

Wine consumption decrease: the dangerous “alibis” of high prices and health

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 26 Gennaio 2024



Once again, I bring up the topic about **the current decrease in wine consumption** which is registering in various international markets. **I bring it up again because it is crucial to realize that consumption is the “mother of every battle”.**

Reading the comments, the evaluations of the main observers, it would appear like this decrease is to ascribe to two main macro-factors:

- **The economic crisis** that is reducing the financial possibilities of many consumers, combined with a **simultaneous augmentation of the wines’ prices**;
- **The greater attention that consumers are reserving to**

their health which, in consequence, translates into a reduction of alcoholic beverages consumption.

Two justifications which, even if they are indeed legitimate, **they also take away every responsibility to our wine industry:** from producers to restaurateurs, from marketing managers to sales agents, from export managers to importers/distributors.

“Blaming” only the poorer consumer or the one that is taking care of their health is, at the end of the day, like saying: I can’t do anything about it.

And, this very “de-accountability”, in my personal opinion, is a dangerous risk to our sector.

I ask you to follow my reasoning not to seem like the usual Jiminy Cricket that wants to be moralistic or give the same old lesson to the various and many subjects involved in the so-called wine industry.

If wine was less consumed “just” because there are less money and we are afraid to “get sick” (I am sorry for the great banalization), it is clear that the maneuver margin of every authorized personnel would be practically null and void.

Therefore, can we all speculate on other causes for these decreases (to which, unfortunately, as was underlined many times, we are not able to give a precise meaning in terms of typologies, prices, distribution channels, client typologies, etc.)?

I am going to try and list some of them:

- increasingly fierce competition from other alcoholic beverages;
- increasingly occasional consumers in the consumption of alcoholic beverages;
- consumers who are more “unfaithful” in their choices of

alcoholic beverages;

- ineffective wine communication towards consumers, especially younger ones;
- an insufficiently “contemporary” wine offer (close to current consumer tastes);
- a less innovative wine offer (both in terms of product, packaging and communication);
- few brands, both territorial and corporate, that are truly recognizable by consumers;
- still too many “neutral” types of wine without a strong recognizable identity.

The list might go on but I think this is enough.

And if to these possible “other causes” we add a distribution system incapable of renovating on the enological offer front, importers that are more and more tired, fewer companies organized in protecting the markets (starting from the internal one), it comes easy, according to me, to affirm that there are other things that our wine industry might do to invert the negative wine consumption route.

In fact, if we were to look at every single other possible cause, we would realize how many actions and strategies could be launched by companies, distributors, importers and restaurateurs to make wine more “attractive”.

Instead, at the present time, we prefer to cry or, at best, **lash out at the World Health Organization.**

All this generates useless and dangerous inaction and makes problems that are objectively serious even bigger, transforming them in insurmountable walls.

It is no coincidence, for example, that despite all the global data indicating a growing interest among consumers in direct relationships with producers, in our case, of the so-called **wine tourism**, there are still very few companies that

seriously invest on this front .

Although there are regions that are recording extraordinary increases in tourist flows (in spite of the crisis described more or less in all the media), **we must ask ourselves what our businesses, but also restaurateurs and wine bar managers, could do to convey better offer wines to their customers.**

On my recent trip to Florida I interviewed some importers and I asked them this question: “**I saw places full of people in Miami, in some restaurants, many of which were “Italian” restaurants, it wasn’t even possible to book a table given the crowding. Is it possible that we can’t sell Italian wine better in such “rich” and ideal places for our wine offering?**”

I could summarize their answers in a single common denominator: “**Of course, but we can’t do it alone, we need serious support from your companies; not spot-on support, but backing throughout the year. The majority of your companies, however, thinks it is enough to give us good wines and leave the rest of the work to us.**”

Of course, even in this response from some American importers lies the risk of an easy “de-accountability”, but **there is no doubt that only the wine supply chain together can win this battle.**