The importance of wine education

scritto da Michéle Shah | 27 Aprile 2017



Debbie Zachareas is the Proprietor and Managing Partner at the Ferry Plaza Wine Merchant in San Francisco's restored Ferry Building, and at the Oxbow Wine & Cheese Merchant in downtown Napa. She is a luminary and the consulting wine buyer for Boulibar in the Ferry Building. She is a well-known wine judge, lecturer, sommelier, and guest speaker throughout the country.

Zachareas's past include developing some of the most innovative wine programs that have helped to shape the city's wine culture.
She was the founder of one of San Francisco's most extensive wine programs at Bacar restaurant, the wine buyer for the Ashbury Market, EOS Restaurant and Wine Bar, the opening sommelier at Rubicon Restaurant and the opening wine director

at Vertigo in the TransAmerica Building.
Nationally recognized by Food and Wine Magazine, Market Watch, Wine Spectator and Saveur Magazines, Bloomberg, Women in Wine Leadership, The California Wine Institute, and she is a member of Les Dames d'Escoffier.
She remains a renowned competition judge and brings a passion and expertise wine to her profession.

How do you view the potential of Italian wine in US in terms of market potential?
It remains the strongest country because of the incredible diversity of styles and price ranges, and the category continues to grow.

How do you think Italian producers can improve their performance in the US market?
What makes it strong in my marketplace are the number of top importers who know their wines and know how to sell them. If there are markets that don't have excellent representation, that is the key. People need exposure and education to varieties that are lesser known.
What do you think of the quality/price ratio of Italian wines?
Most of the wines either over deliver for the price point, or are priced fairly.

What about the presentation of Italian wines?
What I see in the marketplace is attractive and easy to understand,

What qualities do you personally appreciate most in Italian wines?
Great food wines, diversity of styles, lower tannins, higher acidity
Very vibrant whites, and the more aromatic whites have great acidity and gorgeous fruit.
Reds range from light and crunchy, to opulent and fruity, with everything in between.

Please mention the potential of which Italian varieties or

styles do best in your market?
Whites: Fiano, Falangina, Kerner, Verdicchio, Vernaccia, Erbaluce, Arneis, Greco, though the best representations from anyplace are always successful. These are our categories for whites. Reds: Frappato, Cerasuolo, Cortese, Lagrein, Sagrantino, Sangiovese (mostly from Brunello) Cannanou, Schiava, Nebbiolo, Barbera, Schioppettino, Fumin.
Franciacorta and other sparkling wines continue to grow.

What is your advice to Italian producers looking to enter your market?
Find the right importer for each marketplace that can best represent your philosophy

Can you explain a bit more about your experience in the wine field?
I have been a wine professional in San Francisco since 1991. I owned a large wine-oriented restaurant. Currently I own 2 wine retails stores (each with a wine bar, and one with a cheese merchant) and a third on the way. I have worked 25+ years in SF both on and off premise, and sell predominantly smaller producers, and never use third party reviews. I have attached my bio for more detail.
Ferry Plaza Wine Merchant and the The Oxbow Wine and Cheese Merchant are independent retailers who focus on a high level of service, a selection of wines curated by a small and very knowledgable wine buying team, where our goal is to inspire and educate consumers on what we consider some of the best wines of the world. The goal is to have a high price, quality ratio and high customer service.