in our glasses in order to reveal their respective differences. Grapes different one from each other, make different wines as well, with organoleptic qualities such to give both a remarkable personality and identity. Thanks to their respective characteristics, absolutely unique and such to put them - like to say - in quite opposed sides, our tasting by contrast will not be so difficult. Also the techniques used for the making of wines are frequently different, in particular to keep their integrity, that is aiming to keep their respective expression of organoleptic personality. Grignolino is mainly vinified in inert tanks, Gaglioppo is usually produced in wood containers, and there are also cases in which it is made in steel or cement tanks.

Grignolino is a red berried variety mainly found in the areas of Asti and Monferrato in Piedmont, Italy. This variety is also marginally found in the territory of Langhe, while it is virtually absent in the other areas of Piedmont and Italy. In past times, Grignolino was quite common in Piedmont and its progressive reduction was caused by phylloxera, a fate this grape shared with many other varieties. Because of the effects of this aphid, vintners preferred cultivating - for obvious reasons and for need - other resistant varieties, therefore scarifying Grignolino. Information found in old documents support the theory this grape originated from Piedmont, in particular in the territory of Asti and Monferrato. It should also be noticed that, according to what can be read in documents of the past, Grignolino, although in marginal terms, was also present in Oltrepo Pavese and Veneto.

The name probably comes from the dialectal term of Asti area *grignòle*, a word used to call grape pips which are found in great quantity in this variety. Grignolino is used for the production of three *Denominazione d'Origine e Controllata* wines

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This is how you would see Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese in a glass: it should be noticed the transparency and the ruby red color

of Piedmont: Grignolino d'Asti, Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese and Piemonte Grignolino. Wines produced with this grape usually have olfactory characteristics recalling spices, as well as red fruits and sensations of flowers. Grignolino is mainly used alone and makes pleasing and direct wines expressing their best character in their youth. In general terms, in order to keep the specific qualities of the grape, Grignolino is vinified and aged in inert containers, however are known cases in which it is aged in cask. In this latter case, the wine gets a more complex character, by accentuating spicy aromas, typical of this variety, in particular white and black pepper as well as clove.

The characteristics of Gaglioppo are very different, it is the wine making glory of Calabria, its homeland. Variety considered indigenous to this region, Gaglioppo is the grape from which are made the red wines of Cirò area, the most famous wine area of Calabria. It is a variety having a strong resistance and it has adapted itself to the difficult conditions of Calabria, in particular drought and a basically arid soil. Gaglioppo is a variety having very ancient origins, which wines were famous and appreciated since the times of Magna Graecia. It is believed that, in ancient times, Gaglioppo was spread in a wider area than today, along the Adriatic coast and it is believed it was even found in the lands where today is found the Marche region. The current spreading of Gaglioppo is virtually limited to Calabria, its homeland, and it is the most famous and common grape of this region, absolutely protagonist of the red wines made in this land.

In Calabria Gaglioppo is used for the production of both red and rose wines. It is particularly known for the *Denominazione d'Origine Controllata* wines of Cirò, this variety is however used for the production of countless red and rose wines of the region. Gaglioppo is particularly suited for the vinification in inert containers as well as in wood, a technique useful, among the many things, to mitigate the strength of astringency. Wines produced with this variety have very interesting organoleptic characteristics, not only sensations recalling red and black fruits, but also flowers and spicy aromas. Wines produced with Gaglioppo, depending on the production technique, can be appreciated during their youth - a period in which is mainly perceived its severe character - as well as after some years, when

the wine gets a more austere profile. The spicy character of Gaglioppo is sometimes perceptible in its rose wines as well, in particular the aroma of black pepper.

For our tasting we will examine a Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese and a Cirò Rosso. In choosing our wines, we need to pay attention to the respective production laws. Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese provides for the use of this grape for a minimum amount of 90% and the remaining part being Freisa grape. We will therefore make sure our wine is produced with 100% Grignolino. The same consideration is true for Cirò Rosso, in which Gaglioppo grape can be present for a minimum of 80%. Also in this case we will make sure the wine to be actually made with 100% Gaglioppo. We will also pay attention to the production method, by choosing wines fermented and aged in inert containers. Finally, it is preferable both wines belonging to the same vintage, possibly having not more than two years of age. The wines will be tasted at the temperature of 18 °C (64 °F) and poured in their respective tasting glasses.

As usual, let's start the tasting by contrast from the appearance analysis of the wines in order to evaluate color and transparency. Let's pour Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese in this glass and let's tilt it over a white surface, such as sheet of paper. By observing the wine at the base of the glass, it will be noticed a brilliant ruby red color and a pretty high transparency, something allowing the vision of the object put behind the glass. The observation of nuances, towards the opening of the glass, reveals a ruby red color, sometimes tending to garnet red, therefore confirming the modest coloring property of Grignolino. Let's now pass to the observation of Cirò Rosso. At the base of the glass it will be noticed an intense ruby red color, with a lower transparency than Grignolino. Nuances show the same color and, in this case, Gaglioppo confirms its good coloring property. Let's now observe both glasses in order to understand the differences of the two wines.

The olfactory profiles of Grignolino and Gaglioppo are quite different one from each other, having - as a common characteristic - a certain spicy hint recalling black and white pepper. As for the rest, in wines produced with these grapes can be perceived other common olfactory elements, however with a very different overall profile. In Grignolino can be in fact perceived aromas of red fruits and flowers, whereas in Gaglioppo are mainly perceived black fruits, as well as sensations recalling flowers. The aging potentials is different in each variety. Grignolino is generally considered a grape making wines not so suitable for aging. Indeed, Grignolino - depending on how it is cultivated and used for making wine - can give wines of good longevity and developing a pretty interesting olfactory profile. Gaglioppo certainly has a more significant aging potential than Grignolino, developing with time organoleptic sensations of good complexity.

Let's now proceed with the evaluation of opening aromas of Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese. By holding the glass in vertical position and without swirling, let's do the first smell. The opening of Grignolino is characterized by aromas recalling red fruits, in particular cherry, raspberry and plum to which is added strawberry. It will be also perceived the typical hint of black pepper, a frequent sensation in wines produced with Grignolino. After having swirled the glass, the wine completes its olfactory profile with blueberry and flower sensa-

tions of geranium, cyclamen and rose. The olfactory profile of Gaglioppo is quite different. The opening of Cirò Rosso is in fact characterized by plum, black cherry and blueberry. After having swirled the glass, the sequence of aromas is completed by sensations of blackberry and strawberry, as well as flowery perceptions of cyclamen and rose. It will be perceived, also in this case, the spicy aroma of black pepper, a typical characteristic of Gaglioppo.

The differences between Grignolino and Gaglioppo become more evident during the evaluation of taste. The attack of Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese is characterized by a pleasing crispness to which is added a moderate astringency. These two organoleptic sensations are balanced thanks to the contribution of alcohol, despite its burning effect is not excessively strong. In the mouth are perceived flavors of cherry, raspberry and strawberry, sensations already perceived to the nose. The attack of Cirò Rosso, made from Gaglioppo, is characterized by a more robust structure than Grignolino. It is also perceived a stronger roundness, supported by alcohol, and a lower sensation of crispness. Astringency in Gaglioppo is more intense than Grignolino, however having a remarkable agreeableness. In the mouth are perceived flavors of plum, black cherry, blueberry and strawberry, therefore confirming the good correspondence to the nose.

The differences between the two wines are also perceived in the final part of the tasting, the one done after having swallowed the wine. The finish of Grignolino del Monferrato Casalese has generally a good persistence, leaving in the mouth the flavors of the main perceptions: cherry, raspberry and strawberry. After having swallowed the wine, the sensation of crispness in Grignolino is still perceived in the mouth, very agreeable and certainly inviting taking a new sip. The finish of Cirò Rosso has a good persistence, leaving in the mouth the sensation already perceived during tasting and in which can be recognized plum, black cherry and raspberry. The final sensation is more robust than Grignolino, rounder and warmer, nevertheless pleasing and however inviting taking a new sip. Two different grapes, not only for the distance of the respective homelands, capable of giving distinct wine making interpretations and however recognizable in their own personalities.

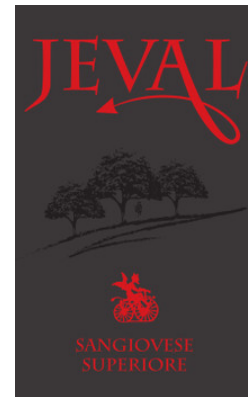
❖ ❖ ❖

Wines of the Month

Score legend

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

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



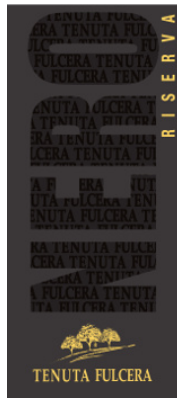
Romagna Sangiovese Superiore Jeval 2012 Tenuta Fulcera (Emilia Romagna, Italy)

🍷 Sangiovese

Price: € 7.00

Score ❖❖❖★

- 👁 Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, moderate transparency.
- 👂 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black cherry, plum and violet followed by aromas of raspberry, blueberry, cyclamen and cinnamon.
- 👅 Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.
- 🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, plum and blueberry.
- 📅 8 months in steel tanks, 4 months in bottle.
- 🍴 *Broiled meat and barbecue, Stuffed pasta with meat, Roasted white meat, Cheese*



**Sangiovese di Romagna Superiore Riserva Nero
2009
Tenuta Fulcera (Emilia Romagna, Italy)**

Sangiovese

Price: € 14.00

Score

Brilliant ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of plum, black cherry and dried violet followed by aromas of blueberry, chocolate, tobacco, mace, vanilla, cinnamon, leather and menthol.

Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, plum and blueberry.

24 months in barrique and cask, 12 months in bottle.

Broiled meat and barbecue, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese

fiorfiore



ROCCAFORE

**Fiorfiore 2013
Roccafore (Umbria, Italy)**

Grechetto

Price: € 16.00

Score

Brilliant golden yellow and nuances of golden yellow, very transparent.

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of apple, hazelnut and plum followed by aromas of pear, citrus fruits, hawthorn, broom, pineapple and vanilla.

Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Persistent finish with flavors of apple, plum and hazelnut.

12 months in cask, 4 months in bottle.

Stuffed pasta, Roasted white meat, Roasted fish



**Montefalco Sagrantino 2010
Roccafore (Umbria, Italy)**

Sagrantino

Price: € 25.00

Score

Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of blackberry, black cherry and violet followed by aromas of plum, blueberry, cocoa, vanilla, cinnamon, mace, licorice and menthol.

Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Persistent finish with flavors blackberry, black cherry and blueberry.

18 months in barrique and cask, 6 months in bottle.

Game, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese



Franciacorta Rosé Extra Brut Millesimato 2009
La Montina (Lombardy, Italy)

Pinot Nero (85%), Chardonnay (15%)

Price: € 25.00

Score

Brilliant cherry pink and nuances of cherry pink, transparent, fine and persistent perlage.

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of cherry, raspberry and bread crust followed by aromas of apple, tangerine, strawberry, cyclamen, yeast, hazelnut and plum.

Effervescent and crisp attack, however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.

Persistent finish with flavors of cherry, raspberry and plum.

Refermented in bottle on its lees for at least 30 months.

Stuffed pasta with meat, Roasted white meat, Roasted fish, Mushroom soups



Franciacorta Pas Dosé Riserva Baiana 2007
La Montina (Lombardy, Italy)

Chardonnay (55%), Pinot Nero (45%)

Price: € 33.50

Score

Brilliant straw yellow and nuances of straw yellow, very transparent, fine and persistent perlage.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of bread crust, plum and ripe banana followed by aromas of praline, honey, apple, yeast, citrus fruits, hawthorn, brioche, raspberry, butter and vanilla.

Effervescent and crisp attack, however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Persistent finish with flavors of plum, apple and praline.

The base wine is aged in cask. Refermented in bottle on its lees for at least 60 months.

Roasted white meat, Roasted fish, Stuffed pasta, Stewed meat



Conero Riserva Grosso Agontano 2011
Garofoli (Marches, Italy)

Montepulciano

Price: € 21.50

Score

Deep ruby red and nuances of garnet red, impenetrable to light.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of black cherry, blackberry and violet followed by aromas of plum, blueberry, black currant, vanilla, face powder, tobacco, leather, licorice, chocolate, made and menthol.

Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Very persistent finish with long flavors of black cherry, blackberry and plum.

18 months in barrique, 24 months in bottle.

Game, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese



Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore
Riserva Serra Fiorese 2010
Garofoli (Marches, Italy)

Verdicchio


Price: € 17.50


Score


Intense golden yellow and nuances of golden yellow, very transparent.


Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of apple, plum and almond followed by aromas of pear, citrus fruits, hawthorn, pineapple, broom, anise, honey, ripe peach, mineral and vanilla.


Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

 Very persistent finish with long flavors of apple, plum, pear and almond.

 Fermented in barrique, aged for 12 months in barrique, at least 2 years in bottle.

 *Stuffed pasta with mushrooms, Roasted fish, Roasted white meat, Stewed fish*

 Persistent finish with flavors of prune, walnut, honey and chocolate.

 Produced with a “bain-marie” batch alembic still. Aged in barrique for 12 months.



EVENTS

News

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



NOT JUST WINE

Aquavitae

Review of Grappa, Distillates and Brandy




Grappasessanta
Zisola (Sicily, Italy)


(Distiller: Distilleria Giovi)


 Pomace of Nero d'Avola

Price: € 38.00 - 50cl

Score ◆◆◆◆☆

 Intense golden yellow, limpid and crystalline.

 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant with aromas of prune, walnut, tobacco, vanilla, chocolate, honey, dried violet, leather and dried fig, with perceptible alcohol pungency.

 Intense flavors with perceptible alcohol pungency which tends to dissolve rapidly, pleasing roundness, balanced sweetness.

Wine Guide Parade

September 2015

The best 15 wines reviewed in our Guide and voted by Di-WineTaste readers

Rank	Wine, Producer	Votes
1	Trentino Gewürztraminer 2014, Endrizzi	3126
2	Cerasuolo di Vittoria Classico 2012, Valle dell'Acate	2826
3	Gran Masetto 2011, Endrizzi	2720
4	Bidis 2013, Valle dell'Acate	2183
5	Masetto Bianco 2013, Endrizzi	2180
6	Masetto Due 2013, Endrizzi	2107
7	Macchia Sacra 2014, Castello di Torre in Pietra	2088
8	Terre di Breccia 2011, Castello di Torre in Pietra	2019
9	Rusciano 2011, Valle dell'Acate	1958
10	Brut, Castello di Torre in Pietra	1908
11	Collerosso 2011, Castello Poggiarello	1888
12	Montechiaro 2009, Castello Poggiarello	1872
13	Montebruno 2012, Castello Poggiarello	1802
14	Trentino Chardonnay 2014, Endrizzi	1732
15	Roma Malvasia Puntinata 2014, Castello di Torre in Pietra	1547