

A revolution in the World of Wine: provocative insights from the Envisioning 2035 Summit

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 22 Settembre 2025



I had the good fortune and opportunity to participate first as a panelist and then as a speaker at the Envisioning 2035 summit held in Milan last June 11. The initiative was an important opportunity, on one hand, to delve into the current state of the wine sector, but above all, to understand its possible evolutions in what is undoubtedly a complex phase.

First, credit must be given to Edoardo Freddi—founder in 2012 of Edoardo Freddi International, one of the most innovative companies supporting Italian wineries in international markets—who, along with Ettore Nicoletto, was the promoter and

organizer of this initiative, which I hope is the beginning of a path of collaboration among various players in the Italian wine supply chain. **Indeed, it is undeniable that in such a revolutionary phase, the recipes of the past are no longer useful, and it is necessary to profoundly rewrite the “rules of engagement” for wine on both the communication and commercial fronts.**

Many insights emerged during the summit. In this first editorial, I wanted to give space to contrasting and provocative visions on the future of wine, with presentations by Priscilla Hennekam (founder of the global community “Rethinking the wine industry” and a consumer advocate) and Robert Joseph (editorial director for Meininger’s Wine Business International and a leading expert on wine economics and marketing), who prompted the audience to reflect on the challenges and opportunities the Italian wine system will have to face in the coming years. **Both speakers presented incisive arguments, with a focus on cultural, technological, and market changes that will influence the global wine sector.** Below is a more in-depth examination of their reflections.

Priscilla Hennekam: The Transformation of the Sector and the Emergence of New Dynamics

The Context of Global Change

Priscilla Hennekam began with a reflection on the current phase of transformation involving the world of wine, with a strong emphasis on the global context. Hennekam referenced Alvin Toffler’s wave theory, which describes how each historical phase of transformation has destroyed the institutions of the previous period. **According to Hennekam’s vision, we are now in the “Third Wave,” the information age, characterized by decentralized, rapid, and unpredictable dynamics.** This paradigm is undermining established structures,

such as those that have governed wine production and distribution until now.

From “Produce → Package → Educate” to “Listen → Connect → Co-create”

One of the central aspects of Priscilla Hennekam's presentation was the radical change in the traditional business model. The old model was simple: produce, package, and then educate the consumer. **Instead, today, Hennekam urges the sector to embrace the new model of listening, connecting, and co-creating.** This approach places the consumer at the center, who is no longer passive but becomes an active protagonist in the product and experience creation process.

The new generations are looking for authenticity, not established brands and hierarchies. Hennekam emphasizes how wine consumption is evolving: today, people seek an emotional connection with the product, a shared experience rather than a simple act of purchase. This implies that wineries must invest in building a consumer community, rather than just focusing on promoting their labels. **Furthermore, trust no longer lies in institutions or labels, but in communities, social groups, and shared stories.** Authenticity and transparency have become central values, and wine must adapt to these changes.

The Role of Technology and Social Communication

Another central theme addressed by Hennekam is the importance of technology. **Digitalization and the use of social platforms are now fundamental tools for connecting producers and consumers.** It's not just about selling wine, but about creating a dialogue and building an experience that resonates with the community's values. The narrative of wine, therefore, must no longer be unilateral, but a shared process in which stories and experiences are “co-created” by consumers, who become brand ambassadors.

Hennekam refers to the example of the Brazilian *confrarias*,

social groups that work together to create value through shared experiences. **Her vision is clear: the future of wine will increasingly be based on the ability to respond to the demands of a society that seeks authenticity, engaging experiences, and shared values.**

Robert Joseph: The Global Challenge and the Change of the Traditional Model

An Uncertain Future for Wine

Robert Joseph's presentation focused on the concrete challenges wine is facing globally. Joseph began his speech by tracing the evolution of wine consumption, which has seen a slow decline from 2000 to 2023. This process affects not only emerging markets but also historic ones like France and Italy, where wine is losing ground to other alcoholic beverages like beer and spirits. **His diagnosis is clear: the sector is losing ground and could suffer a decline of more than 20% in the coming years.**

Changes in Consumer Behavior

Joseph highlighted a growing disaffection among consumers towards traditional wine, a phenomenon that is particularly taking hold among the youth. Consumers are no longer willing to follow the traditional model of wine as a "high-end" and formal product, and the idea of "educating" the public about wine is seen as obsolete. **Today, the consumer does not need to learn but simply wants to have an experience.** The new generations are more interested in drinks that fit better into their less formal and more accessible lifestyles.

The Decline of Brands and the Rise of Convenience

Joseph also spoke about the future of branding in the wine sector, stating that the traditional approach to appellations of origin and brands may no longer be sustainable. Traditional

labels, which tell the story of the *terroir* and production methods, may no longer be able to attract younger consumers. Joseph suggests that wine producers should move towards more flexible and innovative models, such as using alternative packaging, canned wines, or bag-in-box, which better meet the needs of convenience and sustainability.

Innovation in Sales and Distribution Models

According to Joseph, the future of wine no longer lies in the traditional 75 cl bottle approach but in new packaging solutions and direct-to-consumer sales models. Selling wine in cans or bag-in-box format could become the norm for premium segments, as is already happening in some Californian wineries. **Furthermore, Joseph invites wineries to focus on building a true sales experience, rather than educating consumers about the product.** “Creating desire” thus becomes the main goal, responding to the demand for accessibility and ease of use, rather than the narrative of wine as a symbol of tradition.

The Future of Appellations and the Concept of Luxury

Joseph also challenges the idea of luxury associated with wine, proposing a vision where true luxury is not tradition or formality, but freedom of choice and personalization of the experience. Appellations of origin, in his view, could end up promoting a sort of “laziness” in consumers, leading to the commodification and standardization of the product. **The future of premium wine, according to Joseph, will depend on the ability of producers to create unique experiences, without being tied to traditional parameters of quality and territorial identity.**

The reflections of Priscilla Hennekam and Robert Joseph offer two complementary and stimulating visions for the future of Italian wine. While Hennekam pushes for a radical

transformation centered on authenticity and community, Joseph focuses on a practical and strategic change that responds to the challenges of modern consumers. **Both agree on the urgency of abandoning traditional models and adapting to a rapidly changing world, where technology, consumer experience, and sustainability will become key factors for the success of wineries.**
