

Luigi Cremona, wine: human element, vital nerve of the restaurant industry

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Luigi Cremona, a leading journalist in the food and wine world, shares his insights on the evolving role of wine service in Italian fine dining. He emphasizes the importance of personal service, the impact of young professionals, and the need for direct relationships between wineries and restaurateurs to enhance the wine experience in restaurants.

Few names in the Italian food and wine world carry the same authority as Luigi Cremona. A long-time journalist and food critic, Cremona has dedicated his career to exploring, enhancing, and narrating the world of on-trade and high-end Italian restaurants, the primary distribution channel for top-tier wines. As part of the [Amorim Wine Vision project](#), his

valuable insights guide us through the challenges and opportunities of interactions between sommeliers, waitstaff, and clients, highlighting how crucial hospitality and tailored service are. Through the “Emergente Chef” and “Emergente Sala” competitions, Cremona has created concrete opportunities and promoted the renewal of the next generation of restaurant professionals, influencing the approach to wine offerings in restaurants.

In a context where traditional food and wine guides are losing relevance, Cremona offers a sharp reflection on how wineries can improve relationships with the on-trade channel and the restaurant industry. He emphasizes the importance of direct contact and personal presence. This conversation is rich with insights that invite us to rediscover the human element in the world of wine and dining, through the eyes of one of its most passionate advocates.

Based on your extensive experience, how has the creation of wine lists evolved in Italian fine dining restaurants?

The restaurant world is highly varied, and it's hard to give a one-size-fits-all answer because there isn't a single winning model. Many rely on organized companies that optimize stock, delivery, and ensure a variety of bottles (of course from their catalog) with the right margin. Where an owner or sommelier is present and capable, the wine list is more personal, to the undeniable advantage of the experienced consumer. Personally, I prefer this choice when sommeliers don't force their personal preferences onto the customer, often directing them toward a narrow and not customer-friendly selection.

Few Italian restaurants employ

sommeliers, so the role of the waitstaff is becoming increasingly decisive. What's your perspective on this?

In my opinion, this is the key issue. Not all restaurants have a sommelier, and often this role is not even seen favorably by customers, who have learned to fear exaggerations. Customers mostly want "hospitality" and then "tailored service" according to the situation. Unfortunately, in Italy, unless in rare cases, the waitstaff isn't adequately trained on wine offerings, and this is the biggest problem currently affecting the restaurant industry, limiting its development and success.

Through the "Emergente Chef" competition, you've been heavily involved in the promotion of young chefs and, more broadly, the renewal of Italian dining. How will this renewal affect the way wine is presented to customers?

For over 10 years, I've also run "Emergente Sala," dedicated to waitstaff (let's not be ashamed of the term, which we must all rethink), and remember that, in most cases, it's the waitstaff who sell wine. I believe it's our most original and interesting event. Slowly, it's changing the situation. We're trying to create a "community of professionals (waitstaff)" who aim to stay united and, in the future, make an impact, becoming a model.

From your vantage point, how much influence do food and wine guides (both gastronomic and wine-related) have on

consumer choices today?

The only guide that truly makes a difference is the Michelin Guide. The others are irrelevant. No one follows wine guides anymore; they mostly serve the ego of some producers who take pride in them.

The relationship between wine producers and restaurateurs is often difficult. What advice would you give to wine entrepreneurs to better connect with restaurateurs and promote their wines?

As much as possible, be present. The restaurant industry is a world where the human element (thankfully) is still important. Wine producers should not delegate marketing entirely to agents but show their faces. That's the only way to truly understand their target audience, gain recognition, and, in some cases, earn appreciation.

Key points

1. **Wine lists in fine dining are more personal** when guided by skilled sommeliers or owners.
2. **Training waitstaff on wine knowledge is crucial** for restaurant success in Italy.
3. **The “Emergente Sala” initiative is reshaping the role of waitstaff** in wine sales.
4. **Michelin remains the only influential guide**; others have lost relevance.
5. **Wineries should engage personally** with restaurateurs to improve wine marketing.

