# Are you “just” a wine producer or also a hospitality entrepreneur? The difference matters

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*Many Italian wineries still treat hospitality as a side activity rather than a structured business. Yet wine tourism follows its own rules, pricing, customer journey, partnerships, that have nothing to do with winemaking. The real shift is mental: recognizing that welcoming guests is not a generous gesture, but a business that demands strategy, metrics, and dedicated resources.*

There is a transition that many Italian wineries have yet to fully complete: stop seeing themselves as agricultural businesses that “also do hospitality,” and start recognizing

themselves as companies with a genuine hospitality business.

**Wine production and wine tourism are two different worlds.** They have different logics, timelines, skills, and metrics. Continuing to treat wine tourism as a spontaneous extension of the winery means condemning it to remain marginal, fragile, and barely profitable.

## When improvisation becomes a limitation

A few weeks ago I spoke with a co-owner who had recently joined the family business after experience in another sector. He described a solid, family-run operation, with a charismatic father as the winemaker. Quality wines, strong territory, a reputation built over years.

Then came one sentence: “People ten kilometers away don’t know we exist. I come from numbers. I know we can do more.”

In many family businesses, hospitality is born out of generosity. It happens when there’s time, it stretches if the guest is pleasant, an extra glass gets poured because “we’re all having a good time.” The visit depends on the producer’s mood, the day in the vineyard, the feeling of the moment.

Does it work? Yes, as long as it stays artisanal. Is it scalable? No. Is it sustainable? Hardly.

A tour operator needs fixed schedules, defined durations, replicable content. A customer booking online wants to know what they’ll receive, how long it will last, and why that price is justified. **Wine tourism follows its own rules, different from those of agricultural production.**

## Structuring does not mean losing authenticity

A misconception persists in the wine world: organizing wine tourism means losing authenticity. Adding a business plan

would mean turning the winery into a theme park. In reality, the opposite is true.

Structuring means deciding how many visits to offer, with what resources, at what price, and with what margin. It means knowing what an hour and a half visit really costs: the owner’s time, staff, glasses, opened wines, materials, energy, wear and tear on spaces. **It also means choosing your own market positioning.**

Without an analysis of the territory and competitors, however, that distance remains just a feeling. With an analysis, it becomes a strategic decision.

## Agricultural business and hospitality business: two different professions

Producing wine means managing vineyards, vintages, yields, agricultural costs, and markets. Managing hospitality means working on pricing, the customer journey, brand promises, reviews, online distribution, and partnerships with tourism operators.

These are different skills. And assuming that one works well simply because the other is excellent is a mistake.

**As long as wine tourism remains subordinate to production, it will always be the last priority.** As long as it has no dedicated profit and loss account, no goals of its own, no clear indicators, it will remain an ancillary activity.

The turning point is mental before it is operational: recognizing that hospitality is a business.

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## Key points

1. **Wine production and wine tourism** are two separate businesses with different skills and metrics.
2. **Improvised hospitality**, based on mood and availability is not scalable or sustainable long-term.
3. **Structuring visits** with pricing and margins does not kill authenticity; it strengthens positioning.
4. **Without a dedicated P&L**, wine tourism will always remain a secondary, fragile activity.
5. **The first step is mental**: recognizing hospitality as a real, independent business unit.