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News



An unpredictable harvest

"This year, like no other, one will have to wait for the end to draw conclusions about the harvest. It would be better to abstain from unfounded forecasts or declarations on quality, or on the usual exceptional vintage", Riccardo Cotarella, President of oenologists association Assoenologi, told WineNews. "We know the extent of the damages created by April frosts", he continued, "but regarding the drought, we'll have to wait and see how much it will go on. Assoenologi is not in the prophecy business. We have our 4.000 "human sensors", our colleagues, who are the best possible detectors given their professionalism. The first impressions, maybe, will be in by August 20th".



Delle Venezie, onwards!

The 2017 harvest will be the very first of "delle Venezie" DOC, the denomination of Pinot Grigio, which unites, in an area between Veneto, Friuli and the Municipality of Trento, over 20.000 hectares of vineyards, with a potential output of over 260 million bottles, 43% of all the Pinot Grigio in the world. And, the Consortium created to manage it, led by Albino Armani, is taking shape. "Lowering mandatory yields will bring even better performances for Pinot Grigio", Armani pointed out, "and this is the beginning of a path that must bring even more improvements, from quality to the wineries' earnings. This is why winemakers and growers should become part of the Consortium, both to be represented and for economic reasons, which are fundamental for promotion".

Report

Brunello's history at the helm

Fattoria dei Barbi, one of the four historic wineries in Montalcino, as well as one of the protagonists of the birth of Brunello and its Consortium in 1968 (with winemaking pioneer Attorney Gianni Colombini among its founders, and a few others among Montalcino producers), is back on top of the governing structure of the Consortium of Brunello, led by Patrizio Cencioni. Stefano Colombini is the new Vice President, after Andrea Machetti, CEO of Mastrojanni (Illy Group) recently resigned.



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2017: a harvest that will go down in history

Facetiousness aside, the only certainty of the 2017 harvest will be its uncertainty, since there has probably never been this big of a question mark. Anything that could happen has: late frosts, heavy hailstorms and an almost desert-like drought. But the 2017 vintage has yet to be written, even if yields are going to be lower and the harvest will take place 10 to 15 days earlier than usual. It'll be a complicated one, with issues on the horizon for early grape varieties and a bit more hope for quality for the late ones. Furthermore, the 2017 vintage will go down in history as a difficult one at a European level, given the similar weather issues that have taken place in France and Spain, and it will probably spark a discussion on the current grape growing and winemaking model, mainly for what concerns a systematic, "normal" way to gather and use water. Frosts, hailstorms and droughts have left (and are leaving) their mark on the entire peninsula, but they have yet to define the vintage from the point of view of quality. That will be clearer in the next 40 days or so, with watered vineyards that just might bear interesting fruits, to all intents and purposes. Droughts, in a sense, might be a blessing in disguise, but it all hinges on if, and how much, rain will fall in the coming days. Forecasts, though, are a fool's errand at the moment. This is the opinion of twelve of the country's most important agronomists and oenologists, polled by WineNews on the 2017 vintage, which is underway for sparklings and early grape varieties. In the northern part of Italy vineyards appear to be healthy, while in central and southern regions problems abound, especially for the younger ones. Droughts have drastically reduced late blight and other diseases, with fewer chemicals needed and very healthy grapes - and, in this sense, one could well define 2017 as a great vintage. That is, one that comes out of the box with a seal that says "made during a hot year", so to speak, and therefore a tough one from an agronomic point of view, but also from a winemaking one, trying to avoid flat aromas, excessive tannins and high alcoholic contents.

Focus

France, Italy, Spain and sparklers

Taken together, France, Italy and Spain are worth no less than 83% of the global market for sparkling wines in value and a staggering 86.9% in volume, but each of these three countries of the European Union has its own position and importance in the global market, as the analysis of customs data for Q1 2017 authored by Spanish wine publication "Vinetur" has recently underlined. Shipments of these three winemaking countries have reached 166.7 million litres (or 222.2 million bottles) and 1.117 billion Euros, for an average price per litre of 6.71 Euros (5 Euros a bottle), more than any other wine category. Namely, Champagne alone is worth 48% of all exports in value, but only 12% in volume, with an average price of 26.72 Euros per litre, compared to an average price that for other French sparklers, is a mere 4.27 Euros per litre. Italian Prosecco, on the other hand, is worth less than half that sum, even if one takes into account its juggernaut-like growth year over year. In Q1 2017 shipments have reached 38.3 million litres (51 million bottles), almost twice those of French Champagne (26.8 million) and of the Spanish Cava (26 million bottles).



ARNALDO CAPRAI
Viticoltore in Montefalco
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Wine & Food

Heatwave devastates Italian apiculture, agriculture

The latest wild swings in weather conditions have led to a 66% drop in Italian honey production, down to 9.000 tons. This is a new negative record after last year's, when production dropped down to 14.000 tons. Besides honey, the situation is dire because of the bees' role in the propagation of pollen, and therefore the reproduction of plants - all this in the driest summer in the last 200 years. According to the farmers association, Coldiretti, the harsh summer that has engulfed Italy has caused over 2 billion Euros in damages for both agriculture and livestock.

For the record

Chiaretto to become a Denomination

Chiaretto has parted ways with Bardolino, becoming an independent denomination. The latter, meanwhile, has returned to its 19th century roots by recognizing its

three historical crus - La Rocca, Montevaldo and Sommacampagna. The decision was proposed by Consortium President Franco Cristoforetti.

