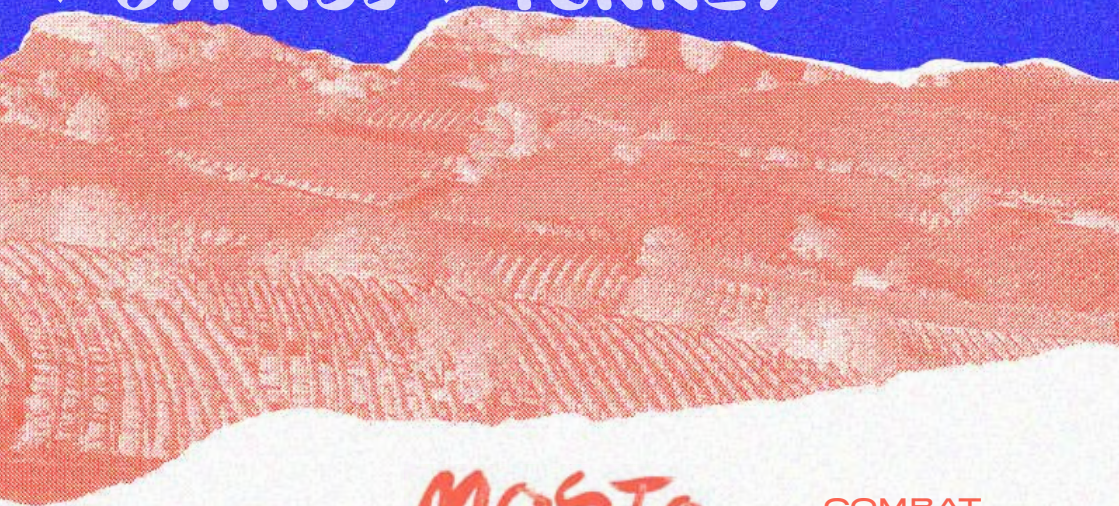


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AFRICA → MOROCCO → TU-  
NISIA → ALGERIA → SYRIA →  
GEORGIA → ARMENIA → AR-  
GENTINA → MEXICO → CHILE  
→ CANADA → UNITED STATES  
→ MONFERRATO → SWITZER-  
LAND → GERMANY → DEN-  
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→ CYPRUS → TURKEY



ISSUE 02

MOSTO

COMBAT  
WINE ZINE



# MOSTO Combat wine zine

## MOSTO TEAM

LORENZO CIBRARIO .. Editor in chief

ELENA OLIVIERI ..... PR

CECILIA ARATA .... Graphic designer

**MOSTO! Combat Wine Zine** is a queer, anti-racist zine founded by Lorenzo.

With Cecilia's creative and graphics and Elena's public relations.

**MOSTO! Volume 02** was made with the help of these very talented people:

**ANNA VAN DYK** London-based, South African born Anna writes about love, food and travels on her website [annavandyk.com](http://annavandyk.com).

**MAI LEGGERA** aka Annina Vallarino works in publishing and runs a website called [maileggera.com](http://maileggera.com). She now lives in the South of France, where she enjoys the wine and the good weather.

**SILVIA IVANI** is post-doe at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Her fields of interest are philosophy of Science and Feminist philosophy. She is currently working on the links between epistemic, ethical and social factors in the scientific speculation.

**BRAM JONHSTON** a former country kid who wandered to New York City and fell in with the wine crowd, Bram mainly divides his time between wine, writing, and music. [tigermimic.com](http://tigermimic.com)

**ANNA LONGUINE** is a writer, currently living in Paris after years of working in natural wine in London. Pursuing her passion for free-verse poetry and creative non-fiction, she is the co-founder of publishing house *Orpheus Standing Alone* (2014). Her work has been included in multi-media shows and exhibited in France, Germany and the UK, as well as in online and printed publications. [annaloungine.com](http://annaloungine.com)

**AXEL POLIMANTI** Axel is an italo-french guy in his 30s. He lived out and in Asia for 10 years teaching English. He's now back in Perugia where he opened the language school Lingo. His bands are Dummo and a brand new project called Snek Cebet. He loves wine.

**GRAZIANO NANI** With 15 years of experience in the communication world, now the creative director of Doing. Also certified Sommelier Ais and wine journalist for several magazines. On Instagram is #HelloOfaWine and his blog is [gutin.it](http://gutin.it), where he writes about wine, design and storytelling.

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**PIERRE ALLAIN** Trying to make sense of a lot of things, Pierre Allain is a graphic designer, illustrator, and radio host as well as a messy collector, an amateur birdwatcher, and a horror movie enthusiast. IG [instagram.com/pierreall](https://www.instagram.com/pierreall)

**SERGIO VARBELLA** Former editor of *Maltese Narrazione* is a graphic designer, illustrator and cartoonist for Einaudi, EL-Einaudi Ragazzi, Fabbri Editori, Internazionale. His recent works includes the graphic novel version of *Little Women* (Mondadori Electa, 2020) and the illustrations for *La storia dell'Inter in 50 ritratti* (Centauria, 2020). [sergiovarbella.com](http://sergiovarbella.com)

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# EDITORIALE

We made it. We, virtual explorers, managed to travel around the world in these 66 pages of MOSTO! Combat Wine Zine volume 02. In a year where nothing was feasible - but a year full of important changes - we were able to take you on a quick tour - and are delighted about this.

With Bram, our reporter from California, we met a Cult leader with a passion for wine, then we travelled to Thailand to see the environmental skills of the local wine business and shipped over to India to discover the grapes from the hills of Maharashtra.

We then drove to China to taste Axel's Hao Chinese fermented wine and we got drunk and happy with an old-time friend of ours. With Japanese wine expert Kaya, we learnt about ancient grapes and Japanese *terroir*, followed by some philosophical exercises with post-doc Silvia from Amsterdam and some ruminations about being sober with our South African journalist Anna.

Paris-based writer Anna Louguine also shared the complex problem of Cultural Appropriation in the wine business concerning Georgia and Armenia. All this jet-lag made us think about made us feeling pretty tired so we got very drunk on the flight with the writer Frankie Barile and MaiLeggera and her take on Colette. Of course, we have not forgotten our beloved Italy, and so we covered the DOCG of the Alta Langa, a Piemontese sparkling wine, and the marketing choices of a young winemaker from Valtellina, thanks to the expertise of communication expert Graziano.

A brief yet exhaustive introduction to Vinchio - Vaglio Serra and Tenute RaDe to complete our grand tour.

Wine is the perfect mixture of Nature and Nurture, the

combination of human efforts on natural landscapes. This specific human intervention into Nature has been going on since the Neolithic Era - if not before. From the Americas to New Zealand and from Africa to Canada, wine has been worked and produced according to a precise method that is common amongst all latitudes and parallels, but still, why are there some many racist issues in the business? White suprematism is a thing in the wine world, as well as misogyny and gender discrimination. Why is wine business so white, straight and

old-school? The factors are several, obviously, but perhaps a linguistic one could be more relevant. It could be its attachment to an outdated way of thinking that divides between new world and old world, or North vs South, or East and West. Decolonising the wine business needs radical change on its language: no more Old-world wines *versus* New-World Wines, no more New Latitude Wine versus Old Latitude Wine, no more Masculine wine versus Feminine Wine, no more use of world Sommelier (I could go on and on): these are all ways to highlight and create

differences. The wine will speak for itself, providing different nuances and tastes for every wine region, but it's not the language role to divide. 2020 was a year of turmoil and revolutions, which are always a bearer of deep changes: let's hope in a new language in the wine business that will mirror new attitudes and behaviour, free from old-school hierarchies.

Lastly, MOSTO! Combat Wine Zine volume 02 was created thinking of a map, a big map of the globe, which is round, not squared, and should not have any difference between North or south, East or West. Round just like a grape, don't forget about it. 🍷 Lorenzo







GO

ING

SO

BER

Text  
ANNA VAN DYK

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2020

I woke up with a raging headache and a dry mouth.

I had gone on a date the night before. The first date I had been on since January. It had been good, as far as blind dates go. We had met at a pub. He ordered a bottle of wine. We drank the whole thing, and then another. I got very drunk, and in the cold light of the morning after that familiar wash of shame rolled over me. I squirmed in my bed in disgust, groaning as I pushed my throbbing head into my pillow. Why did I get so drunk? I blamed it on Covid, and a year spent in misery and anxiety that could only be consoled through booze and the interest of a handsome stranger. What had I said last night? Where was my bank card? I'm never drinking again, I thought to myself. I'll go sober and put that excess energy into running a marathon, or writing a novel. Think of the weight I will lose. Think of the supreme human I will become. Alcohol and I are done.

It's a vow I have made many times before. And as I write this, my second gin and tonic is slowly melting in the glass alongside me. Usually, my sobriety lasts for one to two months, until I gently test the waters with a measured cocktail or glass of wine with dinner. This gradually increases until I relapse into another drunken night. And the sequence begins again.

I am not alone in this dance with liquor. A study in September 2020 showed that British participation in Dry January had grown 15-fold since the annual ritual's inception in 2016. There is now the extra opportunity to absolve ourselves of our drunken sins through Oct-sober. In 2018, 75,000 people in the UK signed up for the event. We can only predict that this number has grown in the subsequent years.



Why do we do this? What does it say about a society if, year after year, it unanimously feels a pull to dedicate

Alcohol is highly addictive. It is a warning printed on wine bottles in black and white, barely visible as we slosh out our fifth glass into whatever receptacle we can find. “I have a very good relationship with alcohol”, my brother once said to me. Is that possible? Alcohol is a drug. In England, there are 586,780 dependent drinkers. 18% of this number are receiving treatment. In 2018, there were 7,551 deaths registered in the UK that related to alcohol-specific causes. Of all the drugs available to us, it is the only one that has the least limitations placed upon it. It is socially acceptable to get inappropriately drunk- applauded and laughed about, even- but abusing any other substance is met with stark judgement. Why do we excuse alcohol but apply the same pardon to no other drug?

I think the simple answer is that it often feels good to be drunk. It’s a brief holiday from our neurosis and anxieties. Drinking is often done in good company and alongside music and dancing and romance, and we all crave the chance to momentarily indulge in a world where we are not ourselves. In this context, it is easy to understand why we tumble past the point of fun and into recklessness when drinking. If a December spent drunk and having fun can be forgiven by a sober start to a new year, why wouldn’t we do it?

But we should drink for more than just escapism and fun. Good alcohol deserves to be appreciated. I drink not just because it makes me feel like a lighter, freer version of myself, but because I admire the craftsmanship and taste behind a perfectly shaken martini. In this context, too, over-indulging is easy to understand. Just like that single slice of cake you treated yourself to that quickly became the whole entire thing, one glass of wine is not as delicious as five.

ate entire months of the year to sobriety?

The answer is clear to me. If I felt as good about myself as I do whilst drunk, I would probably, happily, be sober. I could even perhaps enjoy and appreciate a single glass of wine and have the self-control to know when I have had enough- and not end dates in messy goodbyes and shame the following day. But from the midst of the deep darkness that has been 2020, a delicious, socially acceptable substance that tastes good and makes me feel good about myself seems too good to be true. Why overthink anything that brings us joy?

When you think about it, really, we as a society have truly, collectively, cracked the code to happiness: anything done drunk is now forgivable, redeemable, forgettable. Pour yourself another, England. You deserve it after 2020. We still have the promise of sober January and a new year to wash away the horrors of this one.

#### Sources:

- 🔗 [tinyurl.com/MParticipation](https://tinyurl.com/MParticipation)
- 🔗 [tinyurl.com/MBenefits](https://tinyurl.com/MBenefits)
- 🔗 [tinyurl.com/MStatistic](https://tinyurl.com/MStatistic)
- 🔗 [tinyurl.com/MBulletin](https://tinyurl.com/MBulletin)



# THE NEW LANGUAGE OF BARBACAN

Text

GRAZIANO NANI

The winery is based in Valtellina, close to where I am from, and I have to say that their approach to communication via TikTok turned out to be a winning choice. Just watch the videos of their challenges up and down the steep vineyards and tell me if that does not provide a clear message on what mountain wine is. Heroic viticulture? Yep, but told by a gang of youngsters having the time of their life, bursting with laughter. And, what about telling the tough work in the canteen but with a catchy tune by Stiff Little

Fingers in the background? Better, no? We learn so much from the Barbacan videos, like, what the hell is the 'scialèsci' (have a look at their IG account to have an idea of what I am talking about). The point is: having fun does not prohibit learning and vice versa: the consumer does not have to be overfilled with technical vocabulary, but can learn about wine having fun.

The trick here is the way Barbacan used Instagram and TikTok: the winery speaks another language. This is clear also in the design of their labels,



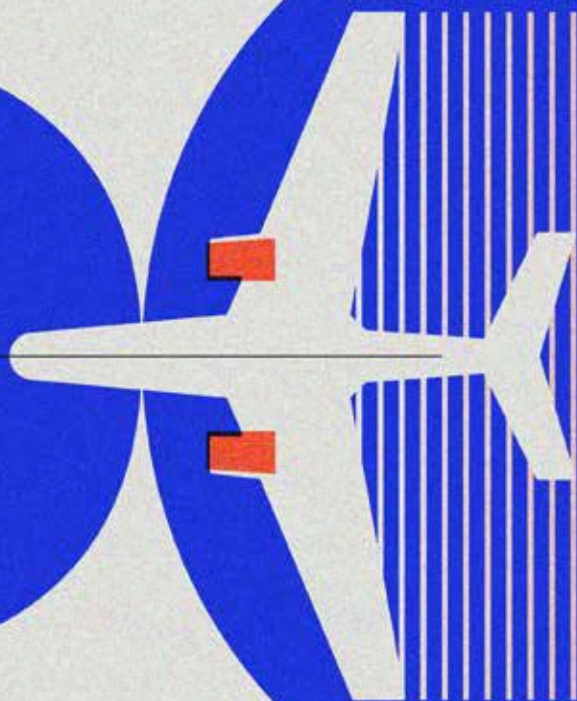
HOW DOES THE WINE WORLD  
SPEAK TODAY? THE ANSWER  
IS SIMPLE: WHATEVER WORKS!  
ALBEIT SOMETIMES THE WINE  
CRONICLES ARE STUCK IN  
THE OLD-FASHIONED RESPECT  
OF THE TERROIR, OR ON THE  
OVERWHELMED BALANCE  
BETWEEN TRADITION AND  
INNOVATION, THE TRUTH IS  
THAT THERE ARE THOUSANDS  
OF STYLES TO TALK ABOUT  
WINE. LET'S ANALYSE  
TOGETHER THE INSPIRED  
BARBACAN ESTATE EXAMPLE.

so powerful with those ancient graffiti and rock carvings that stand out in the shops. I bet you if you enter a wine shop you will notice those labels at first sight.

And you know what? This innovative language is mirrored in their wines too. Try their entry-level Rosso di Valtellina, it's like an introduction to what we drink in the Alps. It ticks all the boxes of what is a fresh and fun winemaking nowadays: indigenous yeasts, no clarification, zero filtrations, and a very easy palate on the mouth. Lastly, the company

and its products share values, the most important element when we talk about wine: spontaneity, authenticity, transparency, no hidden steps in vineyards or in the canteen, but everything absolutely crystal clear. These values are clearly visible across Barbacan videos, products and the way they speak. These young guys laugh and dance between terraces and barrels, without a hint of shade. Because just like their attitude, Barbacan wines have nothing to hide.


**Franky Barile**



**FLY ME  
TO THE BOOZE**



I HATE FLYING.  
IT IS AGAINST  
NATURE. HUMANS  
DO NOT HAVE  
WINGS, AND THE-  
REFORE SHOULD  
STAY ON THE  
GROUND, AND NOT  
AT 36.000 FEET  
ABOVE THE SEA  
LEVEL.



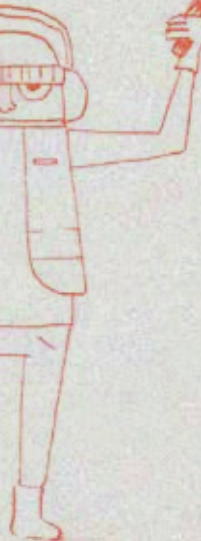
I bet we all agree on this sentence, or, at least, people with some good sense would agree with me, the others are just fools. Another reason why I don't like flying is that I met many engineers in my life and they are very squared: how can someone SO simple can project something as complex as an aeroplane? Over the last 5 years, I have been going home to visit my parents on the train. It takes 10 hours but it has less impact on climate change and it is on the ground (there is a little drama when I am under the Channel, that's BELOW the ground, but it's only 25 minutes, or, as I prefer to count it, 2 glasses of cheap white wine at the couch-bar of the Eurostar). Sadly, I can't take a train to go to New York, where I have been going to work at least twice a year, for the last 10 years. Not only I am intimidated by the actual flight, but for the two weeks before the journey, I am having nightmares, colds and chills.

The only reason why I might tolerate flying is that makes day time drinking socially acceptable. On flights, it can be 3 pm and I can be well hammered, laughing at horrible movies on a very tiny screen. I have the vivid image of me flying over the Death Valley in the direction of San Francisco, on the day of my 33rd birthday, sipping a bloody mary with those tiny black straws. I also recall when on an HTR - JFK I was offered a bottle of complimentary champagne to calm the hell out of my panic attack: only an entire bottle of wine (plus a few whiskies) could stop my body from shaking. I also recall the time when I was crying like a baby, shivering and holding my partner's hand, and only a few gallons of G&Ts were able to save me from the desperation. These stories tell us two things: a) I have an alcohol problem, b) drinking on flights is fun.

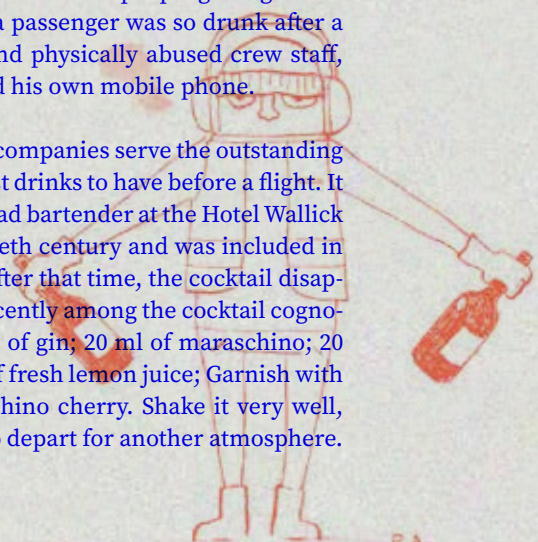
Do you remember the Concorde? The fast Anglo-French craft offered to its customers an incredible drinking experience, included on the price of the ticket. Check the lists online - they are sold on eBay for A LOT of money and have a look to all of those Chateaux or Crus or Clos. I wonder if any passenger on a

**VOYAGE. BON VOYAGE. BON VOYAGE. BON VOYAGE.**





Concorde flight were ever arrested for being too wasted. Around 500 people every year are arrested for being too drunk on a craft (I swear it never happened to me). The reason behind these high numbers is simple: drinking alcohol in the air gets us drunk quicker. On the aeroplane, our body finds it more difficult to absorb oxygen, because of a lower barometric pressure inside the cabin, making us feel drunker quicker. The first documented case of air rage was recorded in 1947 on a flight from Havana to Miami when a drunk man assaulted another passenger and a flight attendant. Since then, as the number of flights has increased over the decades, the number of drunk people followed too. In 1995 a 59 years old investment banker flying to Buenos Aires to New York got out of his seat, assaulted the cabin crew and defecated on a service cart in the first-class section, in front of the other passengers. He also runs around the cabin, leaving traces of faeces all over the first-class, just because the cabin-crew refused to give him another drink. In her masterpiece 'Fear of flight', Erica Jong taught us how flying and sex (and booze) are deeply connected. So much, that, in 2005, an English couple was arrested for being drunk and having sex three-time, as well as performing lap dance in a crew seat. I can picture the face of the other passenger while being forced to see two drunk people getting drunk and naked. In January of 2019, a passenger was so drunk after a bottle of gin, that threatened and physically abused crew staff, and also dismantled and chewed his own mobile phone.



I wonder why none of the flight companies serve the outstanding Aviator cocktail. One of the finest drinks to have before a flight. It was created by Hugo Ensslin, head bartender at the Hotel Wallick in New York, in the early twentieth century and was included in the 1930 Savoy Cocktail Book. After that time, the cocktail disappeared to make its comeback recently among the cocktail cognoscenti. Here is the recipe: 50 ml of gin; 20 ml of maraschino; 20 ml of crème de violette; 20 ml of fresh lemon juice; Garnish with flamed lemon peel or a maraschino cherry. Shake it very well, with a lot of ice, and get ready to depart for another atmosphere.

**BON VOYAGE. BON VOYAGE. BON VOYAGE. BON VOY**

A BRIEF  
YET TRIUMPHANT  
INTRODUCTION  
TO WINE  
IN CHINA



WINE IS  
HAO



**T**he first time I stopped to think about wine in China was when I entered a small corner shop in Dongguan and asked for putao *jiu* (grape alcohol, literally). I had to specify putao as most of what is commonly referred to as wine is made of rice, whether distilled (*baijiu* and *miji*) being the most famous) or fermented. However, what got me thinking was not the fact that I had to specify it was wine from grapes that I wanted; it was the fact that the woman showed me a few bottles and once I told her they were far more expensive than the budget I had in mind, she abruptly picked a ladder, went up to a dusty shelf and picked even dustier bottle. “20 kuai”, she said after dusting off the bottle. It was clear like daylight to me that she did not know much about wine, “an older bottle should cost more” I thought, “not less”. I smiled, paid and brought it to the restaurant. Later on in life I would realise that not every wine ages well, and that even though I got lucky that evening, as the wine tasted decent, I probably did not know much more than that lady and I was about to discover a lot more things about China and wine, as that was only the beginning of my 8-year stay in the middle kingdom.

☞ It all started with Cheong Fatt Tze [...] a man who became a legend himself with a movie-style rags-to-riches story that embodies the Chinese value of *when someone really wants something, they get it done*.

Not everyone knows, but the earliest evidence of an alcoholic beverage in history is from China, dating back to about 7000 BC, in what today is called Henan province by the yellow river valley. The alcoholic beverage was something extremely different from what we refer to nowadays as wine. It was a fermented drink made from a mix of wild grape, rice, hawthorn and honey, more like a neolithic grog, quite likely used for burials and religious ceremonies. From that point in history onwards, it looks like grapes were used less and less in Chinese winemaking. Yes, for us Europeans wine means a fermented drink usually made from grapes, but not in China: there, rice wine is way more common, more often distilled than fermented, and grape wine started to come back to the scene only in recent history.

It all started with Cheong Fatt Tze (today transliterated as Zhang Bishi), a man who became a legend himself with a movie-style rags-to-riches story that embodies the Chinese value of “when someone really wants something, they get it done”. Born in 1840 in Guangdong’s province, he was a young ethnic hakka boy who worked as a cowherd in the green countryside. During his teens, he decided to leave China and moved

to Jakarta, Indonesia where he worked as a water-carrier, a modest and one of the lowest pay jobs, but thanks to his relentless attitude and a decent marriage, by 1890 he became so influential that he was appointed Chinese consul in Singapore. Through his international efforts in trading and diplomacy he fell in love with the world of wine. Yes, wine as we know it, grape wine, this time.

Cheong established the ChangYu winery in 1892 in Yantia, China. He started by planting vines from the USA but they did not adapt with the local climate. He then planted European vines, but only a few bore fruits. He then decided to try and graft local wild grape plants to the European ones and that did the trick! Changyu is still one of the most prominent wineries in the country. As Robert Holton has once written “globalization has been extending its hybridizing thrust for centuries. Just as the idea of biological race is a spurious basis for social and cultural distinction, so the idea of distinct cultures defined by purely endogenous characteristics is equally spurious from an analytical point of view.” This seems to perfectly wrap up what happened with wine in China.

Fast forward to today and China is a country that ranks amongst the ten biggest wine producing countries in the world with over 800 million litres of wine produced in 2019. 800 million litres could seem not much of a big deal if we take into account the almost 1 and half billion people that live there. However, we need to remember that it is a country where grape wine is still a novelty to most. What is even more striking is the amount of imported wine: over 600 millions litres in 2019, almost as much as it produces. There are two main reasons for this: the first one being that China's climate does not fit winemaking (if not in a few provinces), the second is that in a country that does not know much about wine, labels matter. Bringing a foreign wine means bringing good wine, “Most of us think that Chinese red wine is average at best, and we feel ashamed to drink it at a banquet” told us Kevin Kan, owner of BeiJing BII-LII Trading Co.LTD. I have asked Kevin, who happens to also be my former boss, a few questions about something quite unique: Chinese business drinking culture. Connections (关系 - guanxi) are key in China, this obviously applies also to the business sphere and alcohol plays a pivotal role. Kevin confirms that grape wine is still a rarity at business meals, people would rather drink baijiu on these occasions (an over 50° distilled drink made from rice). “Drinking baijiu at a business banquet can build a rapport between people. In fact, getting drunk once or twice together will foster a good relationship” he points out, and then explains “by drinking it, you can get to know a person in depth: often baijiu can make a person say something that they would not say otherwise. If drinking red wine or beer, we tend to think that people are quite distant, not willing to be honest with each other”.



Let's go back to the over 600 million litres of red wine that China has imported in 2019 and the 800 it produced: if these bottles do not end up at business tables they must end up somewhere. They mostly end up at tables when friends and family meet, especially at tables where the cities' new middle class sit. "When I drink at someone's home, I see red wine more often than before... Like, double." Kevin confirms.

Compared to my first year in the middle kingdom, when I had to take a forty-five minute bus to the city center to find Walmart imported wine, I can see how fast wine is becoming more and more available, even in relatively small cities. I have seen wine tastings being organised every other weekend at fancy dim-lit bars as well as supermarkets offering from a handful of bottles to full aisles of wine.

I had many more questions and decided to speak to Danny Deng, a WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust) graduate who now works as a sommelier in Shanghai, to share a few insights on where the relationship with China and Wine is today and what it is heading for.

🗣️ He started by planting vines from the USA but they did not adapt with the local climate. He then planted European vines, but only a few bore fruits. He then decided to try and graft local wild grape plants to the European ones and that did the trick!

Q HI DENNY, THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO TALK TO MOSTO! HOW DID YOU GET INTO WINE? WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN WINE?

A I studied a Hotel Management course and spent a one year placement (in the UK) in a hotel. There, I had many chances to taste great wines while working in the restaurant. After a year, in 2007, I started loving it so much that I decided to enroll at WSET London. From that point on I have always worked in wine and I still love this world.

Q DID YOUR FAMILY DRINK WINE BEFORE YOU STARTED WORKING IN WINE?

A No, they did not. Wine was kind of a novelty in China back then. However, they are drinking wine now. The number of people interested in and, of course, drinking wine grows by the year!

Q IN MY TIME IN CHINA I OFTEN SAW THE BOTTLES FROM THE SAME WINERIES IN ALL SHOPS, RESTAURANTS AND SUPERMARKETS. I AM TALKING ABOUT CHANGYU, GREATWALL, DYNASTY AND SO ON. DO SMALL WINE PRODUCERS EXIST IN A MARKET OF MASSIVE BRANDS? HOW DO THEY SURVIVE?

A Yes, there are some small wine producers, and their quality is not bad at all. However, wine is partly still a novelty and most people would rather buy a “brand” they trust. Therefore, small wineries do struggle and often end up selling through big wine distribution companies, such as Kerry Wine or ASC Fine wines here in Shanghai.

Q HERE AT MOSTO! WE TAKE AT HEART WINES THAT HAVE A SOUL, THAT TRY TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY, IN A MORE NATURAL WAY. BIODYNAMIC, ORGANIC, NATURAL WINE, YOU NAME IT! DO YOU SEE A FUTURE FOR THIS TYPE OF WINE IN CHINA?

A In terms of wine production this is still unheard of in China. However, I believe organic wines will be a trend in the China market, probably earlier than we tend to think. Many top restaurants and hotels already add these wines on their list. People think they are good for health, because they are “有机” (Yǒuji – organic).



Q

THANK YOU DENNY, I HAVE ONE LAST QUESTION FOR YOU. MAYBE A CHEESY ONE, BUT STILL I WANT TO ASK IT: IF CHINESE PEOPLE WERE A TYPE OF WINE, WHAT WINE WOULD THEY BE?

A

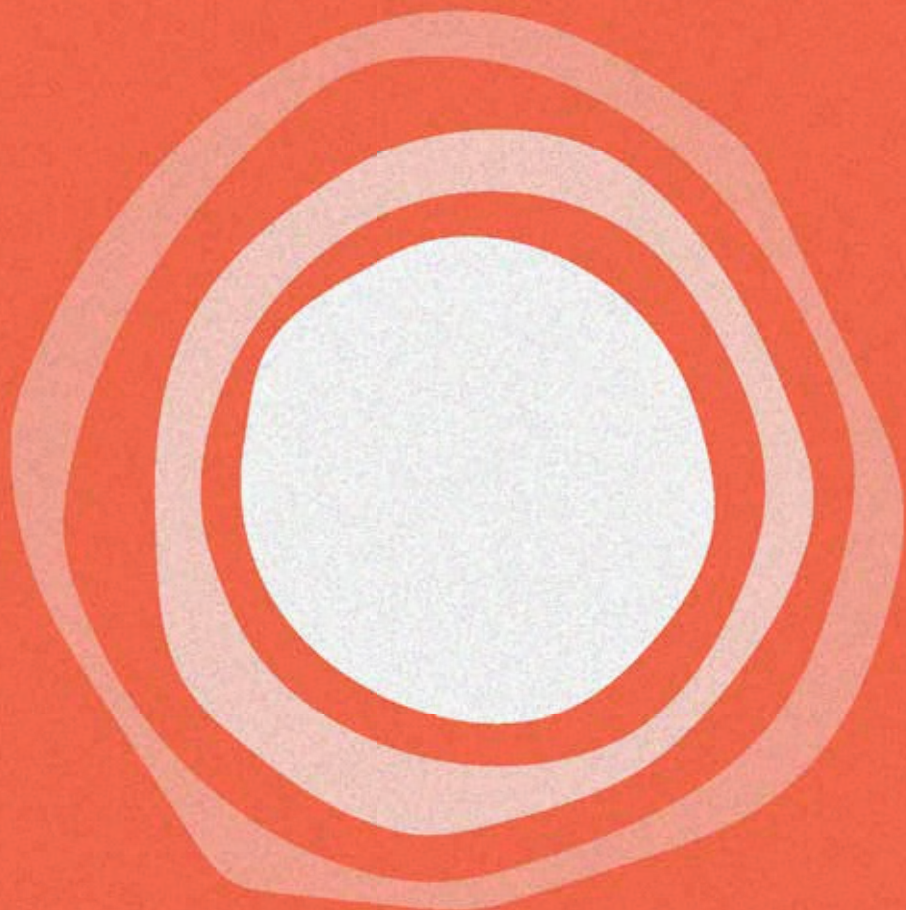
My answer would be Merlot. A soft, fruity and approachable wine.

☺ With this last question, one that seems almost taken out of those long gone teenage drinking nights, I say my goodbyes to Denny and pour myself another glass of wine from the latest local producer I visited a few days ago. 2020 has been, and technically still is, a year to hate for most, let us at least enjoy wine.



PS: A *brief yet triumphant introduction* is a great tune by Against Me!

WINE  
FROM THE LAND  
OF



THE RISING  
SUN





hen people think of Japan, one of the first things that comes to mind is “sake”. In recent years, some may

have also come to know and appreciate Japanese whiskey. Even more niche is the recent appearance and popularity of Japanese craft gin. But when people talk about wine, Japan is one of the last places they'd mention. Sure, sometimes sake is referred to as “rice wine,” but this isn't completely accurate. Instead, I'd like to talk about actual winemaking in Japan; An industry which is evolving rapidly in recent years, by looking at the three iconic varieties: Koshu, Muscat Bailey A, and Yama Sauvignon.

Is winemaking new to Japan? The answer is both yes and no. The earliest records of wine-making date back to 1627-1630, when wine was made under the jurisdiction of the Ogura clan in Fukuoka. This is about the same time as other New World countries; the United States and Chile began making wine in the 16th century and South Africa in the 17th century. However, winemaking did not take root in Japan until after the country's opening to the West in 1874. As part of the government's westernization policy, Japan began to experiment with grape cultivation and wine production. While enjoying a niche status with slow but steady growth throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, World War II and its aftermath caused a severe slump from which Japan only recovered by the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. A period of strong economic growth followed the Olympics, which helped boost its popularity and consumption even beyond its former status.

Today, the Japanese wine industry is in the midst of a revolutionary change. Alice Feiring described Japan as “the next frontier for natural wine” in her article this year. Since the 2000s, there has been a growing trend for small producers to make wine from their own grapes. And despite a harsh climate for winemaking, due to rainy and humid weather, there has been an increasing number of producers trying to make wines as natural as possible.

Japanese wine is characterized by its diversity. Japan's unique and elongated shape lends itself to a variety of climates across its territory. Hokkaido, the northern limit of Japan's wine production, has a latitude of 44° north, whereas the southern limit of Okinawa, has a latitude of 26° north, making for an overall difference of 18°. By comparison, the difference in latitude between Champagne and Corsica in France is only 6°. The topography also varies tremendously from mountainous areas reaching 900m above sea level to coastal vineyards situated a mere 2m above sea level. Thus, characteristics of grapes vary wildly depending on the region where they are grown.

In addition, while many countries rely on *Vitis vinifera* with European varieties such as Chardonnay and Barbera in their wines, Japan cultivates others like the Japanese wild grapes, *Vitis labrusca*, the American varieties for eating, and even hybrids of the two. This is not surprising given that many mainstays of the Japanese diet are a blend of native Japanese dishes and Western influences.

Text	Illustration
KAYA TANII	DARUMA_RIE

## KOSHU

A true Japanese personality,  
sensitive yet versatile

Koshu is the most widely grown white wine grape in Japan, accounting for 17% of Japanese wine. It has been cultivated in Japan since the 12th century in what is now Yamanashi Prefecture around Koshu city. Situated at the foot of Mount Fuji and from which the grape takes its name, Koshu city is widely considered to be the winemaking capital of Japan. More than 50% of the wine from Yamanashi is still made from Koshu. Recent research reveals that this grape is a cross between European and wild Chinese grapes. It is characterized by a crisp, aroma of yuzu–Japanese citrus–, mild acidity, and a clean finish with a hint of bitterness and tanginess on your tongue. Originally a low-aromatic variety, Koshu is often aged *sur lie* to bring out the flavor and fruity characteristics of the wine.

Usually Koshu is low in alcohol (11-12%) and is typically made into light, delicate wines. However, when it's grown in high altitude vineyards where temperatures vary widely from day to night, it can also be powerfully dry and full-bodied. Due to its thicker skin, Koshu contains more skin-derived compounds than most white grapes, and recently, more producers have started making orange wine with Koshu. Skin-contact Koshu has aromas and flavors of dried fruit and roasted green tea. Although it shows many different sides depending on how it is made, overall, it is an excellent accompaniment to Japanese food or any kind of dish with delicate flavors. It is especially recommended for pairing with dishes seasoned with dashi and light soy sauce, as well as sushi, sashimi and other dishes that go well with the understated, refreshing acidity of Koshu wine. Traditionally, sushi is often paired with sake, but nowadays, it's not uncommon to find Koshu in sushi restaurants. Subtle, unassertive, yet flexible, Koshu is perhaps the Japanese wine that best expresses the typical Japanese virtues.

## MUSCAT BAILEY A

De-foxy flavors,  
undergoing a renaissance

The most popular red wine grape in Japan, particularly favored in Yamanashi and Yamagata, was created in 1927 by Zenbe Kawakami, the 'Father of Japanese Wine'. It's a cross between Bailey and Muscat Hamburg that gives birth to a grape designed to withstand Japan's humid, rainy, and typhoon-prone climate, and as such, has become very popular. With its bright red color, it is characterized by aromas of cherry, berry and violet. It is almost tannin-free and round on the palate, with fresh, pithy fruit flavors and good acidity.

In the past, they were made into relatively sweet wines, and the candy-floss fruitiness often noted in American varieties was not fully appreciated. But lately, an increasing number of producers have been making light, dry wines with Muscat Bailey A that are fragrant and supple, as well as sparkling wines perfect for aperitivo with fresh acidity, using the fruitiness of the grape to the wine's advantage. While most wines made with Muscat Bailey A are early-drinking wines with no aging, some producers wishing to lend depth to their wines barrel-age them in Mizunara, a Japanese Oak typically used for aging Japanese whiskey. Take advantage of Muscat Bailey's light, fruity taste and just-right acidity when pairing it with food. It goes especially well with sweet and spicy dishes. If you get the chance, try it with red fish such as tuna, tomato-based dishes, or Korean barbecue—it's a pairing you're sure to fall in love with!



## YAMA SAUVIGNON

The wildest sauvignon you've ever seen

Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc are basically the Marvel movies of the wine world: most people have seen them at least once in their life. But what is Yama Sauvignon? It's a unique Japanese red wine variety created in 1900 by crossing Cabernet Sauvignon and Yamabudo. The eighth largest red wine grape variety in Japan, it's been attracting a lot of recognition in recent years.

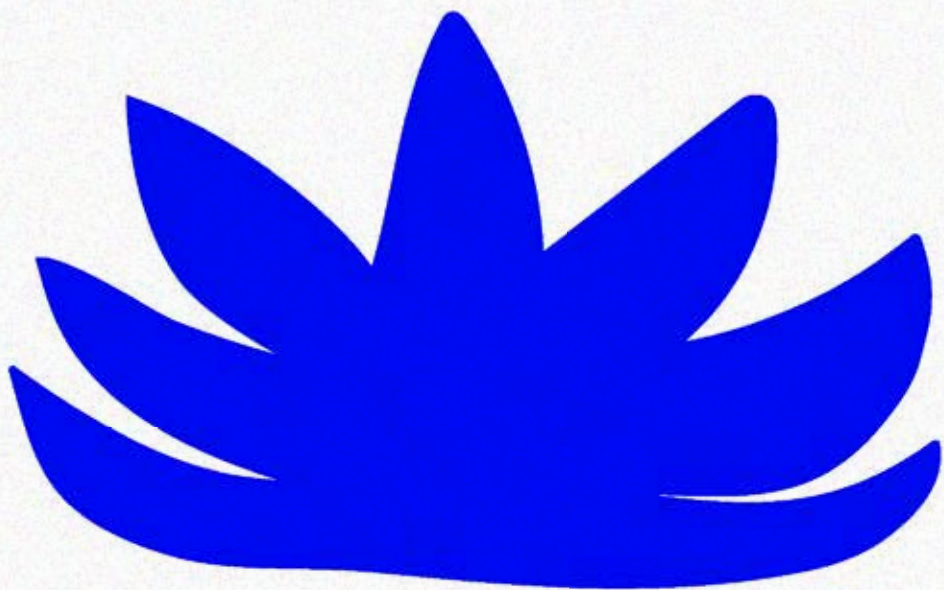
Yamabudo—yama meaning “mountain” and budo meaning “grape” in Japanese—is indigenous to Japan, growing wild in the hills and fields of Hokkaido and Tohoku. Its juice has long been drunk medicinally, as a cure for anemia and to fortify the body. In fact, Yamabudo contains many times more polyphenols than ordinary grapes. Although well-suited to Japan's climate and resistant to disease, it is also extremely high in acidity and has a rustic flavor like wild strawberries with a touch of earth. On the other hand, Cabernet Sauvignon is a difficult variety to grow in Japan, but its aroma is elegant and rich with firm, structured tannins. By combining the two, you get the best of both worlds. In a way, this grape embodies the spirit of Japanese culture since it opened its doors to the world, blending East with West.

The wine is deep purple, ruby in color, with fruit notes of blackberry, blueberry jam, and plum—typical characteristics of Cabernet—and yet, it's also spicy and rustic—flavors of the mountain grape—with a clean acidity. It is a great match for spicy dishes such as Indian curry, as well as for game meat and other hearty meat dishes. While not quite as tannic as Cabernet on its own, it more than makes up for it with acidity instead. It'd be an interesting pairing with a berry-based dessert with cream.



☞ I hope my quick tour of the Japanese wine scene and its rockstar grapes will come to mind when you next see a Japanese variety at your favorite bar. As this scene is undergoing its own revolution, fueled by small-scale producers passionately making wine from unique grapes found nowhere else in the world, why not reward their efforts and your curiosity by cheating on your favorite Barolos or Burgundy wines with a Japanese beauty instead?

HOW INDIA  
BECAME ONE  
OF THE GREATEST  
WINE PRODUCERS



**DIVINE!**





uring the first lockdown, I found myself watching the Indian tv show *Four more shots, Please!*, a Mumbai-set take on Sex & The City. Just like the heroines from the Candace Bushnell novels, four women, with their stereotyped personality, go through their lives facing problems, love, friendship and drama. Just like the American counterpart, this Indian version is also drenched in wine and booze - hence the name of the show. We see those young women having a glass of wine at home, chilling in front of the tv, a glass of wine at the bar with the girlfriends, chatting about boys (the show is loaded with hot men), having a glass of wine at dinner and so on. This gave me the push I needed to make some research on Indian wines and produce this tiny Indian wine guide.

The first traces of grape-growing and winemaking in India are found in the Bronze Age, thanks to the Persians trading in the North of the country. It is believed that the Persian invaders introduced the fruit and started the production of grapes, spreading it into the whole country. Since then, Indian winemaking and fermentation processes were common - albeit wine was a drink not for the masses, just for the elites (nobles, warriors, kings). In the Sanskrit language Vedic text (around 1500 BC), spirits and wine are mentioned as 'Soma' and 'Sura', while in later historical works (around 300 BC) 'Madhu' is used to refer to wine, which was common and various in kinds and qualities.

European traders (and invaders) have then encouraged winemaking. In the XVII century, we have records of Port-style wine production amongst the Portuguese in India. In the XVIII century, we know that the French troops had planned grape gardens (presumably to make wine). During the British invasion, grape-growing was widely spread in the state of Maharashtra and by the Kashmir region. In the XIX century, the Mughal emperors maintained extensive vineyards in the area of Hyderabad, so much that there are records of Indian wines exposed at the EXPO - Great Calcutta Exhibition in 1883. At the beginning of the 20th Century *phylloxera* nearly wiped out the industry, so we had to wait until 1970 to see the industry rising back, like a phoenix.

Albeit the government attitude towards alcohol and booze was not ideal, as it was massively discouraged to drink alcohol after the Independence of India, in 1970 there were collaborations between Italian Vermouth company Cinzano and wine company Bosca with Indian businesses based in Baramati to create a winery and produce grapes. Alongside this, Port-style wine was produced using 'Bangalore Blue' grapes in the area of Goa.

The late 70s, the Tonia Group imported in the Goa region a large amount of *Vitis Vinifera*, in common varieties such as Pinot Noir, Trebbiano, Chardonnay and Cabernet among others. It was only from 1980 that the government started giving support to the development of vineyards and - most importantly - that *Indage* (champagne + India) was born. In 1979 Chateau Indage was the first Indian winery to produce sparkling wine. Based around Pune, the chateau was for years one of the symbols of the wine renaissance of India.

Other important vineyards were Grover (est. in 1990) and Sula (est. in 1998), producing an extensive variety of wine, alongside being established and worldwide famous.




Being such a mastodonic country with such a complex weather system, India has three macro-areas that are suitable for grape growing. A *sub-tropical region* including the areas around Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and some areas in Punjab. A *Hot tropical region* including Maharashtra, Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh, which is the major viticulture region with two crops harvesting in a year. Lastly, a *mild tropical region* in the South of the country, with temperatures between 36 and 12 degrees celsius. In all of these areas, vines are planted at higher altitudes along slopes and cooler parts, to benefit from shadows and cooler air. The altitude of Indian vines is usually from 200m in the South to 1000m in Kashmir. Because the vine-making business was planned from scratch in 1980, India hosts several non-indigenous varieties, with the most common being Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel, Chenin Blanc, Clairette Blanche, Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Riesling.



One of the most interesting vineyards in India at the moment is for sure Krsma with their wide selection of wines. We met Devati Basumallick, sommelier and Brand head of Krsma Estates to discuss the climate conditions in India: “To the best of our knowledge, one of the challenges of growing grapes in India is the fungal pressure faced in vineyards. The temperatures tend to be very conducive for fungal growth as is the periodicity of rainfall resulting in a fairly humid micro-environment in the vine hedge. This allows for easy fungal growth which then requires investment in antifungal measures which may affect the quality of the fruit. However, it must be noted that the climate in Hampi Hills, where the vines of KRSMA Estates are grown, is very different from the more prevalent wine regions of India. This area near Hampi, Koppal district, Karnataka sees very low rainfall and has rocky soil and dry air. This climate tends to inhibit fungal growth and so the vineyard does not face large infections for the most part. However, the downside of this kind of climate is the investment that needs to go to irrigate the vines. Furthermore, the dryness of the air leads to smaller berries with relatively thick skin and low juice volume as the moisture from the fruit is lost. The upshot to this is that the lack of moisture in

🗣️ In all of these areas, vines are planted at higher altitudes along slopes and cooler parts, to benefit from shadows and cooler air.



 The Syrah plants grow well too and have a flavour profile that matches their Rhone based counterparts rather than the Australian Shiraz wines.

the fruit concentrates the flavours and character of the grapes which is easily noted in the wine. This gives the wines of KRSMA their typical bursts of intense aromas and varietal characteristics that make it one of the best-loved Indian wines across the globe.” We asked Devati which grape varieties work better than others in such a climate; “From experiences past and present, we have found that Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc grow very well here. The Syrah plants grow well too and have a flavour profile that matches their Rhone based counterparts rather than the Australian Shiraz wines. Nero d’Avola has been seen to grow very well too, as has Chenin Blanc, Grillo and Merlot. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Pinot noir struggles to grow in these climates- as can be expected- as does Chardonnay and to a certain extent, Sangiovese.”

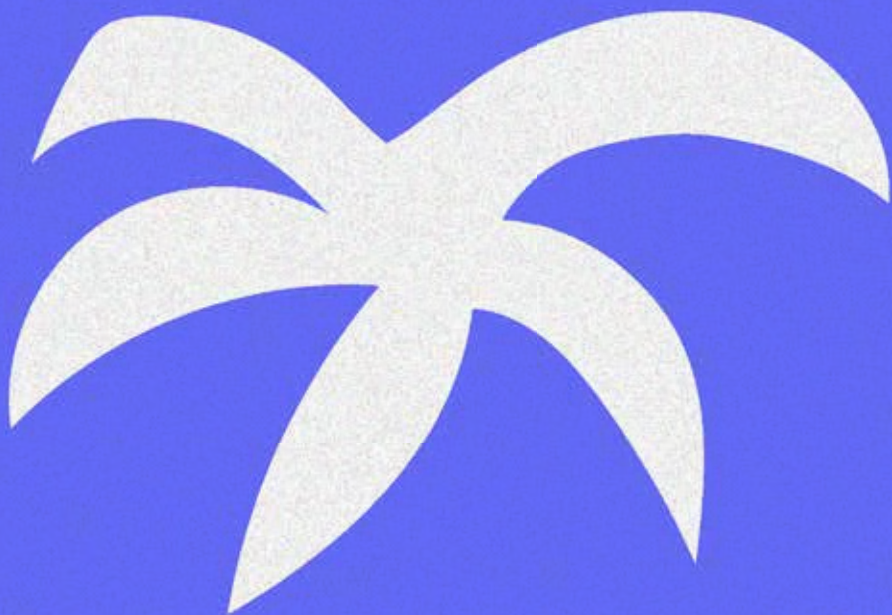
MOSTO also met journalist, WSET Diploma student and wine teacher Ruma Singh to talk about Indian grapes. “India’s top wineries make their wines from *Vitis vinifera*, and the young wine industry is still learning which grape varieties are best suited to the varied range of climate and soil types found in the country, as well as to see which are best suited to our climate, as we are located in a tropical zone,” claimed Mrs Singh. For Mosto, Mrs Singh, asked Mr Manjunath, the Vice-President of the worldwide famous Grover-Zampa Vineyards, to explain us the varied kind of *Vitis* that can be found in India: “The other species apart from *Vitis*

*vinifera* in the *Vitis* genus which produces grapes are *Vitis labrusca* (table varieties like Flame Seedless, Concord and Bangalore Blue) and *Vitis rotundifolia* (table varieties Muscadania)”. “Both species produce table grapes, however, have also been used for Port-style wine” continues Mr Manjunath, “Especially with Bangalore Blue, Bangalore Purple and Sharad seedless, a cross between *vinifera* and other species, used for juice, distillation and entry-level wines - with typical *labrusca* rose aroma”. So, how do winemakers grow grapes in India? Surprisingly, not anymore with the Pergola system, but with the “[...] Y trellis method. We train the vines quite above from ground, unlike Europe where the canopy is trained closer to the ground. For table varieties and wine varieties are grown in hotter regions (Maharashtra), the Y trellising system is used, which helps to protect the bunches from direct sunlight.”

Ruma Singh also added “Leading Indian wineries are very technologically advanced, and use top innovations in winemaking technology. In Grover Zampa, for instance, there is the use of optical sorting machines, concrete eggs, amphorae etc. Wine is matured in barrels of different types and sizes, from 500 litres, 1000 and 2000 litre oak barrels, apart from normal 225-litre oak barrels.”

Given its relative recency, the Indian wine industry is still in a phase of experimentation and development and we are very excited to follow this interesting market in its new and varied directions.

NEW  
LATITUDE  
WINE



THAILAND



**T**hailand, formerly known as Siam, is one of the beautiful countries of Southeast Asia, located at the centre of Indochina, that part of the world that includes Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar. Thailand has a tropical climate, so it is generally very hot, particularly between March and May, with April being the hottest period of the year.

The monsoon season runs from May to October, with torrential rain and high humidity. When you study any wine class or course, you are always told that wine grows in a moderate to a continental climate, usually between the 30th and the 50th latitude, but the new geography of the wine world has changed this axiom, introducing Thailand (13th latitude) and India in the game.

The earliest vineyards in Thailand were planted in 1980 in the Hua Hin Hills - 130 km from Bangkok - via a research project ordered by the Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej. At the time, the wine was presented as a simple table drink without any character, but thanks to the hard work of a small group of winemakers.

Over the last 30 years, several *vinifera* wine varieties have been planted, developing great wines, whilst having to overcome climate disadvantages such as lack of seasonal variation and diurnal temperature variation. Against all odds, in some areas of Thailand, vineyards have found solutions to store Monsoon water, limit the erosion of soil and have found which grape varieties are better to grow in such a tropical climate.

Thai vineyards are planted with various grape varieties and some of them are very exciting.

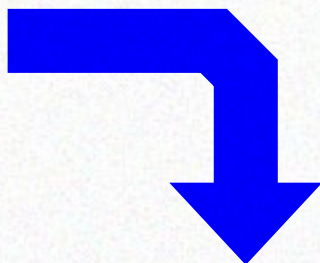
The most common is Malaga Blanc, a southern French table grape introduced in Siam in the late 17th century by a French politician. This variety is known for its thick skin, which helps to cope with the country's abundant rainfall. Other popular varieties are Muscat Hamburg and Cardinal - a mighty Californian variety. Pokdum (Thai name for the Japanese hybrid Black Queen) is becoming generally relevant as well as other varieties including Shiraz, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon, Tempranillo, and - very interestingly - there are some experiments with Sangiovese and Barbera.

The brands to savour are PB Valley Winery, GranMonte Vineyard & Winery, J&J Vineyard, Village Farm and Winery and the super famous Monsoon Valley. Owned by Siam Winery, this last company is run by Charlerm Yoovidhya, the Thai billionaire son of Chaleo Yoovidhya, inventor and owner of Red Bull.

Why is it important to look at the Thai approach to winemaking? Because it shows us some ideas the West world should use to cope with climate change. Thai winemakers experienced conditions that are just beginning to happen in other places, like new kinds of fungi, bacteria or environmental issues (torrential rainfalls, droughts).

Thailand is leading a revolution in the wine business, together with China, Brazil, India and Vietnam. Tropical wines undergo no winter dormancy period, and in many cases, the grapes are harvested twice per year, a brand new concept for the West wine world.

CULTS



CULT  
WINES

Text

BRAM JOHNSON

“I started buying wine  
when I couldn’t afford hash.”



WINE  
CULTS

— CULTIVATION OF THE GRAPEVINE

CULTIVATION

In this article there are three quotes taken from the following articles:  
 🔗 [tinyurl.com/mostoRuins](http://tinyurl.com/mostoRuins) 🔗 [tinyurl.com/mostoCults](http://tinyurl.com/mostoCults) 🔗 [tinyurl.com/mostoSierra](http://tinyurl.com/mostoSierra)

Though his paintings were garnering significant attention, he started to find the hedonistic and excessive lifestyle of the art world unfulfilling. He began a search for something more meaningful and, while pouring through theological volumes, he happened upon a system called "Forth Way". In one such book by George Gurdjieff, he found a phone number for a group called "The Fellowship Of Friends" and gave them a call.

Though initially put-off by his first encounter with the organization, Gideon eventually decided to give the Fellowship a try, committing a year to test the waters with them. That turned into 30 years and changed the course of his life forever.

"...going back to the point where I said, "Yes, I'll work in the winery for a little bit," roughly a year later, by necessity, the winery fell in my lap like a hot potato."

Most people not in the Fellowship Of Friends would call it a cult. It's a non-denominational religious group built on increasing the consciousness of its members and preparing the seeds for a post-apocalypse society. Their organization is centered around the Apollo compound in Oregon House, California. With 1200 acres (485 Hectares) of secluded property, the Fellowship spent ages clearing the land, putting up structures, and creating what would eventually be the Renaissance Vineyard.

Gideon once described a night during the planting of the almost 400 acre vineyard when he returned to his room to find he was unable to unbutton his own shirt. The endless hours of manually digging post holes had left his hands rigid, painful, and unable to move enough even for such a simple task. Luckily the damage was not permanent.





Though Renaissance Vineyard and Winery began producing wine in 1978, they didn't actually attempt to sell any of it until 1987 when they released a non-vintage Cabernet Sauvignon blending wine from 1978-1981 and some Riesling. This was to be Gideon's first foray into the wine world, as he was tasked with establishing a market for Renaissance in Europe. The wines struggled to gain traction overseas and the Fellowship finally gave up on that market in 1991. Gideon returned to California and assumed the position of assistant winemaker and eventually became head winemaker in 1994, a position that he held for 16 years.

“...once my first fermentation got started, I knew I was home. I felt like I was melting down from the inside out. I fell in love with the magic of that process.”

The vineyards at Renaissance were farmed organically from own-rooted (non-grafted) vines planted in austere volcanic soil at elevations ranging from 1700-2350 feet (518-716 meters). Gideon's predecessors seemed to give little thought to the vineyard and winemaking, so among his first tasks were identifying the best and worst parcels, regrafting the failing parcels with better suited varieties, and reshaping the haphazard vineyard into a carefully tended, cohesive collection of microclimates. It was during this era that helped define Renaissance as one of California's crown jewels. While they were too far off the map and too poorly managed to ever become established as their counterparts in Napa and Sonoma, their wines became highly sought after by those in the know. Intensely concentrated, age-worthy, and complex, the wines told a story of their unique origins in the way that all great wines throughout history have done.

In 1995, a friend offered Gideon and his wife Saron the opportunity to graft over his vineyard. Originally planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, the vineyard was too cool to ripen properly, so Gideon felt Pinot Noir would have a better chance. Three years later, Gideon purchased the property and thus, Clos Saron was born.

Using a combination of his Home Vineyard Pinot Noir and fruit purchased from Renaissance, he began creating his impeccable and unique wines in a style that would later be rolled into the “Natural Wine Movement”, though Gideon never concerned himself with such marketing.

“I’m not certified anything. We were both cult members for long enough so we do not want to join anymore cults, be it organic, biodynamic, natural or anything.”

Though he continued working at Renaissance for many years, Gideon had been experiencing a growing disillusionment with the Fellowship. Feeling that the organization was not all it claimed to be, he sought to distance himself. After training his replacement at the winery, he left the Fellowship in 2010 and, per their rules, was shut out entirely. Literally. Once when I was visiting his winery, I asked whether we might be able to visit Renaissance, to which Gideon replied: “You probably could, but I’m not allowed in there any more.”

Having lost his access to the Renaissance fruit, Gideon discontinued any cuvees specific to that vineyard and began producing a new range from small, responsibly farmed vineyards around his area. These cuvees showed a different side of Gideon’s winemaking: lighter and brighter, released younger, they were an exciting expression of his thoughtful touch in the cellar, a worthy next chapter in the adventure he started over 30 years earlier.



That would be a satisfying happy ending, no? Well, hang tight, we're about to go full circle.

“I don't take credit for greatness in wine because to me that's the vineyard, because there's no greatness other than the vineyard in wine.”

Around this time Gideon began to develop a cult following of his own, and young aspiring winemakers began showing up at his door. Over the next several years he shared his wisdom with these knowledge-seekers and inadvertently caused the second renaissance to hit Oregon House. Three new wineries were born out of this, all excited by the under-explored potential of North Yuba County and the brilliant wines that Gideon had produced there.

Thée ♂ Thou, La Onda, and Frenchtown Farms all began producing their own distinctive, minimal intervention, and excitingly unconventional wines, which was remarkable on its own, however another exciting development sprang from this as well. Aaron and Cara Mockrish of Frenchtown Farms were able to secure access to a large section of the Renaissance Vineyard, which suddenly put that unique source back on the table for Clos Saron.

Though it took some finessing, Gideon was able to return to the Renaissance Vineyard, though closely watched by Fellowship members. He was also able to purchase several lots of library wines he had made during his Renaissance tenure, essentially abandoned in storage for all the interim years. He re-labeled these as Taken From Granite, both a reference to the soil of Renaissance and a tongue-in-cheek jab at the state of neglect they were found in.

With his unique home vineyard, the iconic Renaissance fruit, a community of young winemakers, and a lifetime of experience, Gideon is the humble center of a wine legend that is still being written.



*C. S. M.*



CHAMPAGNE  
FOR A REBEL



My partner and I have two brand new friends in this 'Christmas version' lockdown: nothing strange, nothing that involves yoga or meditation, not even hobbies such as painting or pottery classes (too much effort). These faithful friends are the classic combo of *booze* and *movies*.

The pandemic hasn't stopped the production of the former (alcohol sales have increased significantly for home consumption), but has for sure changed the latter... now bounded to streaming platforms. Because of the pandemic, there are a very few new titles being released, and many of them are waiting to be released in cinema, God knows when. Long gone is the age when we used to re-watch old masterpieces multiple times, on VHS and DVD, nowadays we have become *pret-a-watchèr*: we want something new to unwrap every day. Although I did recently re-watch *The Apartment* (what a delightfully light presentation of city life, and without progressive messages), I am one of those who do not catch old titles and watch them again.

Over this long confinement, my partner and I have been having even longer discussions concerning what to watch in the evening. Around this topic, every little disagreement can become fatal: he's in love with horror movies, I cannot stand - why suffer without crying? I would rather watch drama, human troubles, mysteries, dysfunctional relationships, but he does not like them. He's a french man who does not like the naïf stereotypes of the French movies and I am an Italian woman who's done with the stereotypes of Italian movies (usually involving cheating couples and loud family dramas).



We both agreed on watching *Colette*, the biopic about the French writer, the symbol to the XX century (1873–1954), but both were not convinced by it. I like Keira Knightley, she's stunningly beautiful, brilliant and gorgeous, but how can she impersonate someone as human, carnal, defective, imperfect as Colette, with all of her excesses? Colette, a contrarian soul full of contradictions, free when she was not even able to vote, best-seller author, but also dancer, actress, aesthete, journalist, bisexual, gender nonconformist... and lover of good food and good wine. If you want to deeply know her, do not watch this movie, but read the beautiful portrait Judith Thurman wrote on her *Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette*. In this book, Thurman tells us how Colette was indulging herself in feasts and drunk nights, even though she never stopped exercising herself.

After years spent ghost writing for her husband, Colette decided to sign her own books and started to write for several magazines and newspapers. One of those was *Marie-Claire*, where she published, in an issue dated 1940, a warm champagne based anti-flu recipe (let's make this clear, it is anti-flu not anti-Covid19). What was in it?

Boil half of a bottle of good dry champagne. Boil it shortly until it simmers vigorously. Then remove it from fire and add a generous dose of Armagnac. This cocktail has to be drunk piping hot and in bed. I saw many people fainting because of the booze in it. Anyway, nobody woke up without being healed.



Colette was alive during the Spanish Influenza, but she did not write any recipe for it. Probably for the good, we have enough of No-Vax these days and their remedies for Covid19 in their stupid little blogs online. Remember when Donald Trump asked us to take ammonia to kill the virus? Some people ended up in hospitals because they believed him...

In the book *Colette Gourmand* by Marie-Christine and Didier Clément (Abin Michel), there are several recipes that our Beloved French writer used to write and share with friends and family. It's mesmerising to think that she was the most influential and famous female French writer at her time, with the Legion of Honour, and that she was also writing about food and beverage... it would be like Margaret Atwood tweeting the recipe of her apple pie... Why not? Who said it is not cool? In 2019, the article "Cooking with

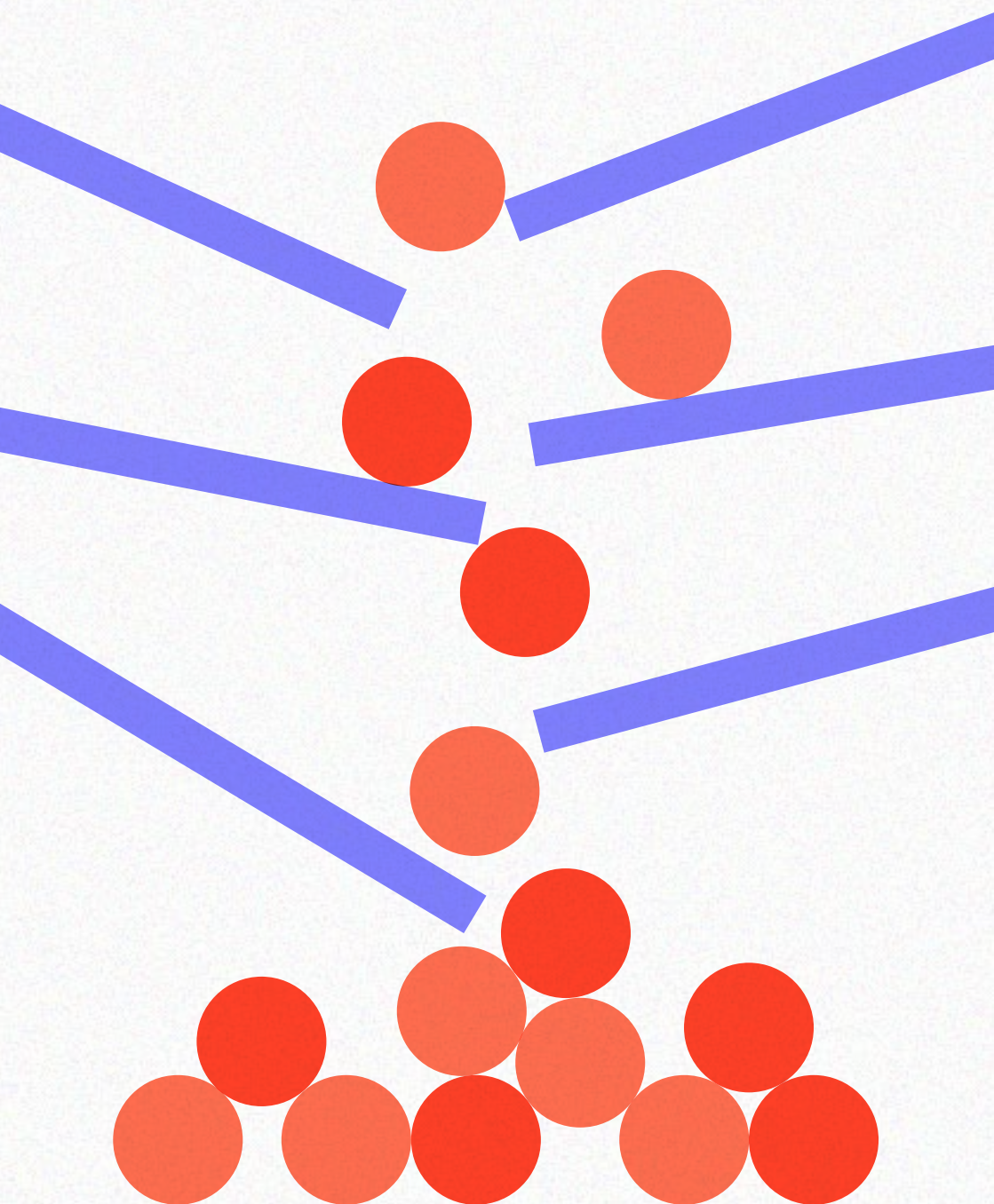
Colette" was published in *The Paris Review*, filled with food and drinks recipes that appeared in Colette's novels, which were enjoyed with pleasure, eaten and drunk without feeling guilty, unlike today's celebrity detox plans.

Jean Cocteau once said: 'Colette is a good fork and she shows it through her style. She's cheerful, she saves on salt and fat, but she uses pepper, garlic and several herbs. She's not afraid of feeding you with raw chilli pepper, those who burn your mouth'.

This was Colette: eclectic, non-linear, without any attitude; she was curious about everything, and her writing method was part of this discovery process. She was anti-politics, anti-establishment (I believe she would not be happy for this Feminist halo given her by the USA intellectuals). Ideology and common sense were her enemy, perfectly summed in her motto: "Describe what you see, do not guess".

Viva Colette!





*\* According to The Cambridge Dictionary, cultural appropriation is the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture. According to Wikipedia, cultural appropriation, at times also (more aptly) referred to as cultural misappropriation, is the adoption of an element or elements of one culture or identity by members of another culture or identity: this can be controversial when members of a dominant culture appropriate from disadvantaged minority cultures.*



# CULTURAL APPROPRIATION IN WINE?\*

Text

ANNA LOUNGUINE

Recently my good friend Lorenzo, founder of Mosto, asked me what I thought of Lady Gaga's new video 911. The reason he asked me, I'm guessing, is partly because I'm part Armenian and in the video, Gaga references the work of Sergei Parajanov, Armenian film director and all-time hero of mine. Full disclosure, I dodged the question. This happened as the situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan was worsening by the minute, and I classically suffered from diaspora guilt, having all sorts of thoughts about why I was luckier than other Armenians today as was my family 105 years ago, and what I could do to help this estranged home of mine, one of my favourite places on Earth, at risk of disappearing altogether.

But there's no excuse for avoiding what could have simply been an awkward conversation, I'm not proud of it. That's what we do too often, when talking about cultural appropriation. A bit like those two lukewarm definitions quoted above. That must stop, I'll start with owning up to my cowardice.

A few hours later, thankfully not noticing I'd not responded to his question (or perhaps gracing me with a sweet escape - either way, ruined that now), he texted saying Anna do you think there can be cultural appropriation in wine? As in, I said, is winemaking technically cultural

appropriation from the Caucasus? To be honest, I said, I have no idea, but I'll have a think. This is said, think, and dammit Google has no answers to the question. I'm not sure I immediately do. Hopefully we can get somewhere with this.

Let's start from the beginning. Wine (wine as we know it, as in wine made of grapes) was born in modern-day Georgia/Armenia/Iran, dating to somewhere between 6,000 BC and 4,000 BC (rice wine was already being made in China, dating to about 7,000 BC). At the time, wine was flavoured with honey and herbs - there's a penchant for sweetness in the region, wine is still on the sweet side today - but the reason for this is mainly to do with the fact that wild grapes have less sugar content than cultivated grapes do, and interestingly, winemaking came before vine growing. Winemaking methods have, since then, changed significantly for the greater part, let's say, for the purpose of this train of thoughts, *benefiting* from global industrialisation, allowing its mass production.

For a lot of biodynamic growers and producers however, it is primordial to reintroduce ancient techniques to get closer to the grapes and the soil the vines were planted on. It doesn't just consist in doing everything by hand, not fining nor filtering the wine, but also replicating methods used in the early ages of wine.

For instance, regulating temperature control by placing the foot-stomped bunches of grapes in amphorae (big, clay pots) and burying them underground, below the vines, so that gravity operates a gentle press, leaving the juice trickle down and the grapes crush one another with their own weight (in that part of the world, this is still how wine is made for both personal and commercial production).

I had always thought of it as a noble and beautiful thing to do. What if I was wrong, what if that was illegitimate appropriation. If Lady Gaga references Parajanov clearly in her video, does it make it okay? If a winemaker makes Georgian style wine, and references Georgia, is that okay? If a winemaker makes Georgian style wine, buys cheap amphorae from Portugal as is common, and proclaims to be making Georgian style wine, is that okay? Would it be worse (or better?) if he didn't claim anything at all? Why is it that it seems that agricultural appropriation is any different to cultural appropriation - other than the fact that beside wine, it's a world unbeknownst to me?

In France there is a show called *L'Amour Est Dans Le Pré* (Love Is In The Field), a reality dating show where lonely and shy farmers try to find love. Currently shooting its sixteenth season, needless to say it's a hoot. Having lived in the UK for ten years, I'd heard of it but I'd not seen it. Catching some bits of it recently, I was surprised to see the show was more about farmer's lives and agriculture than dating: a mainstream show trying to reconnect people with nature and the people who work with it. How we lost touch with it or when it happened I don't know, but what I do know is that it makes it difficult to talk about

agricultural appropriation, what it is, what it looks like.


Agriculture is ager, agr- 'field' and cultura 'growing, cultivation' - the dual meaning of culture provides a link between culture and agriculture. But then, what makes tradition,

and what makes appropriation? Could all and any winemaking be cultural appropriation of Georgian/Armenian/Iranian heritage? But then is all agriculture cultural appropriation?

Agriculture is by its very nature is a way for farmers and growers to make a living. Traditions are passed down from generation to generation. Skills are imported, exported, more recently industrialised, made mechanical, prolific, profitable. It seems a stretch to define agricultural norms as a form of plagiarism - they're often legislations put in place for financial, sanitary or technical reasons. A country producing their own wine isn't appropriating another country's culture if it just so happens that is how you make wine. Right?

What about different appellations in wine have different specifications, adapting them to other regions (when you talk of a "Provence-style rose" from say, Spain, for instance). Why do most countries produce grape wine rather than what they have 'in store', like rice wine in rice producing countries (think sake in Japan), or pomegranate wine, very specific to Caucasus (pomegranate is the national fruit in Iran and Azerbaijan, and sacred in Armenia and Georgia - and speaking of Parajanov, check out *The Colour Of Pomegranates* if you haven't seen it)? Why isn't the UK getting into the plum wine business?





The most common grapevine, *Vitis Vinifera*, is native to the Caucasus and Western Asia and it is well-known from Pre-History. It was probably already harvested in the Palaeolithic but its culture is known to have begun in the Neolithic period and it spread to the rest of Europe, arriving at the American continent. The Egyptians knew the grapevine, but the Greeks and the Romans developed its culture to a greater extent, spreading it all over the Roman Europe. The Spaniards introduced this crop in North America. The crop was cloned and planted everywhere in the world. During WWII, vine crops from Burgundy and Bordeaux were sent to be planted in America to salvage them in case they were destroyed and needed to be cloned back into French soils.


There are endless different ways to grow vines and make wine, the skills and savoir-faire go back thousands of years, so where does experimentation end and appropriation begin? Should labels reference the traditions that inspired the production? Are the winemakers of today, doing the noble deed of reviving old traditions without referencing them necessarily, unduly appropriating them? Culture is a thing hard to grasp and hard to define. In terms of wine, the apple never falls far from the tree. What goes into the culture of wine is all-encompassing. It's the vegetables you grow, the food you eat, the micro-climate, the mountains, the sea, the wild flowers and grasses, the animals that eat them. Copying a style probably works technically, and sure, it'll be cheaper, competitive, heck, it might even be interesting, but it can

never replace the magic. Visiting Piedmont for instance, I was so taken with the atmosphere, the architecture, the fog, the food. Everything fell into place, wine was not so much about what was in the (however delicious) bottle, it was about people, places and things.

I am still full of questions, and close to no answer. I start to think about what cultural appropriation is, and the role that the wine industry plays. The Black Lives Matter 2020 protests shed necessary light on the blatant societal issues with racism and cultural appropriation. It's urgent to work out what that looks like within the wine world in order to dismantle it.

Julia Coney, American wine writer and founder of Black Wine Professionals, regrets the unwillingness of white people in wine to "do the work". Wine journalist Dorothy J. Gaiter cries out "I'm angry, exhausted, and hurting".

If Black Lives Matter manifestos successfully establish the width and depth of systemic racism across the world, wine is of course no exception. Way, way, waaay before you even consider what it's like for a person of colour to work in wine (making it, selling it, tasting it, buying it), think about the systemic ramifications of a world that's exclusive by its very nature: its codes are embedded in Europe - the craft of winemaking was developed alongside the spread of Christianity. Take the word *sommelier* for example, synonymous with servitude, it first referred to the official responsible for the transport of the French Royalty's baggage when they travelled, then, during the reign of Louis XIV, the *sommelier* was the official in charge of the



transport of baggage when the court moved. In the household of a lord, he was the official who chose the wines, table settings and desserts. The sommelier used his *tastevin*, a silver saucer on a thick silver chain worn around the neck to check his lord's wine and food for poison. Wine jargon exclusively derives from frankly obscure French (at best, European) technical words, legal terms, and traditions.

I've been complicit in this, I've used terms I don't necessarily *fully* understand, neither do I condone them particularly. But they sound great. As a French native speaker I've had a definite advantage in that I understand them without even trying and without realising that using them is perpetuating this forceful, imperialist tradition.

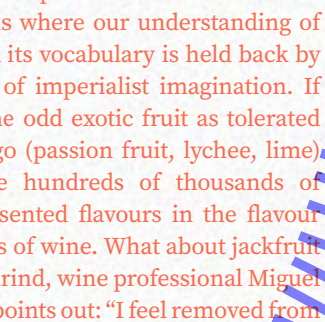
Part of the issue is that there will always be a tension between specificity and accessibility. Of course, in some cases, the best way to describe a certain grape might actually be that one fruit, and you'll find yourself using it even if you haven't tasted it, but you know it's right. Take Sauvignon Blanc and gooseberry. As a French person, I'd never tasted gooseberry, but by association, I had learnt to recognise it.

Accessibility needs to become more of a priority. What if we could start using descriptions instead of terms, and why does the pertinence of the match matter so much to the assessment. If we can't differentiate red from white when we're blindfolded (fact), and wine tasting is influenced by our personal experience of just about everything, why can't there be a compromise between specificity and accessibility.

If I talk about the sea, you'll picture waves, salty blue water, and sand. However the image we picture will not and *cannot* be the same. That's a compromise between specificity and accessibility, because it's something anyone is able to picture, that will tolerate infinite variance but with no impact on accuracy. Most of the time, wine words aren't in fact things we've tasted: leather, rocks, charcoal, marker pen, barnyard. They solicit emotion and imagination. So why restrain it to the experience of a privileged few? How is wine lexicon convincing if it's irrelevant for the most part anyway? In the UK, some quirkier wine terms are accepted in assessment, things like "my grandmother's sofa" or "the smell after it's rained" inviting a fair bit more universality, but it's taking far too long to democratise it globally.

We're told during WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust, a respected, worldwide organisation), when introduced to their redoubtable systematic approach to wine tasting, that the flavours we taste are marginally subjective as long as they belong to the same category. For instance, if I taste raspberry and you taste strawberry: we're tasting red fruit, tart berry. The difference solely relying on your memory versus my memory of each fruit. We formed different palates because you and I don't eat the same, we didn't grow up in the same house.

But this is where our understanding of wine and its vocabulary is held back by our lack of imperialist imagination. If we get the odd exotic fruit as tolerated wine lingo (passion fruit, lychee, lime) there are hundreds of thousands of misrepresented flavours in the flavour thesaurus of wine. What about jackfruit and tamarind, wine professional Miguel de Leon points out: "I feel removed from





the expertise of my own experience, in a place where I'm supposed to trust my tongue, but the tasting sheet suggests that it's betrayed me".

So it's not just that wine is exclusive and opaque: it's inherently racist in the way it's institutionalised, because it excludes dimensions of flavour that are unfamiliar to the white, Western cultures that dominate the world of wine. In the same article, De Leon writes "I want to dismantle white supremacy in wine. I want to spark change, to remove the barriers of entry, to call in and call out peers and industry leaders about the results of their actions and the consequences of their inactions. I want to get loud, get angry, do better."

White supremacy in wine is systemic, insidious, and multi-faced. Cultural appropriation is one facet, a big issue across the wine world, because it often goes hand in hand with gentrification.

For instance when four white men open a wine bar in an up and coming bit of Washington, D.C. and name it "Barkada" with a blurb that reads like so: "noun, Tagalog - a group of friends: A totally cool word that describes us: a group of friends serving crazy delicious wine, hanging out just off U Street in DC." They don't plan on serving Filipino food or drinks, the establishment isn't owned by anyone of Filipino heritage, they don't plan on raising funds going towards a non-profit benefiting Filipino Americans or back in the Philippines. None of that, this endeavour purely is a way to capitalise on the Filipino culture for the sake of originality. Possibly much like Gaga and Armenia, I'm afraid. If we dig a little deeper, it gets even darker, because *barkada* is derived from the Spanish word *barcada*, meaning *boatload*.

Boatloads of Filipino prisoners shipped away from their homes by boat, forming bonds that would help them survive colonisation, imprisonment, and enslavement (hence the modern meaning of the term, close-knit group of friends). So of course, calling it 'a totally cool word' not only strips it of its resonance as a symbol of Filipino resilience, it's a proof of ignorance on the atrocities perpetrated during colonial times and disregard for the painful history of the Philippines.

Or when Namaqua Wines in South Africa, using Khoisan ritual (a marginalised Afrikaans speaking community) to promote their wine. The label showed a depiction of the Khoisan people, in the style of ancient rock paintings, performing the rain dance, and the three liter box wine was called Rain Dance. The Human Rights commission was solicited to ask Namaqua Wines to remove the wine off the market. The problem is that in a context where diversities are ill-represented, when we don't see indigenous cultures, when we know nothing about them, it's offensive to use and abuse references out of context for pure capitalist interest, which is an insult to the Khoisan people and a disrespect towards Khoisan culture.

Before I'm able to ponder on all of the questions raised above, I know this: there is a deeply ingrained white supremacy in wine that, has to stop. I also know this: where there is wine there is culture and vice versa - it can be copied and sold at a cheaper rate but it can't be broken or stolen. I know that there needs to be more voices joining in on this conversation, and I hope this tiny little stone of an article can help build new foundations and find the answers I was not able to find, and offered more questions in their stead.

# VINCHIO

VA



Interview with TESSA DONNADIEU

&

GLIO

MUSKETEERS OF WINE

On a sunny day in October, we drove over the hills of the Monferrato area, Italy. The shades of fall were spread throughout the vineyards, and the smell of harvesting was in the air - a Vermouth-like perfume, bitter and sweet. Orange trees, yellow bushes, red leaves, and brown vineyards were painting a picturesque scenario in front of our eyes, lush and voluptuous. This part of Piedmont is an area rich in history, castles, churches, museums and elegance. Many writers, over the XX century, tried to describe the beauty of Monferrato and Langhe, conveying that it is a land of plenty, yet well rooted to its farming origins.

Modern tourism does not know Monferrato very well. Of course, tourists are familiar with Langhe and its renowned Barolos and Barbarescos, but Monferrato is still a hidden gem. "We have more of a naturist kind of tourism: hikers, joggers, runners, cyclists" comments Tessa Donnadieu, our link to the area and export manager of Vinchio - Vaglio Serra, the local wine coop, "People who live and breath Nature."

After a quick drive over the hills above Nizza Monferrato, we arrive at the village of Vinchio, a small cluster of houses, some of them hundreds of years old, built with stones mixed with chalk and tuff. Monferrato is rustic and steep, with sinuous vineyards of Barbera, Dolcetto, Ruche, Grignolino, Moscato and other indigenous grape varieties, mixed to dense forests filled with oaks and chestnuts trees, pines, majestic lime woods. The grapes are dark red and the lines of Barbera design perfect lines in the local hills, surrounding the village from each direction. From the top of the hills, we can see the white crown of the Alps separating us from France, while we can feel the mild breeze of the Ligurian sea coming from the South. Monferrato is, in fact, not only situated between the Mediterranean and the Alps, was once part of the Med itself, hiding mysteries and unique *terroir*. Also because of this, Vinchio-Vaglio is situated in the core zone of the Unesco heritage area, there must be a reason for such appellation.





“Look at this” Tessa is showing us a fossil, “this is perhaps a million years old, from the Pliocene tertiary era”. In her hand, a perfectly conserved fossil, in the shape of a shell, covered in the tuff and sand. The cleansing of the fossil, unravelled a smell of soil, a pungent odour of mushroom and white truffle. “This year there are going to be a lot of both” smiled Tessa.

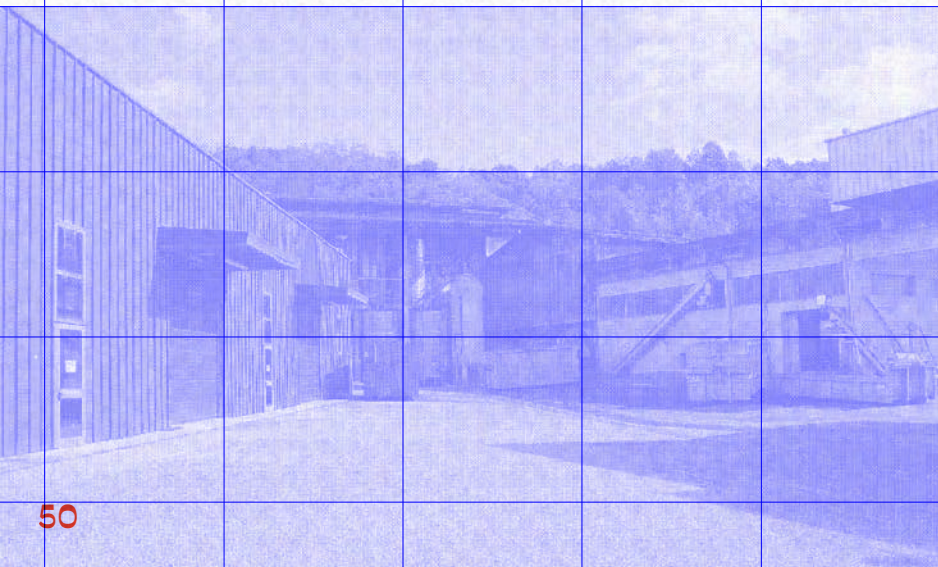
Tessa Donnadieu is the Export Manager of Vinchio-Vaglio Serra, the local associate winemakers' company, and she holds a great passion for her work and for the company she represents. “The coop was born in 1959, with the union of nineteen vine-growers from the local villages of Vinchio & Vaglio. Since then it has expanded the roster of producers, so much that now it consists of 192 families of winemakers” explains Tessa. Over the years, the coop has expanded its land too: “reaching 450 hectares of lands, between the two villages of Vinchio and Vaglio, and the surrounding areas, with a very few vineyards situated in nearby villages” continues Tessa.

The Alto Monferrato - the subregion where the company is located - in a calcareous and sandy area, only vines, persimmons, pears and apples grow vigorously, as well as forests, providing shade in the summer hot days. The hills are very steep, with vineyards exposed to the sun in the summer, rain in autumn and spring and snow in winter: this alternation of the four-season is what makes the grapes so succulent and juicy, perfect for the production of several varieties and wines: “Albarossa, Grignolino, Roche, Arneis, Cortese, Moscato, Brachetto, Nebbiolo, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir” proudly declares Tessa. A gentle mist raised from the vineyards beneath us, covering in grey the bushes and the vineyards “this is what we need for the Nebbiolo” admits Tessa, “the secret ingredient”.

Tessa is a French woman in love with the Piedmont region, and like many french, she respects and loves wine and wine culture. Originally from Toulouse, she studied International Trade in Wine in Burgundy and then eventually moved to Piedmont, finding a similar country style of living to the one she knew well. “I also lived in London,” remembers “that’s a fun city, I have good memories of Carnaby Street and still have good friends there”.


The company co-op provides technical assistance to the winemakers, with the aim of a low environmental impact, as well as providing enologists, wine experts and a structure where the grapes are worked. The canteen of Vinchio - Vaglio Serra is a large, concrete building outside, with a perfectly clean and organised indoor space. “The core idea of a coop” claims Tessa “is to allow little producers who are not able to bottle their wine to come here after the harvesting and producing their wine”. This happens once the border control has checked the quality and the number of the producer’s grapes, to provide consistency to the brand.

We then moved to the tasting room, inside the wine shop, where Tessa showed us the diverse range of products the coop produces. “Let’s start with our new entry,” said Tessa while popping a bottle of Alta Langa. “Vinchio - Vaglio Serra classic method” The wine is fresh, crispy and with a refined effervescence; the colour is pale yellow, on the nose fragrant, and on the palate, a note of breadcrumb and brioche makes it elegant and classy. “This wine is a love letter to our *terroir*, to the Nature around our lands and our director Ernestino Laiolo, sadly departed in 2020.”

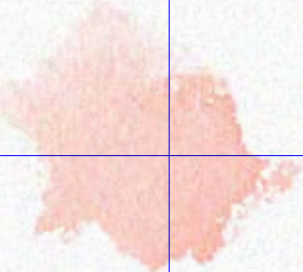




Our second bottle is the Pinot Noir named 'Gajera': a light body red wine with hints of red fruits and a fresh and vibrant taste.



We then try "Tre Vescovi" 2018, the flagship wine of the coop. This Barbera Superiore offers a strong aroma of black fruits notes (Black Cherry, Blackberry, Blackcurrant), as well as tertiary aromas such as clove, black pepper, dried fruits and a slight liquorice touch at the end. The reason why the Barbera is called 'Superiore' is due to the choice of the grapes, as well as a passage in oak for six months. "We recently changed the logo of our flagship wine. Now you can see two crossed shields, simply and elegantly designed, both meaning passion, union and brotherhood. All core values of our company." Tessa told us.



Time for a fourth wine, the refined '50 Vigne Vecchie' which, in the words of Tessa: "This wine made from old vine Barbera since 2008 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this coop. The nose is a wonderful dark cherry and blackberries with hints of spices. The palate has great rounded tannins and fresh acidity which has you reaching for another glass ... perfect with my mushroom risotto" with a big smile on her friendly face. We finish our tasting with 'InSynthesis' whose colour is almost garnet. Its complex spicy scent has light toasted notes and red berries. The mouth is warm, robust, with the scent of candied fruits and vanilla, exceptional structure and lingering with light and gentle tannins. In the world of Lorenzo Giordano, president of the coop: "Barbera is one of the very few grapes who can produce a very fresh, fun, wine and complex, bold, noble wine."

Everyone is part of the bigger scale in Vinchio - Vaglio Serra, every little helps in the coop, and the spirit of the brotherhood is strong, so much that you feel it in the reasonable prices of their products, in the attitude and ethics at work. The hard work of the people involved in making this brand a synonym of quality and respect for mankind.

# ALTA- LAN- GA

## BUBBLES THROUGH HISTORY

Text

LORENZO CIBRARIO & ELENA OLIVIERI



# CHAPTER 1

## PREQUEL



The landing into the Alta Langa planet was a journey we carefully planned during the first lockdown, with our version of the famous *smart working* - the much funnier *smart drinking*.

We were ordering drinks via Deliveroo from friend's restaurants and bars with a simple request: "A bottle of Alta Langa, thanks, no preference, you choose the producer" on a phone, at home, trying to cope with 2020.

While sipping Alta Langa, and fighting COVID paranoia and seclusion, we started to text friends and family, asking for: "your favourite top three producers of Alta Langa".

A diverse yet authoritative panel of drinkers replied sincerely, showing the complex and various world of the Alta Langa wine. And, oh boy, we got drunk with your tips! Thanks to these ideas, as soon as we were able to meet, around July, we decided to start a tour around the Alta Langa landscapes, cities and producers. In the beginning, we were driving a Panda from Champagne running between the hills of Piedmont, amongst cows,

forests and vineyards. Like the loopy bottom of a bottle of wine, we circumnavigated around Alta Langa, starting and ending at Canelli, the pulsing bubbly hearth of the Alta Langa area.

At the Enoteca Regionale in Canelli, on a scorching sunny day, we drank the fragrant and refined Psea by Pechennino from Dogliani (CN): a pas dose traditional method in barrique, aged 36 months on lees. The wine was good and we had two bottles, eating slices of Vitello Tonnato, homemade grissini and Russian Salad.

The following weekend we drove our Panda at 41 degrees celsius to Cocchi, in Cocconato where we met Giulio Bava, president of the Alta Langa consortium, and CEO of the Cocchi Estate.

The heatwave was so strong we couldn't think straight and the mirages that saved our lives were the outstanding Bianc d'Bianc, 100% Chardonnay and a Pas Dose, brut nature Pinot Noir with 60 months of ageing on the lees.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE BAVA INTERVIEW



What is the characteristic of a great wine? What makes the wine excellent? Is it the quality of the grape, the style of the Maison? Perhaps the winemakers' secrets?

The combination of these elements? The variables are infinite.

But, according to our guest, Mr. Giulio Bava, only defined criteria, scientific data and strict regulations are synonyms of quality. Let's find out why and how.

"What is important to me is to define what Alta Langa is. I want to give to the reader a clear definition for the Piedmontese sparkling wines". Giulio Bava is very serious on this mission, staring at us with firm eyes. It's a steaming hot day of August 2020, the most hideous year in a long time, I bet we all agree on this, and Bava is receiving us in his office at the Cocchi Estate in Coconato. Bava is the CEO of the renown Vermouth and Sparkling wine company Cocchi, but he is also the president of the Alta Langa consortium, the local

union of the producers of sparkling wine. Smartly dressed, Bava hosts us in the lounge of the Cocchi Estate, between design chairs and a counter bar refreshed by (Thank God) icy air-con.

History is made of facts, and some of them are indisputable truths. One of these facts is that "Piedmont was the first region producing Traditional Method in our Peninsula, at the beginning of the XIX century, after Carlo Gancia visited Reims for the first time, falling in love with that thing called Champagne." Ehm, who wouldn't?

Mr Gancia decided to introduce champenoise method sparkling wine in Canelli, called Spumante, mixing Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and, with the help of the local nobles, sell it, trading it all over Europe. At the end of the XIX century, Spumante was already traveling the world, thanks to brands who then became very popular over the following century. Labels such as Gancia, Riccadonna, Cinzano, Martini & Rossi are just a few of the constellation of names of the spumante business. While some of these have now disappeared, they all contributed to the export of the business of sparkling wines and





Illustration SERGIO VARBELLA

Piedmontese Vermouths over the XX century, consolidating the name, and the region. “Once I was visiting the museum of the Zeppelin in Germany, where I saw a menu, from 1902, mentioning Spumante Cinzano” claims Bava “Over the XX century, the Piedmontese Traditional Method became more and more linked to single Maisons, than to a specific geographical area. This was not a good choice, so things had to change”.

It will be then at the end of the 80s when seven producers from Piedmonts overtook a shared commitment to define the rules for production of Spumante wines locally: ‘It took them 10 years of studies and trials, analysis of the terroir, the fields and the vineyards to provide the perfect Traditional Method criteria’ admits with pride, Bava.

“Together with the Piedmont Region and the Institute of Experimental Viticulture, 48 estates were involved, covering a total area of approximately 40

hectares, with the planting of 80 thousand vine rootings (85% Pinot Noir, with 10 different clones, and 15% Chardonnay, with three clones)” tells us, Bava, to provide an idea of scientific accuracy behind the Alta Langa project. The results were studied, analysed and researched by a scientific committee to find out what were the best locations and grapes in the area to produce the official Traditional Method.

“Alta Langa is effort, studies and data” affirms Mr Bava: “After that time, we had the results of such enormous labour, and we understood where and what altitude and what clone we should have planted.” To fit into the rigid discipline of the Alta Langa DOCG, a wine has to be for 90% Pinot Noir or Chardonnay (or both) and has to come from a certain area between the province of Alessandria, Asti and Cuneo. “On the website of the Alta Langa consortium, you can find all the specifics you need,” says Bava.





Bava shows a great knowledge of wine and the history of wine, which is a real pleasure to listen to: "Viticulture in the XIX century in Piedmont was very different, It was a bit confusing. Not only were there so many more varieties than today, but vineyards were wilder and untidy" said Bava. "And more interesting, vines were mixed among varieties". Speaking of which: "Pinot Noir is thought to be introduced by Mr Gancia after his trip to Reims, while there are records of Chardonnay being in the Piedmontese area since the XVI century" claims Bava. "These grapes are not originally from Piedmont but have been around for 300 years" definitely traditional varieties.

Given these premises, once we have defined what grapes, what altitude

(from 250 meters above the sea level to much more) and where, how Alta Langa is made?

"Well, the main aspect of how Alta Langa is produced has to be the 30 months of ageing on the lees, which is 2 years more than the Champagne. This happens to provide the best possible product to our customers". The way Bava describes the precise and rigorous traditional method of the Alta Langa sparkling wine is charming. Not only the Alta Langa consortium decided to invest 10 years in research, but also to age the wine on lees for 30 months.

The effort the Alta Langa consortium put in its product is definitely paid by remarkable quality. The final product is as good as Champagne, we believe at MOSTO!





## THE TRATTORIA EXPERIENCE



The tour continued with a visit to Santo Stefano Belbo, the birthplace of Cesare Pavese, one of the finest Italian writers and translators.

Bright was the tomb in the sunny Piedmontese cemetery, covered in bay leaves, as it should. We also drove to the very top of the hills, to Marco Capra's, the young winemaker of "Sei Tremenda" an Alta Langa extra brut with a classic cuvée: Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The winemaker had chosen to use the decanted free-run must and left it for 6 months on its lees, while the second fermentation happened in the bottle for 36 months. Marco is friendly and his canteen faces the lush vegetation made of forests and vineyards.

Sunday came and we decided to find out if Alta Langa works well when paired with food. Sunday lunch is a category of the spirit, it's a way of being, is quintessentially Italian: you know when it starts, but you never know when it will end. Could life be a perpetual Sunday lunch? If only...

We travelled to Olmo Gentile, a little village with 71 citizens at 700 meters over the sea level, a beautiful castle from the X century and a little restaurant called Trattoria da Geminio, but known by

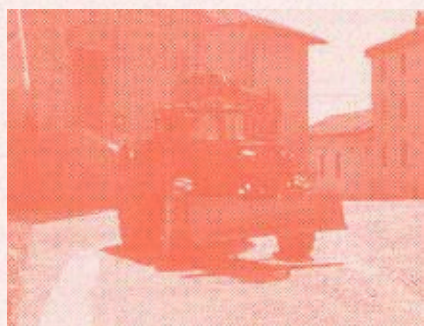
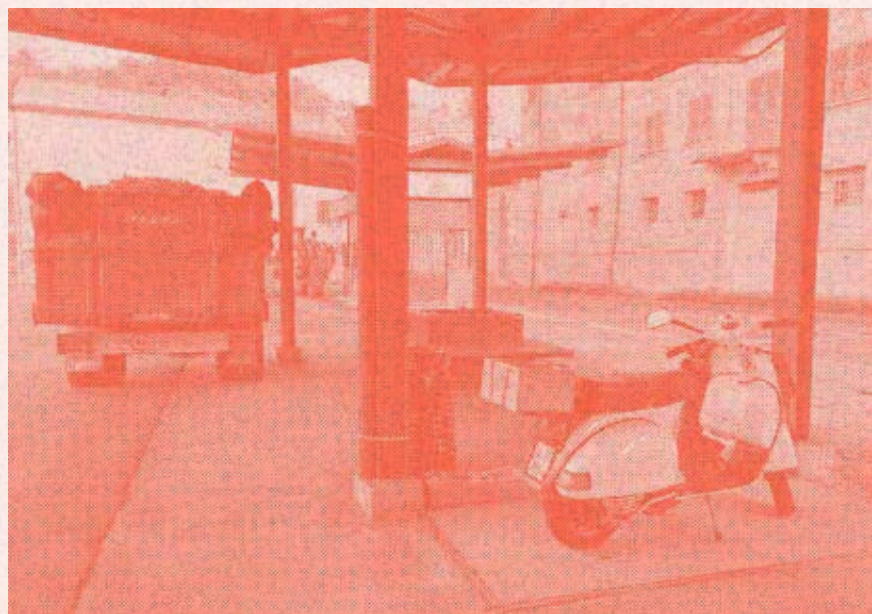
everybody in the area as Ristorante della Posta. The whole experience is perfectly Millennial: a match boarded restaurant frozen in time with cats, geraniums and old ladies with perfectly groomed hair and flowery dresses.

We sat at 1 pm and we left at 5 o'clock, eating a plateau of starters, primi, secondi, cheeses, desserts. For the occasion, we opened a *Bianc 'd Bianc* by Cocchi Cocconato (AS). This fruity 100% Chardonnay Brut Millésimé worked very well with our Piedmontese food and it is made by a young yet dynamic producer. It was then followed by a historical name Enrico Serafino from Canale (CN), a remarkable bottle of wine: brut D.O.C.G. with three years on its yeast and then bottled. It is very interesting to note that every woman or man of the Alta Langa producers has grown up around red wine barrels. All of them have played with red wine once, learned how to make red wine first, perhaps Barbera, or Dolcetto, or Nebbiolo, conveying to their sparkling wine a 'red' personality. Just like some memories pass through generations, this happened in the Alta Langa world, where a certain *je ne sais quoi* of the red winemaking was then filtered in the aromas of the sparkling wine.













## THE ALCIATI INTERVIEW



Ok, Alta Langa is deeply rooted in its territory, it goes well with local trattoria-style food. But how does it perform with Michelin cuisine?

Don't worry, we also covered this important question, when we met Andrea Alciati, the owner of the breathtaking Relais S.Maurizio at Santo Stefano Belbo (CN).

Andrea is the third son of the renowned Guido da Costigliole, an ante-litteram brand ambassador of the Piedmontese cuisine, and has been running the Relais for a long time. The restaurant is framed inside an ancient XVII century monastery and offers to international customers the best of our culinary tradition. Surrounded by secular olive-trees, with vines as far as the eye can see, Andrea answered our questions about Alta Langa: "Offering Alta Langa to our customers is very important. A glass of wine of the Alta Langa is like a ticket to a journey, it can take you anywhere. From the small Maison to the established producer, from the newcomer to the historical brand. Alta Langa is the wine of the Renaissance of the Piedmontese sparkling wine bu-

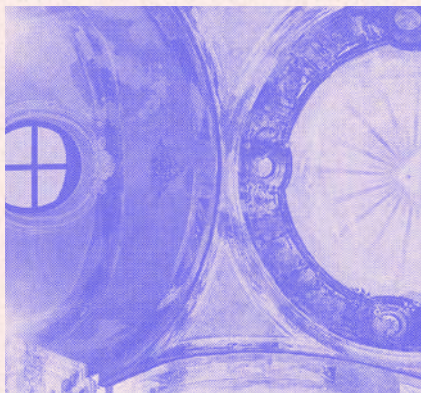
siness. It was much ought to dust this ancient wine off, and have a great Piedmontese sparkling wine again on the tables! We are sipping a glass of Alta Langa, in this astonishing scenario, chatting with the charming Andrea, very friendly and convivial, when we are served a plate of "Agnolotti" served on the linen napkin and made by Lidia, Andrea's mother, a truly revolutionary woman, who changed the way this particular kind of pasta was made and how to serve them. Lidia introduced, in fact, a new kind of Agnolotti, the so-called "Al Plin": a soft and light dough, with three types of meat filling - rabbit, pork and veal. She also decided to serve them on a linen napkin, with nothing else. The pairing with Alta Langa was just pure perfection. Recommended.







## END TITLES



The end of Alta Langa journey brought us back to Canelli.

Our knowledge improved, meeting so many people, producers, marketers, restaurateurs, all linked by the common passion for the Alta Langa products. On the last weekend of September, MOSTO was part of Canelli Città del Vino 2020, and hosted three days of parties, wine and music. With a little help from our friends at the Alta Langa Consortium, we managed to serve these incredible wines to our customers.

- \* Anna Ghione - Canelli  
*Alta Langa La Reine Brut 2016*
- \* Cascina Cerutti - Cassinasco  
*Alta Langa Cuvée Enrico Cerutti Brut 2016*
- \* Marcalberto - Santo Stefano B.  
*Alta Langa Millesimato Extra Brut 2016*
- \* Avezza Azienda Agricola - Canelli  
*Alta Langa Dosaggio Zero 2016*
- \* Cantina Pianbello - Canelli  
*Alta Langa Pianbè brut 2015*
- \* Contratto Winery - Canelli  
*Alta Langa For England Blanc de noir pas dosé 2015*
- \* Coppo - Canelli  
*Alta Langa A Licia pas dosé 2014*
- \* Colombo - Cascina Pastori- Bubbio  
*Alta Langa Rosè Brut Riserva 60 mesi 2013*
- \* Tosti 1820 - Canelli  
*Alta Langa Riserva Giulio I 2012*
- \* Gancia- Canelli  
*Alta Langa Cuvee Gancia Riserva 60 Mesi brut 2011*

The only problem we had was our infinite quench! Cheers to the people behind the Alta Langa DOCG, their effort, their hard work and their love for this wine region is what made this sparkling wine so delicious. CHEERS!

## TIMORASSO WITH A TWIST.



ONCE TOURISTS HAVE LEFT THE HILLS AROUND SAN MARZANO OLIVETO, IN PIEDMONT, ITALY, THEY WILL REMEMBER IN THEIR MINDS THE VIVID AND VIBRANT IMAGE OF LUSCIOUS LANDSCAPES. IT TAKES A LOT OF EFFORT NOT TO SPEND TIME SITTING ON TOP OF ONE OF THOSE GIGANTIC BENCHES AROUND THE HILLS OF MONFERRATO, MINDFULLY WATCHING THE WORLD PASSING THROUGH, CONTEMPLATING THE BEAUTY OF NATURE.

Text  
LORENZO CIBRARIO



Well, this is what happened to me on a Wednesday afternoon at the end of September: I got lost on my way to 'Tenute RaDe' vineyard. Luckily, I spotted one of those big benches and decided to sit there and enjoy the view. It was also the only place my 4G was working, so I was standing with my arm raised, trying to communicate with Ilaria, brand ambassador of Tenute RaDe, while I was receiving 25 emails and checking the news on Twitter. The Londoner in me, though, realised how important it is to slow down and observe the world passing by. So, yep, lesson learned: Nature 1, Nurture 0 (kind of...). Patiently, Ilaria described the winery, and from the top of the Hill I was able to spot something between a DDR building and Brutalist art, "yes, that's us" replied Ilaria, "Ok, I am on my way" I shouted to the phone. "This was the old apple farm of San Marzano Oliveto, which my dad bought in early 2000. We completely refurbished it inside, but we left this soviet look for the outside" laughed Daniele Cusmano, owner of the brand 'Tenute RaDe'.

Daniele comes from a family of winemakers, as his father Raimondo Cusmano is the CEO of *Cusmano Vini*, a renowned local winery. "My dad, a Milanese man, decided to move to the country to fulfil his dream of managing a winery and a farm, and after many years of hard work he did it". After his degree in oenology, Daniele decided to take control of the family business 'Tenute Rade' and produced a selection of wine for a younger crowd, with cool marketing and a friendly approach.

In the white grape range, Daniele produces Sauvignon, Timorasso, Chardonnay and Moscato, while the red spectrum consists of Barbera (regular, Superiore, Nizza), Merlot, Syrah (very well blended in 'Monferrato Rosso' - I have to say I was very pleased with this wine) and Pinot Noir. The reason for this eclectic production is the 45 hectares of land the family owns and runs in different parts of Piedmont, allowing them to produce such a diverse selection of grapes. Timorasso from the lands of the subregion of Colli Tortonesi, Sauvignon from the Castel Boglione area and so on. This scattered geography allows the company to produce a bigger variety of options.

The reason why I was invited to Tenute Rade though, was to try the Classic Method made out of Timorasso, which is a rather unusual and pretty bold choice. This brave decision came from the idea of experimenting with the versatility of the grape: "its acidity and minerality can make an excellent Classic Method", according to Daniele: "not to mention the ageing potential of the Timorasso, a complex, refined grape we love". The *perlage* is refined, and the colour is bright yellow, well-balanced acidity and minerality, notes of pears, peaches and chamomile. "We harvest the bottom part of the Timorasso grapes in early August when they are not fully ripe, to keep the acidity level high, this will help during the fermentation in the bottle" comments Daniele. "Our logo was formed by an eagle and a moon. The former because it's one of the symbols of Piedmont, and the latter because the moon has always been the symbol of our family since my dad decided to start the wine business". This union of family traditions and new experimentation is this unique Timorasso Metodo Classico, which is a sparkling wine with structure and confidence. The energy Daniele and Ilaria put in their work is commendable, and can be sensed in the effervescence of this wine.

# IL BICCHIERE



MANY OF US WILL NOT BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS BECAUSE OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS. TO COPE WITH THE FEELINGS THAT THIS SITUATION TRIGGERS, I MADE A LIST OF THE THINGS I LOVE.

Text **SILVIA IVANI**

Illustration **PIERRE ALLAIN**

Vermentino is one of the things I love most. I adore its freshness, the way it elegantly pairs with some of my favourite dishes, and the fact that it makes me feel home (I am an “expat” and the Vermentino I usually drink comes from my native region).

All this Vermentino thinking led me to meditate on the following questions: What is the relation between love and knowledge? Can my emotions, feelings, values, and desires make me more perceptive and able to understand a wine, its characteristics, and potential better? That factors like emotions and memories

# ESERCIZIO DI



have a role in determining our wine preferences is not surprising, but the point I am interested in exploring is whether they can help us understand a wine better. In other words, can they put us in a better position to study a wine and penetrate its mysteries (if any)?

Psychologists have a lot to say about this. What about philosophers?

In *The Poetics of Space*, the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard claimed that “The moment we love an image, it cannot remain the copy of a fact”. When we become emotionally involved with something or someone, we add layers made of assumptions, meanings, and expectations, and we end up with a quite personal version of the object of our love.

Philosophers of science have traditionally argued that a good investigator is a dispassionate investigator. Neutralizing any influence of our interests, values, and ideals on our enquiry is what makes us objective and able to attain an accurate, faithful portrayal of the world. This idea is referred to as the value-free ideal of science in the literature. It applies to scientific research, but it is easy to extend it to other contexts. Imagine you are angry with your wine retailer. This may influence how you experience the wine they sold you and spoil not only your enjoyment, but also the process of knowledge production.

Several philosophers have challenged the idea that emotions, values, and ideals necessarily threaten our ability to reach an accurate portrayal of the world. They claim that these factors may sometimes facilitate the attainment of knowledge. For instance, some philosophers have argued that the research conducted by some primatologists in the 1970s was tremendously epistemically fruitful (also) because it was inspired by certain feminist ideals. Those researchers

were unhappy with the sexist assumption that made primatologists study female primates as passive resources for male primates, they cared about reaching an accurate understanding of the behaviours of female primates, and they revolutionized the field by pointing out how limiting and inaccurate that assumption was.

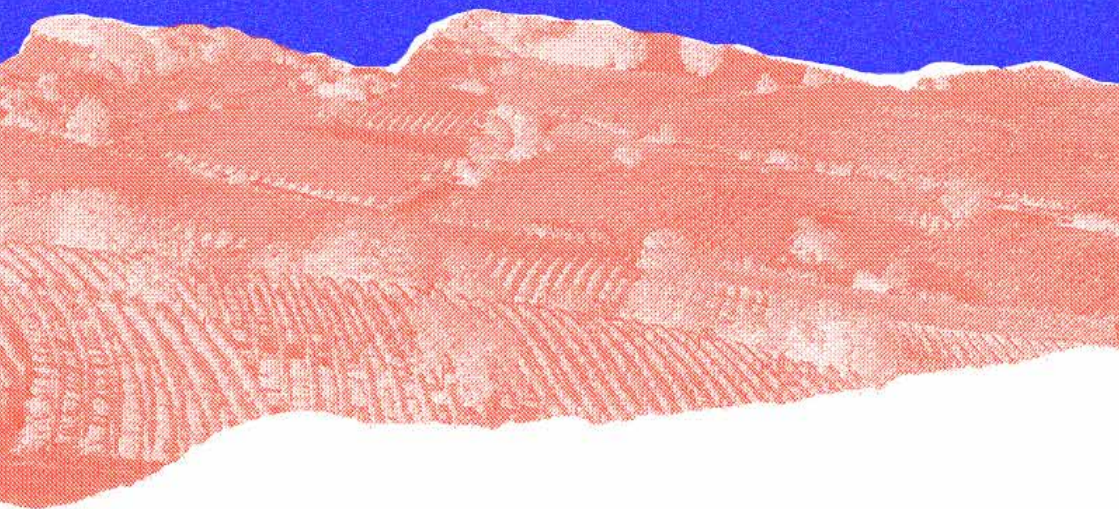
It should be noted that this does not mean that emotions, values, and ideals always play a beneficial role and should be trusted without question in our attempts to understand the world. They can and do obfuscate our understanding of reality in certain contexts. However, the critique of the value-free ideal reveals that the relation between these factors and the attainment of knowledge is more complex than expected and needs to be carefully investigated.

The questions I would like to invite you to explore at the beginning of the new year are: what knowledge did love make you acquire? Does your emotions, values, and ideals enrich, boost, or constrain your ability to explore and understand reality?

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