

It is crucial to understand the reasons of the decrease in wine consumption

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 26 Gennaio 2024



The most debated topic both at the end of 2023 and at the beginning of 2024 is **the decrease in wine consumption** with related attempt to try and find the reasons.

On the matter, there is the very authoritative point of view of **Jancis Robinson** who might be considered the most well-known Master of Wine from a Global point of view.

Robinson, from the Financial Times columns, gave her opinion on what might be the main reasons of the wine consumption decrease that have been registered in numerous international markets.

According to Robinson, the main reason, at least for fine

wines, is to ascribe to the prices increase which “skyrocketed”.

“Wine producers around the world – says the well-known English Master of Wine – who, for a certain period of time, absorbed the increasing costs (of bottles and equipment, for examples), seem to have decided in unison to **transfer them to us consumers**. And, us British people for August the 1st 2023 have also had the added obligation of a new and complex tax system tied to alcoholic content, which determined 44 pence more to every bottle for the greater part of still wines”.

I am going to stop there on this first consideration by Robinson while asking a question: how much is the wine price objectively affecting the actual consumption trend?

I must admit: I do not have an answer for that. **However, I am also convinced that none else actually does.** Especially is we do not restrict the analysis to fine wines only, but we take into consideration the whole wine offer panorama on an international level.

I do have some common considerations to make, which are the product of a recent superficial journalist investigation on **Verona's supermarkets during the recently passed Christmas time**.

We asked some of them (almost 100 people) if they had the perception of a price increase for the wines on the shelves.

Only 12% of them said yes, while 43% claimed that it seemed that not only wines did not register any particular increase, but that some product typologies were also among the most interesting promotions.

It would be sufficient to spend more time at the supermarkets; both “normal” and the so-called “discount” to have a confirmation about the statements of the consumers we

interviewed.

If we look at wine on a wider picture, it is still **dreadfully cheap**. From my point of view up until we look at the wine industry taking into consideration only the fine wines, we risk to have an absolutely limited vision.

And this is even more true today in light of the dynamics of consumption of alcoholic beverages that seem to be more and more "laic", as **Felicity Carter** rightfully underlines in the latest issue of the Meininger's International.

The Editor-in-Chief of The Drop wrote that there is a **"collapse of the barriers (...). Signs are emerging that consumers, especially younger ones, no longer rigidly identify themselves as "wine consumers"; "beer consumers" or "cocktail consumers".**

The lines between the categories are blurring and this is particularly clear in the USA. Carter, on the topic, reclaims a comment by Bryan Roth, analyst at Feel Goods, according to whom the consumers are more worried about the "basic fermentable", meaning that it is not crucial whether they are drinking a non-alcoholic artisanal soda produced in a brewery; the important thing for them is that it has great taste.

And if this is true, then it means that the alcoholic beverages consumption is polarizing even more:

- those (the clear minority) who look at wine in an **exclusive way**, trying to better understand the differences of the different production identities (particularly in fine wines);
- those (the vast majority) who see wine as a **possible but occasional option** and have decidedly lower information needs.

However, many comments, at least according to me, seem to focus only on the tip of the much larger iceberg that is the wine offer around the world.

On the same topic, Carter underlines how, in the face of a sharp decline in red wines. to the advantage of whites above all, full-bodied red wines continue to perform excellently: **"Despite the growing success of white wines – sais Carter –full-bodied red wines, still maintain a strong position. The creation of new styles of red wines, such as those fermented in bourbon barrels for a smoky flavor, has attracted audiences, particularly millennial men. These wines are described as "faster and stronger" and continue to generate profits".**

And this in defiance to all those, including myself, who were almost convinced that the era of red wines once defined as "trained" was, to some extent, **over**.

For these reasons I consider it very dangerous today to only rely on assessments, even if they are made by authoritative observers. Because they often risk to be conditioned by **"prejudices"** or perceptions limited to a small cross-section of the wine market.