

Look at novel ways of entering the market

scritto da Lavinia Furlani | 25 Giugno 2014



We interview Jon Thorsen, one of the most important wine blogger and we asked him some informations about his activity and his opinion about italian Wine.

Describe your blog

I am simply a wine consumer who is trying to help other wine consumers find great wine without spending a lot of money. My website, The Reverse Wine Snob (www.ReverseWineSnob.com) focuses on reviews on wines that sell for \$20 or less in the

U.S. although on Saturdays I also “splurge” and focus on wines over \$20. Before starting the site I had no experience in wine but I saw that there were probably a lot of people like myself who didn’t drink as much wine as they might like because they thought they had to spend \$20 or more to get a decent bottle. My wife also helps with the site, particularly the photos.

I primarily review wines, rating them both on taste and cost but also include small bites of additional information to help my readers learn. I’ve also started to do much more traveling and writing about wine travel. Most recently I was touring the Rhone Valley thanks to the French Tourism office and before that in Slovenia. Italy is at the top of my wish list of places to go next.

How do you view the potential of Italian wine in your country in terms of market potential?

The number of wine drinkers in the U.S. is growing and I think that the potential for Italian wine is very good, although there is definitely work to be done. The Italian classification of wines is very confusing to the average consumer. It’s a similar situation with French wine but I think that for the less expensive wines, the Italian wineries and their U.S. importers do a better job with making engaging labels.

How do you think Italian producers can improve their performance in your country? What do you suggest?

While the quality of the wine is always the most important thing, marketing of the wine is also very important as well as the ability to stand out on store shelves. An eye catching label is a must nowadays in the under \$20 market. Word of mouth is also extremely important – if a friend or a trusted resource tells you a wine is good it can have a big impact on sales. Alternatively, if a consumer googles your wine and no one is talking about, that can be a big negative. Trying to reach out directly to consumers and building a network of fans and influencers who are willing to talk about your wine can

prove very beneficial, although it takes some work.

What do you think of the quality/price ratio of Italian wines? Overall it is good, although you really have to separate the wines at the top of the market that are mainly being purchased by very knowledgeable wine consumers (Brunello and Barolo for example) from those that are less expensive. I personally find Italian wine to give very good value, even the ones that are more expensive. When I am looking for a splurge wine (over \$20), I more often than not will choose an Italian wine.

What qualities do you personally appreciate most in Italian wines?

The wonderful ability to pair with food. Also in many of them their ageability. And I don't really know how to define it but for me many Italian wines just have character – they are unique, they don't taste like everything else on the market.

Please mention the potential of which white varieties and which red varieties do best in your market

For reds, the under \$20 market is dominated by Sangiovese and Sangiovese based blends – Chianti primarily. While I also love these, I try to encourage people to branch out and try different varieties like Aglianico and Nero d'Avola because there is so much more out there. People are beginning to listen and seek these out.

For whites, after Pinot Grigio (and Prosecco) the whites not nearly as well known. Personally I love the mineral quality in many of them from places like Alto Adige.

What is your advice to Italian producers looking to enter your market?

Because of the broken and outdated 3 tier distribution system in the U.S. it is very hard for a new wine to enter. I would encourage producers to look at novel ways of entering the market, say through a partnership with a direct seller like NakedWines.com or Club W or a retailer like Trader Joe's. If the wines are well received then it helps to build an audience

which should then make it much easier to find a traditional importer and distributor who is willing to put your wine on a lot of store shelves.