



News



Oak and chocolate

Why not use French oak barrels to age chocolate, just like it is oftentimes done for wine? The idea comes from Simone Sabaini, a chocolate maker from Modica, Sicily, and he is the very first one in the world to have put it in practice. "After more than a year of tests", he explained, "we have come up with a technique that allows us to age chocolate in such a fashion. For us, it is a new way to have the world of chocolate interact with the beer, wine and spirits world". The first test run has recently been started using a Marsala oak barrel which comes from winemaker Marco De Bartoli - and another one from renowned wine artisan Josko Gravner is in the cards as well.



SMS

A notable overtake

France, it seems, is not so unreachable for the very best Italian wines. With the exception of Bordeaux - which is still the undisputed king of the hill when it comes to the secondary market, even if it is still losing market share month after month recently - the rest of the French production is definitely within reach, as testified by the July 2015 report of Liv-Ex (www.liv-ex.com), the most authoritative benchmark of the fine wines market of the entire world. The report states that an historical event has taken place, namely the overtaking of Burgundy by Italian wines: the greatest labels of our country have reached 7% of total transactions on the secondary market last month, compared to the 6.7% of the wines from Burgundy.

Report

"A state of grace"

According to Enzo Vizzari, Editor-in-chief of the most important Italian restaurant and wine guides - "I Ristoranti d'Italia" and "I Vini d'Italia" of publishing group "L'Espresso" - Italian cuisine is in a "state of grace, qualitatively speaking, much more than Spain, as well as Northern Europe, whose fads have passed. Right now", he added, "we might be even above France, after some very tough years from an economic point of view as many reviews had to be deleted because in the meantime the restaurant had to close down".



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First Page

Are vineyard sicknesses a worldwide problem?

There is an alarm being sounded around the vineyards of the world, and many experts concur with its message: an increasingly large amount of plants are getting attacked by wood-related sicknesses, and the situation is in many respects similar to the one that saw phylloxera run rampant among winemakers at the end of the 19th century. "Wine Spectator" magazine recently tackled the issue by interviewing some experts, and according to them, winemakers in places as diverse as Spain, California, Switzerland, Australia and France, are dealing with an increasingly large number of sicknesses and fungi. Among those experts, David Gramaje of Instituto de Ciencias de la Vid y del Vino de Rioja, in Spain, Richard Smart, one of Australia's most famous wine consultants and Kendra Baumgartner of Davis University, have said that "every vineyard in California is affected by at least one illness, even though there are various degrees of impact, and the situation is identical to the one at the time of the phylloxera epidemic". It is, therefore, a situation that is not to be underestimated, and it already has shown its economic consequences: according to the Institut Français de la Vigne et du Vin, for example, no less than 12% of all French vineyards are unproductive because of the situation, and 5 to 6% has to be replanted every year, to the tune of around 1 billion Dollars each year. The debate is strong on the matter, since some point the finger at plant nursery techniques, some to work in the vineyards, and some to the use of mechanical tools, which could create more damage to plants, in turn favoring the onset of more illnesses. Some on the other hand, are not so ready to cry wolf. Leonardo Valenti and Attilio Scienza of Milan University, two of the most prominent experts on the matter, told WineNews, it is of course important to be aware of the situation, but one should keep in mind the fact that these illnesses have been around forever, and today, thanks to scientific research, they can be kept in check. "Of course", Scienza remarked, "research has to go on no matter what, on the genetic front as well, in order to create varieties that are inherently more resistant to these pathologies".

Focus

Italy rules American premium wines

The latest news regarding Italian wine imports in the United States, the single most important market for our country, are not that great (with 6.1% drop in value and 1.5% growth in value in the first half of 2015 compared to 2014, according to the Italian Wine & Food Institute, and with sparklings still on a roll, up 23% in volume and 12% in value), but some stars are shining more brightly than others. According to an Impact Databank report, and its analysis by "Shanken News Daily", when it comes to the premium segment - 10 dollars per bottle and up - which has gone up 4% in 2014, the top-growing brands (starting with the leader Kendall-Jackson, followed by Chateau Ste. Michelle, 14 Hands, Ménage a Trois, Bogle Vineyards and E. & J. Gallo) also include some Italian names as well, like Ruffino (13% more, to 1 million cases) and Santa Margherita (1.4% growth). The two represent the tip of an iceberg that sees Italy dominate the segment, according to Constellation Brands' Scott Ehrlich, thanks to sparkling wines like Prosecco and Moscato d'Asti, and to Pinot Grigio. White wines, overall, represent over 60% of all Italian wines sold in the States in value.



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Wine & Food

Prosecco, the new king of sparkling wines in the UK

According to a year-long monitoring of the off-trade sector in the UK conducted by IRI, the most famous sparkling wine of them all has grown 72% in value, to a record of 388 million Pounds, and 78% in volume, to 37.3 million litres. A lot better than Champagne, at 1.2% growth in value, to 250 million Pounds, and volumes down 0.4%, to 9.8 million litres. The data underscores the fact that what could have been defined as a passing fad has become much more than that, with Prosecco becoming a cornerstone of wine consumption in one of the most important markets.

For the record

The world's best Muscat wine is Italian

Moscato di Terracina Doc Oppidum Secco 2014 Sant'Andrea has been officially crowned as the best Muscat in the world, out of 230 contestants, during the latest edition of the

"Muscat International Contest Monde". Another Italian, Fior d'Arancio Colli Euganei Docg Maeli Moscato 2014 Terre Del Pirio, is at number 10.

