

The risks of benaltrismo in the wine world

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 19 Ottobre 2026



There is a word I hear more and more often these months, at every conference, at every working table, in every comment under a post: “something else entirely.” It would take something else entirely. **The problem is something else entirely.** Something else entirely is needed.

We all know the moment we are in. Consumption is falling, and not only in Italy, it is falling in strategic, historic markets that for decades we have considered a given. **In too many countries wine is no longer perceived as an interesting product, and this is perhaps the worst news, because a loss of interest is much harder to recover than a drop in price.**

And yet, faced with all this, the debate in our sector seems to have found the perfect formula for not moving. It is

written that the language of wine is too elitist, that it drives consumers away, especially younger people. Answer: something else entirely is needed. **It is stressed that the protection consortia have enormous tasks and responsibilities but are not given the tools to carry them out, either in economic terms or in terms of skills and human resources.** Answer: something else entirely is needed.

Sandro Boscaini, president of Masi, wrote in recent days, on the sidelines of a harvest that began two weeks early, that **“almost always the production regulations represent the situation of more than thirty years ago”** and that “bold choices are needed in the face of the now too numerous array of denominations,” distinguishing those that express a strong territorial identity from those “rarely appreciated outside their own regional area.” This is said by someone who joined the company in the 1960s, not a passing consultant. Answer: something else entirely is needed.

It is written that we have too many wines unsuited to the markets... something else entirely is needed. That we must bring wine back to the general public with events designed for consumers and not for industry insiders... something else entirely is needed. That we finally need a serious national direction for the promotion of Italian wine in the world... something else entirely is needed. I could go on forever. **And the very fact that I could go on forever is the point.**

Converging on problems, diverging on solutions

Benaltrismo has an enormous advantage: it costs nothing. It lets you appear lucid, look at things “from above,” without ever putting yourself out there with a concrete proposal. **Every solution, by definition, is partial, so every solution can be dismissed as insufficient.** And so we end up doing something very Italian, all converging on the problems

and never starting with any solution.

We are all convinced that there is not just one problem. Nobody thinks so. But waiting to have analyzed, shared and ranked them all before starting to solve one means wasting time. **And time, today, is the resource we lack most.**

I am not naive, I know that behind a lot of benaltrismo there is also a defense of positions. **Every problem placed at the top of the list implies that someone has to change something, and the most elegant way to change nothing is to explain that the real problem is another one.**

Where I would start

Someone on LinkedIn asked me, rightly: and where would you start from? I answer, because otherwise I too would be doing benaltrismo in reverse. **First, bring wine back to the people.** Promotion events aimed at final consumers, on the national territory and in some strategic markets. We already have models, such as, for example, Vinitaly in the City in Calabria and Hostaria in Verona.

It is not a demagogic message, it is a precise choice to escape from this absurd elitism that has turned wine from a table product into a product for the initiated. **Those who have no desire for wine are not convinced with yet another masterclass for operators.**

Second, interprofessional supply chain agreements. At least in some important denominations, sit down at a table with the horeca channel and with large-scale retail to find understandings on the absurdity we are living through: unjustified price hikes in too much of the restaurant sector on one side, systematic bargain sales in too much of the large-scale retail on the other. **Two extremes that are making the entire supply chain lose out, from the vineyard to the shelf.**

The consortia were born as interprofessional bodies, but it is a role they have in fact never exercised, and **perhaps never as much as today would all segments of the supply chain need to confront one another without barriers** to find agreements that suit everyone.

Third, real lifeblood for wine tourism. **The survival of so many small and micro businesses in Italian wine will increasingly depend on hospitality.** It is not an opinion, it is what the numbers say of those who have already put hospitality at the center. Australia is investing significant resources on this front to support its own companies.

For us, today, an OCM for wine tourism would be more important than the one for export, at least for the majority of businesses. And the export OCM itself should be reshaped, so that it is not always the same ones who receive resources and so that a part of those resources finally goes to system-wide promotions of Italian wine, and not to the umpteenth sum of individual initiatives.

Starting, not concluding

They are three things. They do not solve everything, and whoever wants to tell me that something else entirely is needed will also be right. **But they are three things that can be started tomorrow morning, without waiting for the perfect reform of the system.**

The risk of benaltrismo is not that of getting priorities wrong. **It is that of never moving, and of realizing in a few years that in the meantime the consumers, those who were waiting for us to make up our minds, have simply chosen something else.** Something else entirely, indeed.

Key points

1. **Consumption is falling** in strategic markets, and lost interest in wine is harder to recover than lower prices.
2. **Benaltrismo costs nothing**: every partial solution gets dismissed as insufficient, so the sector stays still.
3. **Bring wine to the people** with consumer events instead of more masterclasses for operators.
4. **Create interprofessional agreements** between horeca and large-scale retail to end price extremes.
5. **Fund wine tourism** with a dedicated OCM and rebalance export funds toward system promotion.