

# Wine tourism might become determinant for many little-known denominations

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 6 Agosto 2023



To become a famous and recognizable wine territory, is it necessary to make great wines appreciated by the enological critique? **Or to have a clear vocation for the production of quality wines?**

The answer that comes from our **Wine Tour in the USA** is: absolutely not. We visited more than one hundred cellars in twelve different States and just a few of these companies were located in territories that we could define as suitable for wine production. But there are also numerous companies that, even if located in pretty suitable areas, do not aim at being

appreciated on the enological point of view but rather on the wine tourism appeal, on the hospitality capacity.

This last one is the most interesting factor that we bring home and that might be very useful for the development of the wine tourism in our Country.

Not only that: **we believe that this factor is certainly determinant to finally reveal many of our denominations** that are today almost unknown or they are not taken into consideration by the enological critique.

But, before entering in the heart of this topic which I believe to be truly strategic and, being presumptuous, even revolutionary, I think it is important to take a step back.

In fact, until today, in what could be defined as the modern viticulture, the factor that let a denomination be known, that made it **prestigious at an international level was the official recognition from the enological critique**.

For example, think about the famous "**Judgement of Paris**" in 1976 which corroborated the California wines that "challenged" the great wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy.

Not forgetting the importance of the ratings by the great Robert Parker that let the Bordeaux wines be known to the new world.

And, talking about our Country, we cannot forget the recognition role held by "**Tre Bicchieri**" **into the development of the reputation of numerous denominations**.

In fact, not by chance, the majority of the producers' associations, while looking for an increase in their reputation and that of their denominations, **they try and tighten the best relationships** with the enological critique wishing to "take home" that much yearned notoriety.

The USA, and not only, are teaching us that notoriety,

reputation, but also the economic sustainability of a producing territory might be obtained also (actually, especially) **thanks to the opening of the companies**, to their hospitality; in brief: thanks to the development of wine tourism.

What we considered for a long time, too long indeed, **to be just a complementary activity** (actually, almost marginal) to the production, for many wine territories at an international level is the main key to success.

To some extent, **we can define this observation as some kind of a “brilliant idea that seems obvious in retrospect”**, which means that we have had this clear obviousness in front of us for many years.

Yet, I needed Ian Rynecki, **Pippin Hill general manager** (one of the most active companies in the wine tourism field in Virginia) to open my eyes.

Sitting on a table and tasting some of their decent wines, but surely not exceptional (besides, I learned later on that they don't take part to the process of vinification), and observing an extraordinary landscape, to say the least, absolutely unpolluted, I asked him: **“How is it possible that Virginia became so well-known in the wine producing panorama, with an ever growing number of companies (they reached and exceeded the 300 units)?”**.

“Surely some European producers were important because in the 70s they built this territory (the Zonin family is among those, with the purchase of the **Barboursville Vineyards in 1976**); but what really changed the history of this territory has been the decision of opening the companies to the public, to the tourists”.

**So, it is possible to not be a great wine producing territory and to become nonetheless an important, attractive, desirable area.**

The answer is in many territories in the USA. Virginia is surely among the States where the “suitability” for wine production is superior to other areas, such as those of the Midwest (Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Indiana), for example, which bet everything on the wine tourism appeal through wines produced with grapes bought in **large part between California and the State of Washington**.

But, thanks to the wine tourism, even the States which, until a short time ago, were absolutely marginal in the wine producing global panorama, **are now acquiring their space** (especially from an economic point of view).

And I thought about how many Italian denominations, “unknown” at this day, might finally find the right notoriety and reputation, but also greater economic sustainability, thanks to the **wine tourism development**.