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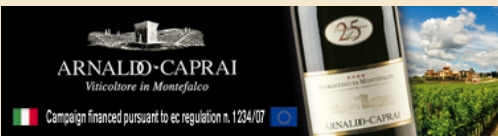
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News



A van in the vineyards

Italy can boast more than 600 indigenous grape varieties, but many of those risk extinction: it's a heritage to be rediscovered and defended. That is what Michael Loos, an American who came to Florence 23 years ago, must have thought, since he came up with an original and adventurous idea: an "Italian Tour", region by region, behind the wheel of a Barolo-tinted van, telling the story of Italian wine's characteristics in real time. The project is called "20 Mondì" - since every region is a world in itself, with its history, traditions and characteristics - and Michael will narrate them both online and through a series of travel guides as apps (www.20mondi.com).



Bacchus & finance

No one thinks that it's all sunshine and roses, but there is undoubtedly a sense of trust towards wine in the world, and a lot of signals point to this. The last one, chronologically speaking, comes from Constellation Brands, the biggest name in wine commerce, which recently announced the completion of its sale of 600 million US dollars worth of senior obligations due in 2022: the company expects to use the proceeds "for general corporate purposes" (are any other acquisitions in the air, after the Italian Ruffino?), reducing indebtedness or repurchasing common stock. That aside, the important news is that investors believe in a great sector, one that has its core business in wine. That is to say, they believe in the development of Bacchus' economy.

Report

Winemakers and the Internet

Winenews recently published its 2012 survey of Italian winemakers' forays on the Web, and the results reveal that websites are increasingly used as all-round "portals" for wine tourism, with wine as the selling point of their respective territories, and that social networks are now considered business tools. The top three sites in the ranking are those of Venetian producer Santa Margherita (santamargherita.com), of Tuscan Marchesi de' Frescobaldi (frescobaldi.it) and of Sicilian producer Planeta (planeta.it).



First Page

Italian wine & food districts get around

"Made in Italy" products rely on exports: the umpteenth confirmation comes from a report by the Study Centre of Italian banking group Intesa San Paolo, which points out that the districts' turnover grew 7.6% in 2011 over 2010, mainly due to exports, gaining back what was lost during the first phase of the crisis: almost all of 2011's results (41 out of 44) exceeded 2007. And the best-performing districts have been those of wine, from Trentino's Trentodoc to Verona, with Amarone first and foremost, and from the two territories of Prosecco, Conegliano and Valdobbiadene, to Tuscany's Chianti. The top district is Piedmont and its Langhe, Roero and Monferrato regions with exports growing 8.5%, reaching 1 billion Euros in value and sporting a 241.7 million Euros "surplus" over 2007. Among others, the milk & dairy products district of Lombardy reached 686 million Euros in exports alone. But the most difficult market, which will probably not change in 2012, is the domestic one: "domestic demand will be weak and the increase in unemployment rate, together with strict balance and budget measures put in action by the Italian Government, will most likely further shrink consumption of foodstuffs, as happened in 2008-2009 and in 2011", the report says. And so, as we have been writing for some time, exports are no longer a possibility, but a necessity, even if according to Intesa San Paolo the landscape is changing on that front as well: in the last 6 years exports have shrunk in "mature" markets, but grown in emerging ones, China and Russia above all. And debts are still a worry for Italian wine & food businesses: according to an analysis made by Coldiretti, one of Italy's main farmers' associations, of data coming from Mestre's small businesses association Cgia, 50.000 businesses closed shop in 2011, and the number of those in financial dire straits grew 30%. Moreover, interest rates for loans in agriculture are now 6%, a 30% higher rate than the one applied for general businesses, Coldiretti says - not to mention that 60% of businesses cannot get loans at all, no matter the rate.

Focus

Italy "should use its top-tier in China"

As far as the Chinese market is concerned, "Italy should approach it using its top-tier wines, since on the entry-level tier its products are not competitive with those coming from Chile and New Zealand, because they have many fiscal advantages" - and they're growing a lot to boot, as a recent Wine Intelligence report points out. Such is the opinion of Raimondo Romani of Gelardini & Romani Wine Auction, which recently created a road show, starting in cities like Nanchang and Guangzhou, to conquer the Chinese public with Italian "icon wines", starting with Antinori, one of the first winemakers to get to China and labels such as Solaia and Tignanello. "Knowledge of Italian wine is limited to the big, developed cities, a minuscule part of China. And our entry-level products are perceived as of no appeal. That's why we started the road show, which will continue in 2012 and 2013 with all of our classified "Grand Crus of Italy" and the full support of our diplomacy. Over here, though, Italian cuisine does not "pull" consumers towards wine, given the Chinese culinary tradition, but it could be the opposite. Still, the potential market is enormous: there's more than one billion people living outside those big cities".



www.vinalitytour.com



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Wine & Food

Investing in Italian vineyards? Sardinia's the cool place to be

Since wine consumption is generally on the rise in the world, why not invest in vineyards? To that purpose, the UK magazine "The Drink Business" recently created a "top 10" list of emerging territories where one could plant grapes or buy vineyards, ranked by their long-term profitability. As far as Italy is concerned, Sardinia is at number 8, since "quality has grown a lot, a sure sign of its investment potential". At number one, of course, there's China, where wine production is predicted to grow by a whopping 77% in the next four years.

For the record

"Junk food tax" to become law in Italy

Italian Minister of Health Renato Balduzzi recently came back to the subject of a "junk food tax", both to "favour the health of citizens and to modernize hospitals", and to get

financial resources (the tax should bring the State coffers 24 million Euros from spirits alone). But a clear-cut definition of "junk food" is still to come.

