

If wine is not central in wine tourism anymore...

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 18 Maggio 2022



Last week, visiting some wine companies specialized in the **wine tourism in South Africa** – not only in the well-known area of Stellenbosh, but also in the beautiful areas of Hermanus and Elgin – a quote by **Donatella Cinelli Colombini** came up into my mind, in a recent webinar she declared: “In the wine tourism it is changing the visitors target which by now look for entertainments rather than having a proper interest for wine”. An affirmation that finds perfect confirmation in the **South African wine tourism model**, but also in other wine region not only in the so-called New World.

Actually, we thought that our old Europe would never have to adjust to that wine tourism model, among those the **Napa Valley** one, in California because we “were different anyways and in our cellars would have always come tourists interested in wine in particular”.

We are discovering that it is not like this, there is some sort of **“boring” emergency** in the wine tourism welcome ways of many wine companies of our country.

A boredom that has a very precise reason: the absolute centrality of wine.

But, reflecting on this topic, I think that maybe this is a “problem” which is not specific of the welcoming but reflect, to some extent, a different approach from many consumers with respect to wine.

The obsession for the product

I already wrote about the “obsession for the product” regarding many produces that keep thinking that “only the wines” need to communicate their identity.

It is sufficient to read the majority of press releases that we receive or reading the companies websites or visiting the cellars (in two years we visited more than 250 cellars with the Italian Wine Tour), to realize how, despite the alarms launched by Donatella, **the majority of the companies keep pointing all their wine communication to the product.**

Yet, thinking it clearly, **all of this is a colossal contradiction**. In the end, if we think this through, today it is finally achieving what we have been saying and writing about for a long-time regarding wine.

How many times, in fact, have we said (across-the-board to all the authorized personnel, producers, journalists, blogger, sommeliers, etc.) that wine is a “cultural” product, it is a territory ambassador, an instrument of conviviality that may bring immaterial values often more relevant than the material ones.

How many times have we underlined that fortunately, wine is full of evocative values, that the ideal storytelling is the one able to move without lingering too much on the technical-producing aspects.

Moreover, in the meantime, wine consumers, also in the traditionally producing country like our own, have become more irregular, they broke the daily dynamic to choose wine only in certain occasions.

So, wine, with an extraordinary acceleration in the last 30 years, has passed from being some type of food to being a product of various cultural values.

All of those that contributed to this passage must feel satisfied because they reached a great outcome that today seems taken for granted but, for those, like myself, tried to deal with wine at the end of the 80s, believe me, it appeared as an impossible goal.

The change of focus in the wine tourism

What are the consequences of the evolving process?

First of all, the loss of product centrality as we know it. I understand that this may sometimes show to be difficult to accept for those that daily invest in the qualification of the product in the vineyard and in the cellar, but the reality does not change. **Consumers that will love the wine contest more than they love the wine itself are and will be more and more.**

This does not mean that everyone is looking for the most superficial values in wine, on the contrary: more and more are those that, for example, see in **sustainability** a key factor of their shopping choice in wine.

But, also in this last case **the concept is “sustainability” the attractive element**, with all the aspects that characterize this aspect (health, ethic, environment, social, etc.).

Factors that may often prevail on specific elements tied to the product (tasting characteristics, vineyard, vinification techniques, etc.).

So, today, according to me, keep giving absolute centrality to the product not only is a risk to not intercept the

expectations of many consumers anymore, but it also means to drop more than 30 years of construction of a new wine image.