Wanted: professionals for wine tourism, but on the right terms. The wine sector looks in the mirror

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Italian wine tourism claims it cannot find qualified professionals, yet many skilled candidates receive no reply from wineries. Behind the talent shortage lies a more complex reality: small producers lack the budget for dedicated staff, wages remain low, weekend work is standard, and job profiles are unrealistically broad. The problem is structural – and requires honest, collective solutions.

A few weeks ago I wrote an editorial in which I discussed the real crux of Italian wine tourism, namely the scarcity of professionals truly prepared to welcome guests, not just talk

about wine. I received many emails at the editorial office and several comments on LinkedIn, and I realised I had addressed only part of the picture.

Those who knock on winery doors and find no answer

A letter received by the editorial office was written by a professional working in training and tasting management. Over the past few months, he had contacted several wineries proposing concrete collaborations. Result: silence. Not a motivated refusal, not a “we’ll think about it.” Silence. The question he asked himself is: the difficulty in finding competent staff is real, but how many wineries are actually looking?

The sustainability no one calculates

There is, however, another side to the issue that would be wrong to ignore. A small-to-medium-sized winery – and Italian viticulture is largely made up of these – often cannot afford a figure dedicated exclusively to hospitality. The skills may be there, the willingness too, but the numbers don’t add up. **This is a real structural constraint that requires different solutions from simply hiring someone.** Flexible collaborations, shared roles across multiple wineries, hybrid models. What is needed, in any case, is to build sustainable working conditions for both parties – not to offload the problem onto those seeking work, nor to pretend that every winery has the same resources.

The conditions no one wants to name

The most direct comment we received put its finger on something that tends to be avoided in public debate: wages. Often inadequate, almost never accompanied by bonuses on direct sales, always burdened by weekend work. And a

professional profile that in practice means doing everything: hospitality, tastings, sales, logistics, cleaning, last-minute travel. **The heavy turnover that characterises the sector does not tell the story of a generation unwilling to work, but of people who understood the game and stopped accepting it.**

Where the real knot lies

The human resources problem in wine tourism has more faces than those seen at conferences. There are those who offer skills and receive no response. There are those who would like to invest but lack the structure to do so. And there is a model of employment that demands much and gives back little. **As long as all these levels are not addressed together, talking about a shortage of qualified staff remains a partial diagnosis.** The talent is there. What is still missing is the collective will to truly value it.

Key points

1. **Many qualified professionals actively seek collaborations with wineries but receive no response**, questioning whether demand is genuine.
2. **Small and medium wineries face real structural limits** that make hiring a dedicated hospitality figure financially unsustainable.
3. **Low wages, no sales bonuses and mandatory weekend work make wine tourism roles unattractive** and drive high turnover.
4. J**ob profiles often require candidates to handle hospitality, sales, logistics and cleaning** simultaneously for minimal pay.
5. **The talent exists, what is missing is the collective will to build fair**, sustainable working conditions.