

Abstract of thesis: Tokaji Aszú – Between tradition and modernity

In this work I will show and analyse the differences of the traditional and modern Tokaji Aszú. Working in the fine wine business in Hungary for over a decade it is one of the most fascinating topic I meet almost every day. It is an exciting period when different styles, methods and philosophies meet at the dinner table and on tasting events. Collectors, wine enthusiasts, wine drinkers and producers all have definite ideas about traditions and modernity, even though this is a very complex and layered subject. Personally I love both the traditional and modern style if the Aszú wine is produced in the highest quality standards. I believe that there is a place in gastronomy for the various directions.

The changes of the styles and methods in Tokaj region are continuous; therefore the most up to date information regarding production belong to the winemakers, who create the product. The winemakers of the Tokaj region were my primary source of information. I created a Questionnaire about the different steps of wine making, from site selection through viticulture and vinification to bottling and marketing the product. I have interviewed the most influential producers and also small family wineries owners about the topic. I have visited several wineries to check the present-day technologies used in the production. I compared the collected information with my personal experience gained in the hospitality and retail sector both international and local stages. The historical facts and the methods used in different times are sourced from authentic literature including books published from 1867 to 2012. My suggestions are confirmed by all these information to improve the success in the future production.

The content of my Diploma work is the following:

After the *Introduction* in the *Historical overview* section I review important steps of the history of the Tokaji wines, which determine the actual style of the dessert wines. Different regulations and methods collected from the early times, which made the Tokaji Aszú so popular and successful product from the 16th century onwards, the problems of the methods and the controls in the communist times. Some of the actual regulations collected, which influence the styles.

In the *Changes in the vineyards* section the influence of the different ownership structure is shown. After the communist era the increasing ratio of the dry wine segment brings another influential practice. The spraying against botrytis and the earlier harvest for dry wines are causing less Aszú production. The wine-specific harvest also changes the ratio of the grape varieties in the Aszú wines at numerous wineries.

In the *Changes in the cellar technology* section I gather the different methods which determine the major differences in style. The hygiene, the temperature and time of fermentation, the time of maceration, the fermentation and aging vessels, the time and method of ageing are essential factors of the modern and traditional Aszú wines. The results of the various factors collected in this section which create fresh, lively and vibrant style or wines with the 'dark aromas' of tobacco, coffee, dried tropical fruity, plum jamy characters in the Tokaji Aszú.

How presentation follows the world trends – is the next section, where the changes of bottling, labelling and closing the Tokaji Aszú are presented.

In the *Market as influencing factor in changes of style of dessert wine* section I display how the success of the producers of the modern style pressed other winemakers to change their methods.

In the *Recommendations to increase success* section I make suggestions which would increase recognition, appreciation and sales of the Tokaji Aszú both on international and local stages. The importance of the constant high quality and clear portfolio is obvious. The winemakers of the region need to invest into technologies which ensure clear, well-made wines in every style. These investments should enjoy priorities. The visualisation of the product needs more attention in many cases to please the consumers' eyes, and to establish confidence in the product. It would be essential for the region to centralize the marketing structure and the wine tourism. If the region can tell the story of the Tokaji Aszú to the potential consumer and can also educate wine drinkers about the product, the sales would definitely increase. It would have extreme importance to gather the participants of the sector into a well-functioning organization to set directions to drive the region out of the economic crisis.

In the *Conclusion* I recount the consequences gathered in the work about the level of the changes and the difficult present times. The direction might not be clear for every producer yet, however the influential winemakers' clear ideas get the majority of the members of the segment to follow them. The future of the Tokaji Aszú wine is in many hands. In the last few decades the region has seen more changes than in centuries before. These changes affect almost every aspect of the wine production from ownership structure to international marketing. These changes have influence on viticulture and vinification on a significant level. The ratio of the Aszú wines produced in modern style is increasing. It might be the future of the sweet wines of the Tokaji region. Today we have the chance to experience the unique speciality called Tokaji Aszú in both modern and traditional styles.