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News



Beware of "Italian sounding" at a New Year's Eve abroad

More than a million Italian citizens are expected to be abroad for New Year's Eve, and many of those in all probability will not give up their country's traditional dishes for the night's dinner. All well and good, to be sure, but according to Coldiretti, one of the main farmers' associations of Italy, 2 of those dishes out of 3 are likely to be just "Italian sounding", if not straight-up counterfeit. The farmer's association's assessment of the value of food counterfeiting and "Italian sounding" products reaches 50 billion Euros a year - twice the yearly value of exports of real made in Italy products.



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A "lawful" toast

New Year's Eve is upon us, with its dinners and soirées, but there's a place where people will toast to something more than the new year: "to lawfulness, hope, the opportunity of tangible projects and social justice", as Father Ciotti, the President of the anti-Mafia organization Libera, said. Thanks to Libera the historical Café de Paris in Rome, home of La Dolce Vita - and of the crime syndicate 'Ndrangheta after that - will be reborn, and today, among the tables loved by people such as Fellini, Sinatra and Modugno, rebirth tastes like Father Diana's buffalo mozzarella and the fragrance of Corleone's Centopassi wine, created by the many young people that found their redemption in the farmlands confiscated to the Mafia: cheers, then, to a 2012 full of lawfulness and good things!

Report

Italy and the "Spanish link"

There's a "Spanish link" between Italy and Russia, as far as wines are concerned. According to the Russian "Research Center for Federal & Regional Alcohol Markets", 109 million litres were imported in the first 9 months of 2011, despite duties and logistical issues. And if the lion's share of that comes from France (21.9%) the race for the silver is between Italy and Spain (15.2% each): Spain has had a great 2011 for exports (+26% in volume), and with Italy at +166% as a destination for its wines without a guarantee of origin.



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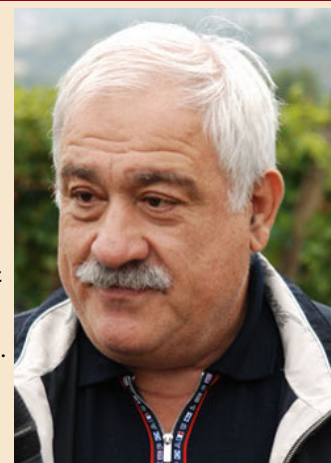
Auctions & wine: an assessment of 2011 and 2012's forecasts of the international auction houses

It is time for end-of-year assessments for the great global auction houses, in a 2011 that confirmed beyond a doubt the rise of Asia as the single most important market for wine collectionists, dethroning even the United States: a process driven mainly by the "new super-rich" from China and Hong Kong, fascinated by great wines not only for the pleasure they give, but also for their role of status symbols, standard-bearers of foreign luxury and profitable (not to mention relatively safe) investments. And so, according to British news agency Reuters, the American auction house Acker Merrall & Condit, which specializes in wines, sold 110 millions U.S. dollars's worth of goods in 2011, followed by the British auction house Christie's (more than 90 millions), the American house Sotheby's (85.5 millions) and the British house Bonhams (17 millions). But 2011 did not bring only great results: the "super-rich" Asians have stopped buying without glancing at the price tags first, and are now buying fine wines only at prices that they deem reasonable. A sign that the knowledge of wine is spreading fast, and also of the fact that the "Bordeaux bubble" - a wine that in 2011 went for the best possible prices anywhere, no matter what - started shrinking visibly, with dealers predicting that 2012 will see a drop in prices for the products of the Châteaux. The same cases of 1982 Lafite-Rothschild, which sold in March for more than 60.000 U.S. dollars each, were bringing in less than 45.000 later in the year, and the coming dip will make it unlikely that the 300 bottle lot of Château Lafite-Rothschild - with vintages between 1981 and 2005 - that was sold for more than 539.000 U.S. dollars will reach that level again anytime soon. At the same time, prices for Burgundy wines will most likely remain high in the medium term, since the overall amount of wines produced in the region is relatively small - it is, after all, a simple matter of supply and demand.

Focus

"Producers great and small, go in peace"

"In wine territories there must not be a quarrel between small and great producers, but an alliance, which must be supported in any way". Such is the opinion of Attilio Scienza, Professor of Viticulture and Oenology at the University of Milan and one of the world's leading experts on wine growing, in his interview with WineNews - in which he advocates the need for an equilibrium between all companies, since every one of them plays a fundamental role for the success of a territory. "One cannot make do without the true forerunners, like Gaja in Piedmont or Biondi Santi in Montalcino: that said, it essential that the great producers, and by that I mean big as well, put themselves in the service of smaller, less "famous" ones, otherwise the brand will always come first, and the territory second". From this perspective, a small producers's first task is to avoid emulation. "Sassicaia in Bolgheri, for example, is unique, one simply can't try to imitate it and bet on a passing resemblance. It might have been enough a few years ago, but not with today's consumer and his quest for a wine outside the norm, far from conformity. This is the goal that a small company should strive for: uniqueness".



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Wine & Food

2012 begins, and so do the roadshows of great Italian reds

The roadshows of great Italian reds start on January: on the 28th and 29th, Verona's Palazzo della Gran Guardia will host the preview of the 2008 vintage of Amarone della Valpolicella. Then Tuscany, in Florence, at the "Chianti Classico Collection", with the last vintages of Chianti Classico and the cask previews of 2011 (Feb. 20th-21st), then the preview of the 2009 vintage and 2008 Riserva of the Vino Nobile di Montepulciano (22nd-23rd) and finally "Benvenuto Brunello" in Montalcino, with the 2007 vintage and 2006 Riserva (24th-25th). With "Sicilia en Primeur" as the grand finale (Apr. 20th-22nd).

For the record

The world's best cellar? At the bottom of the sea

Franck Labyrie, owner of Château du Coureau, plans to one-up its 2009 project, when he put 8000 bottles of his Blanc des cabanes to age under 9 to 25 feet of water - an experiment

that the Italian Cantina Bisson tried as well. The lack of oxygen, light and microbes gave amazing results, so Labeyrie plans to put the next 600 bottles under 3000 feet of water.

