Wine DOCs: do we even believe in our own denominations?

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 1 Settembre 2022



Why is it so difficult in Italy to open a transparent debate on protection consortiums and, more generally, on the issue of the management and promotion of Italian origin designations?
The very interesting research carried out by Astarea as part of the Gavi Award "La Buona Italia 2022" on "Communicating Italian wine abroad via the web. The role of the Protection Consortiums" was not enough to stimulate a **frank discussion on the role and the importance of the Consortium not even on the front of the promotion of the Italian denominations in the world.**

Every now and then someone advises me to stop addressing this issue because it is a waste of time.
However, **I do not give up because I consider it a decisive aspect for the competitiveness of our wine system.**

In this spirit, **I moderated the meeting** on the theme "The DOCG

and DOC Consortiums today: An Italian system poised between protection and promotion. Strategies, opportunities and frailties to face in order to design the future ", **held on June 10th at Garda as part of the Spumantitalia Festival.**

There were very few people to listen to us, even if those present were of the highest rank – starting from **Riccardo Ricci Curbastro,** president of Federdoc which brings together all the Italian protection consortium; **Giulio Somma,** director of Corriere Vinicolo, one of the few historic publications of the Unione Italiana Vini that follows the political-economic dynamics of the wine sector; **Giacomo Pondini,** director of the Asti DOCG Consortium; **Carlo Veronese**, director of the Oltrepò Pavese Wine Protection Consortium; **Aldo Lorenzoni,** former director of the Soave wine consortium. **Vittorio Fiore,** one of the most authoritative winemakers in our country, and **Lamberto Vallarino Gancia**, recently appointed CEO of the Domori group, but with a long experience in a company that made the history of Italian bubbles, who also made an important contribution.

A very small group, indeed, but it was able to bring out some of the most salient aspects of the Italian consortium system. A pity that there were few people to listen to the opinions of the authoritative speakers, because I believe they could have had a very clear picture of the **current state of the Italian Protection Consortium.**

The presupposed question of the reflection that we tried to put at the center of the interventions at the Garda meeting was the following: **"How important is the role of the Protection Consortium in the success of a denomination?".**
Certainly, this is a very complex question but to which, in my opinion, it is essential to give one or more answers in order to understand which structure and organization a Protection Consortium must have in order to **guarantee adequate support for the development of a denomination.**

Giulio Somma highlighted how the Italy of wine is divided in

two on the "consortium" front, with a southern part of Italy that in fact sees most of the denominations to be orphaned of a Protection Consortium.
"A paradox – underlined the director of Corriere Vinicolo – considering the large number of denominations present in our Southern Italy".
"The exaggerated proliferation of designations of origin in our country – **highlighted the president of Federdoc Ricci Curbastro** – has certainly not facilitated the creation of as many Protections Consortium but there is no doubt that where there is no Consortium the management and enhancement of a DOC becomes much more difficult if not impossible ".

But it is equally true that, where there are Consortium, things do not always go so well.
"The complexity and rigidity of the production regulations – explained the director of the Oltrepò Pavese Wine Consortium – pushes many producers to make wines" without appellation "and this also greatly affects the economic contribution to the Protection Consortiums".

In the observations of Somma, **Ricci Curbastro and Veronese reside the "contradictions" of the consortium system of Italian wine.** On the one hand there are denominations which are do not have a guide; on the other hand, there is an excess of denominations and the difficulty of many Consortiums to have an adequate financial endowment also due to production regulations that limit the investment of many companies in their DOC or DOCG.

Problems that have been known for some time, but that the time has come to tackle with determination because there is no shadow of a doubt that where there is a strong consortium, the denomination benefits in an extraordinary way.
And today a strong Consortium, as it had already emerged in Astarea's research, **is the one capable of guaranteeing both effective "territorial" communication and adequate enhancement of corporate brands.**

A challenge that is not simple which implies, as it has been stressed several times, a more suited to current needs structuring of most of our Consortiums.

Today, for example, **there are no training courses for managers of protection consortiums**. This is not to be considered a small limitation, considering the peculiarities of a Protection Consortium.
However, I remain convinced that the improvement of our consortium system can only take place if Italian wine producers are aware of the importance of their denominations.

In the latter regard, I am sorry to point out that, at present, **dozens and dozens of disciplinary changes are languishing in the drawers of the National Committee of the DOCs.** The key organization for the recognition and modification of the specifications of our denominations is represented by a structure with only two employees, one of whom is close to retirement.
If our wine system, including professional organizations, believes that this is sufficient to guarantee the regulatory solidity of our denominations, then I fear **it will be hard to see many consortiums and strong denominations in our country.**