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Italian Weekly Wine News.it

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Issue 62 - Nov. 26th-Dec. 1st, 2012 - Expressly for wine lovers, professionals and opinion leaders the world over
Registration number 709, Courthouse of Siena, March 31st, 2001 - Editor-in-chief: Alessandro Regoli

News



The sommelier Ministers

"A sommelier became a Minister and today a Minister has become a sommelier": with these words Italian Minister of Justice Paola Severino, at the Bibenda soir e last week (Franco Ricci was a great host, as usual, pictured above with the Ministers), received the "silver tastevin", the symbol of the honorary sommelier, from Minister of Economy Vittorio Grilli - who is a true sommelier, with both a "Bibenda master class" degree and a soft spot for Supertuscans and French wines. Severino told Winenews of her "passion for the culture of wine", and how she strongly believes "in the hard work of Italian wine & food firms". A good omen, perhaps?



Vissani's revolution

He was the very first chef to become a television celebrity, starting a trend that had many commentators asking themselves who really cooked in Italy's great restaurants, and now Gianfranco Vissani has also become the first to take his old "hat" back - the chef's hat, of course - taking a step back and rediscovering the beauty of old recipes. "I went too far, I overdid it on air", he told Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera: "it's time to change and to come back to simplicity. We brought our public away from restaurants by transforming cooking into a carousel of mousses and chemistry, but now we absolutely must take back our role of paladins of the land, by betting on the best producers, in order to guarantee the quality of vegetables, oil and meats to our customers".

Report

Fiorello, the "alcohol-head"

Italian superstar comedian and actor Rosario Fiorello has become the latest testimonial for the anti-alcohol abuse campaign "Teste-di-alkol" (Alcohol-heads). The Sicilian showman is the new face for "Drink with your head", the project created by Florentine students and the non-profit organization Generazioni Contatti. The packaging of the portable alcohol-tests is very similar to the old Italian Panini stickers, dedicated to soccer players - a fun and new way to tell everyone to drink responsibly.

First Page

A chance meeting with Charlie Arturaola

Sometimes chance just pops out of left field - like what happened to us this week, when "the soldier of wine", as he likes to call himself, visited our newsroom. Charlie Arturaola, sommelier and wine commentator, is laying the groundwork for his second film as the main character, "The Duel of Wine", which should premiere in early 2014 and takes the spectator on a tour of the best wine territories in France, Spain and Italy. Sporting his blue shoes and his customary smile, he told us of his travels (almost 200.000 miles a year) promoting Italian wine (among others) and of the success that his first movie, "El Camino del Vino", by Nicolas Carrera, is getting the world over. And, between one joke and another, he explained a great deal. He explained how hard it is for everybody to sell bottles at pre-crisis prices, and how, on a global scale and in the U.S. as well, the great names - with the exception of their top producers - also find it more difficult to keep selling at their usual prices, and how hard it is not to give in and lower them. But he also explained how many young people are fascinated by wine, and how they are not looking for people to tell them the features of great and unreachable wines, but for those who will tell them how to drink well for 20 bucks tops. And he explained how this is changing not only how wine is sold, but also how it is narrated and explained. Because expert consumers are fed up with traditional reviews and technical details, and new ones, both young and/or newly arrived in the wine-drinking public, are definitely not mesmerized by this approach. He explained how some critics are not critiquing to make the sector grow better but to demolish it and how they should stop evaluating a producer on the basis of the wines he produced in a certain vintage or circumstance. Rather, they should start evaluating the stories he tells, the territories he lives in and contributes to change - in a word, the "culture" of wine, because this is what fascinates people from Canada to China. He told us about the many difficulties that exist, but also of the many ways to overcome them. And at the end, it felt like a gust of "world" went through our newsroom.

Focus

When wine unites the European Union

The EU is 55 years old, and in some ways it's still looking for a shared identity. This endeavour might find an easier path in wine, since vine and wine are part of the history of Europe all the way back to ancient Greece, as professor Antonio Cal  explained. All these countries, be they producers, like Italy, France or Spain, or consumers, share that history: and today they stand united on the bond between wine and territory. From Italy that counts 443 grape varieties (mostly indigenous or of ancient cultivation), to Spain, which gets 93% of its production from its "own" varieties, to Germany, where wine production was brought by the ancient Romans. This is what emerged from the conference "55 years of EU: the culture of wine as the identifying element of Europe", promoted by the Research Centre for Viticulture of Conegliano. According to Federico Castellucci, Director of the IOVW, "producing countries like France, Italy and Germany must be wary of becoming simple producers of raw materials, because exports of "on tap" wine towards logistical hubs like Holland or the UK are growing - which then bottle and export it, holding some of the added value".



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Wine & Food

Wine and literature go hand in hand with Santa Margherita

One of Italian wine's most important brands, Santa Margherita, renewed its commitment to pairing wine with culture and the written word in the 7th edition of its "Santa Margherita wine literary prize". The contest, organized by the Venetian winemaker together with Italian bookstore chain Feltrinelli, saw the short stories of emerging writers Alessandro Di Mase, Silvia Cerioli and Barbara Gramegna on the podium. Their short stories will be printed on the back labels of Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio Valdadige Doc, Chardonnay Trentino Doc and M ller Thurgau Frizzante Vigneti delle Dolomiti Tgi.

For the record

Fake "Made in EU" worth 100 billion Euros

Parmigiano, San Daniele, Chianti and other great names of Italian wine & food are not the only ones who are under assault from the plague of counterfeiting. The illegal production and sale of fake products costs Italy 60 billion Euros a year, but 100 billion to the EU as a whole, according to Italian farmers' association CIA.

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