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News



Frescobaldi-Mondavi, the end

"It's the natural outcome of this change. Michael Mondavi owns less than 2% of Ornellaia, Luce della Vite and Castelgiocondo, and they're mostly sentimental stakes. By the end of the year, we'll have acquired them", Lamberto Frescobaldi, at the helm of one of the most important Italian wine firms, told WineNews, commenting on the change of importer in the U.S., as "Shanken" anticipated, ending the partnership with Mondavi's Folio Wine Partners. Mondavi will sell its shares of Tenute di Toscana, the holding that owns Ornellaia, Castelgiocondo e Luce della Vite. The Russian SPI Group will stay with Frescobaldi (with 80% stake), as "important partners, who believe in quality".



Harvest, more bad news

According to Riccardo Cotarella, President of Italian oenologist association Assoenologi, the latest estimates, which we wrote about in the last issue, already need an update, and one that bodes even less well for the 2017 harvest: "we previously stated that, in case of further hot weather and lack of rain, our estimates would have to be lowered, and so it is, even though it is hard to tell by how much yet. Some are already talking about quality", he told WineNews, "but personally I think that this year, more than ever, using generic terms that might point to a great vintage makes no sense at all. We'll be able to say more, both regarding quality and quantity, around mid-September, when about 70% of the harvest will be completed", he concluded.

Report

A 6.000-year old wine

The wine that has been called "the most ancient Italian wine" - or rather, its remains - apparently dates all the way back to the year 4.000 BC. A research group headed by archaeologist Davide Tanasi recently made the discovery on Mount Kronio, near Agrigento, in Sicily. The team's findings, published in "Microchemical Journal", point out that viticulture and winemaking in Italy did not begin in the Bronze Age, as previously thought, but more than two millennia before that period.



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First Page

Italy's white wine producers on the harvest

WineNews recently conducted a survey on the most important Italian wineries that, in the situation of a harvest started 15 days earlier than usual, on average, already have part of the earlier and white grape varieties in their cellars, and are about to shift gears on the process for white wines of the 2017 vintage. The survey covered the entire country, from northern regions such as Franciacorta (with sparkling winemakers such as Bellavista, Castello Bonomi and Guido Berlucchi), Trentodoc (Ferrari, Letrari and La Vis) and Prosecco (Villa Sandi) to Alto Adige (San Michele Appiano), Gavi (La Chiara and La Raia), Friuli Venezia Giulia (Venica & Venica), Veneto (Cantina di Soave), and central Italy, from Verdicchio's Marche (Umani Ronchi) to Umbria (Castello della Sala - Marchesi Antinori), Tuscany, Vernaccia di San Gimignano (Cesani), and finally southern regions like Campania (Feudi di San Gregorio), Sicily (Tasca d'Almerita e Planeta) and Sardinia (Argiolas and Siddura). One thing appears to be sure - quantity is way down, 15% to 40% less, depending on the areas, and only when it's been harvested and crushed one will be able to speak about output, because generally speaking bunches have fewer grapes, and smaller ones, caused by the effects of spring frosts and the exceptional heat waves that followed them. But those grapes that make it to the cellars, thanks to the excellent (and costly) work of selection conducted in the vineyards, are extremely healthy, even if, due to the early ripening, excellence will remain a far goal. The real challenge, then, now more than ever, is going to be striking the right balance between acidity, phenolic maturity, sugar concentration and all the other factors. Additionally, it's clear that the situation, even inside the same territory or denomination, is very different from vineyard to vineyard, but quite evidently, is markedly better in those areas where it has been possible to use emergency irrigations. Finally, generally speaking, indigenous grape varieties, which are historically more attuned to their territories, have "weathered the storm", so to speak, a lot better than their international counterparts.

Focus

Extraordinary measures for Prosecco

A tough year, from a winemaking perspective, forces one to think long and hard on how to best overcome its various quirks and challenges, and some choices often stand out - like the recent choice the Consortium of Prosecco DOC made, which allows for grapes from Glera vineyards in the territory of Prosecco (but not in the area described by the policy document itself) to be included in this harvest as well. The document, it should be pointed out, allows for a 5% increase in the area every year through annual announcements. "This extraordinary decision", Consortium President Stefano Zanette told WineNews, "concerns 2.000 hectares of vineyards, which should produce around 150.000 hectolitres of wine. Once the harvest is over, they will be excluded once more, until the next announcement, which will come in autumn and will allow for 1.200 new hectares". The harvest is currently in full swing in the land of the global darling of sparkling wine lovers, whose love has apparently been unperturbed by the recent "Prosecco teeth" controversy, which Agriculture Minister Maurizio Martina has recently defined as flat-out "fake news".



ARNALDO CAPRAI
Viticoltore in Montefalco

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Wine & Food

Italian wine under counterfeit siege in Eastern Europe

Italian wine is no stranger to counterfeiters, particularly in Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Moldova above all, and Asti and Prosecco are the most common targets. European MP Alberto Cirio, member of the Agriculture Commission of the EU Parliament, pointed out that "In Ukraine alone, in three years' time, fake Asti jumped from 1 to 2.5 million bottles", and "out of 3 million bottles, only 569.000 are real ones, the others are sold off at 2.46 Euros at mass retail stores, compared to the regular price of 6.55 Euros", Giorgio Bosticco, Director of the Consortium of Asti DOCG, stated.

For the record

The world's first food theme park is almost ready

Next November 15th, in Bologna, Fico Eatly World, the world's first food theme park, will open its doors. Created by Oscar Farinetti, it'll cover more than 10 hectares, and

include rides, sport areas, food stores and workshops, "in order to sum up the excellent Italian wine & food, from the field to the fork". Entrance will be free of charge.

