Citra’s 50th Anniversary: a vision come true

scritto da Emanuele Fiorio | 10 Agosto 2023



Citra celebrates its 50-year anniversary, an exceptional occasion to **commemorate this cooperative that reunites 9 cellars in the Chieti province** and which represents a unicum in the Central-Italy panorama.

Born in 1973, **Citra is today the main wine reality in the Abruzzo region;** it is able to produce 22 million bottles, 60% of which are destined to more than 50 markets around the world.

It is a **thrilling anniversary which will take place in an exceptional frame, the Teatro Tosti,** in the center of Ortona, the city where Citra is based. For the event, which is

addressed to all the representatives of the social base and the territory's stakeholders, it has been organized a conference with the title "Da 50 anni CITRAMANDIAMO Vini, Volti, Valori con lo sguardo al futuro" – "For 50 years we have been passing on wines, faces, values with a gaze towards the future" –, **moderated by Wine Meridian managing director, Fabio Piccoli.**

Sandro Spella, Citra's President immediately made everyone feel at home, introducing the first part of the conference (dedicated to institutions), with the help of the archbishop of the Lanciano/Ortona diocese, **S.E. Mons. Emidio Cipollone,** whom underlined the symbolic value of the conference's title contained in the neologism "Citramandiamo" which resends to the bequeathal of those who had the courage and the will to start this splendid adventure in 1973: "Talking about wine does not mean only talking about the organoleptic characteristics, the trading details, the viticulture; it is something more. Talking about wine means talking about joy, happiness, life and safety: wine is mentions 224 times in the Bible. Around wine there are faces and values. Passing on wine means, exactly, passing on faces and values"

"This reality produces 40% of the wine bottled in Abruzzo. It is not an Ortona asset, it is a regional national one", underlined **Leo Castiglione – Ortona Mayor.** "This year falls also the 80th anniversary of the Ortona Battle; from there everything started again and Citra is an excellence that represents this rebirth. Citra works for and with the territory, when social initiatives are organized, Citra is always present".

"I was reading data about Citra: 22 million bottles produced, 60% of which are destined abroad in more than 50 global markets", said **Senator Etelwardo Sigismondi,** "This means bringing our territorial and cultural heritage around the world".

The National President of the Wine Tourism Movement, **Nicola D'Auria highlighted Citra's importance not only as a producing reality but also as an Abruzzo wine ambassador**: "Citra, with all its producers, represents an important image, behind this wine world there are women, men and families".

"Citra demonstrated great foresight", started the National President of the **Città del Vino Association, Angelo Radica**: "in particular in relation to two aspects: 50 years ago, Citra decided to put together different realities to create a second-level cooperative, which I believe was a thorny yet genius idea. The second element concerns the investments in the sparkling wines category which were little developed in Abruzzo, another foresight signal".

"This territory is the cornerstone of the wine production, one of the major referring points in the regional economy", **Marco Marsiglio – Abruzzo Region President – declared.** "Export is growing, the international appreciation is more and more widespread. The Abruzzo Region will keep sustaining and valorizing the sector because it is a production tied intimately to the territory and its people".

After the authorities' testimonies, **Sebastiano Porello – former Citra President and former Consorzio di Tutela Vini D'Abruzzo president** – started the conference making an excursus on the development and the goals reached by the cooperative: "Citra has been the first Abruzzo reality to enter the GDO, in Esselunga to be precise. The growth has been important; thanks to the collaboration with Alitalia and Lufthansa, **Citra was able to open up and be known around the world.** On the provisions of these successes, a decision was made to invest in technologies and human resources. New relationships were also tied with other GDO emblems and the goal was set on quality over quantity. What Abruzzo is able to do in terms of quality and quantity is difficult to be repeated in other areas on a global level".

Riccardo Cotarella – Assoenologi Global President and, since 2017, chief of Citra-Wine-Team – mentioned a brief emblematic anecdote on Citra and the cooperative cellars' importance: "I remember 20 years ago, one sentence that I never forgot. When the agricultures went to the cooperative they would say «I am going to the cellar to unload the grapes». **The verb «unload» symbolizes the scarce value given to the product.** I am convinced that this attitude has changed now, especially thanks to the cooperative cellars which are a lever that will lift the wine world. One problem remains crucial to solve regarding the Abruzzo wines: 30% of the bottled wine remains too low of a percentage".

On the importance of the cooperation **Fabiola Di Loreto – Confcooperative National Director** – intervened: "A critical mass is required. We need volumes, production consistency and this can be guaranteed only by aggregation. Cooperatives today only make excellent productions and I believe that the system has made huge steps ahead, but there is still room to move forward. Besides, the cooperative system has an added value, the one of inter-generations".

Denis Pantini – Nomisma Wine Monitor Managing Director – rattled off some key data to understand the current moment: "In the last 25 years, the Abruzzo wines' export has quadrupled, reaching 219 million Euros. Europe and North America have an important weight, but the Abruzzo wines have widened a lot also in Asia (9% in total). The GDO is an important channel and despite contraction seen in 2022, the current results are still higher than the pre-pandemic period. Ho.Re.Ca is getting back in track and in 2022 the values fell back to the ones previous to the Covid-19. **The Abruzzo wines have had the capacity to grow 12,5% in value,** but the generic wines still have too much of an incidence, 46%. This product is not able to express its potential. Cooperation is important for the territory development since we have a fragmented tissue. Generally, wine companies grow barely three hectares,

in Abruzzo this data is even lower, 2 hectares on average".

"Communicating wine is very difficult", said **Adua Villa – digital entrepreneur, sommelier and journalist** – "cooperative companies such as Citra have their unique strength, they were born in an excellent area. The bottle needs to be the means to narrate stories. The wine world has a very B2B communication, addressed to the operators. The wine bottle is difficult to communicate and that is why the values communication is so important. Abruzzo is receiving great attention, with a wider echo every day. The table and the wine are the means for this territory".

In conclusion, **Giuseppe Colantonio – Citra Marketing Manager** – presented a preview of the special edition and enumerated Laus Vitae line packaging, dedicated to Citra's 50-year anniversary: "Today, we reveal the packaging, but this is only the first event for this 50th itinerant. Laus Vitae encloses three meaning: a thank to life, a praise to the grape and a commendation to the vineyards. This is a poem from our Prophet, Gabriele D'Annunzio, in which he explains the "panismo", the visceral human-nature relationship. The Laus Vitae has been awarded by Vinitaly as third best etiquette and we also won a special prize: «Technology and Innovation» for the Ortense D'Autore bag-in-box – Pecorino Terre di Chieti IGT, invented by our creative designer, Pina D'Eusanio".

"We work hard to actively contribute to the economic and social progress of the territory", clarified **Fabio De Dominicis – Citra General Director** – "We pinpoint strategies of both technological innovation and maximum respect to the environment. The Equalitas certification Sustainable Wine is an important goal that underlines the reached standard and it is a part of a larger project: "WE CULTIVATE VALUES FOR THE FUTURE".

At the end, **Sandro Spella – Citra President – underlined once again that "the company's mission is to promote but,**

especially, to give value to our 3000 associate grapes' quality. Our associates are Citra's soul. Every day we work hard to improve our territory, both for us and for the future generations. Citra will always be a "fly-wheel" for the development of the Abruzzo viticulture and the numbers demonstrate as much. We are the biggest wine producer community in Central-Italy and we are aware of the great responsibility we hold towards the whole producing chain. This stands for today as well as for the future. We need union, we need to stand together".

To seal this important Citra half-century, the exhibition of **the soprano Katia Ricciarelli and the tenor Francesco Zingariello who delighted the present guests with a spectacular interpretation of the "Libiamo ne' lieti calici",** well-known episode from the Giuseppe Verdi's Traviata. A homage to the Ortone composer Tosti was performed: "A vucchella" (in Italian "la boccuccia") and, to end with a bang, all Citra's employees entered the staged singing "We are the Citra", on the Queen's reviewed notes. A 50-year Anniversary to remember, to frame and to pass on.

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