

Without the past, there is no future; about the need for teaching wine history in WSET Diploma courses

A history course is absent from the WSET Diploma curriculum. Yet, without the knowledge of the past, understanding the present is impossible. WSET students need to be familiar with the historical context of wine production, just as they must know the geography of wine regions, because it will provide them with a reference point for understanding the contemporary wine market.

This paper presents the proposal of a Wine History lecture designed for WSET Diploma students. A course of this title is taught by the author at post-graduate studies *Knowledge of Wine: Media, Market, Culture* at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. The ultimate reason for seeking historical knowledge is learning from past mistakes and identifying long-term processes which might imperceptibly affect the present world. History can also serve as a inspiration for marketing projects for whole wine regions and individual vineyards. Sources used for the lecture include general studies, conference proceedings, excavation reports, primary historical sources, media articles, as well as personal experiences and interviews with scientists and wine producers.

The paper is divided into an introduction, the main body, comprising three sections, and a short summary. The introduction presents the paper's objectives and cites examples of using historical knowledge in contemporary wine production. The main part begins with an outline of the Collegium Civitas Wine Knowledge course syllabus. The issues discussed there are listed so as to show the scope of knowledge required from students during exams. The list is followed by a description of methods used in wine history research.

The next part is focused on various examples of practical use for historical knowledge in contemporary winemaking. They include the return to traditional cultivation methods avoiding chemical pesticides and mechanization, and planting vineyards in places traditionally regarded as the most valued – and labor- and cost-intensive, such as steep slopes or artificial river terraces. Archaeological experiments in Sicily on the reconstruction of Roman vine-growing techniques show potential uses for modern producers. Examples are mentioned of reintroduction of old grape varieties in places they had once been popular, with commercial uses in Austria (Furmint in Rust) and Hungary (Kabar in Tokay). Using ceramic

amphorae for fermentation and maturation is a trendy technique that can bring commercial and image benefits, as shown by examples from Georgia and Europe. Also old ways of wine maturation can be implemented, such as underwater maturation that is used by an American winery which praises the ideally stable conditions.

A commercialization of archaeological and chemical research results is presented in the form of the recreation of a grog-like beverage from the tomb of king Midas, and of the oldest alcohol to date found in Jiahu (China). Tourism in wine regions is an obvious example of successfully using history for the promotion of wine industry. Finally, reference is made to past climate cycles which heavily bear on agriculture and can change the character of whole wine regions. In the face of the current dynamic climate warming it is particularly important to understand its impact in the past in order to minimize its adverse effects and look for potential benefits.

The last part of the paper contains an outline of a wine history lecture tailored for the WSET Diploma course. Compared to the original course, it was shortened and late modern history was omitted as it is discussed in lectures for Unit 3, focusing on individual countries. The time limit of 2–3 hours for the lecture dictated a concise form and selection of the most important issues. The narrative focuses on the emergence, development and then downfall of the wine culture spanning several millennia. It begins with the domestication of the grapevine in present-day Georgia in the 6th millennium BC. Then the role of wine in ancient civilizations of the Middle East and Egypt is presented, followed by the many aspects of ancient Greek relationship with wine, and then the unprecedented development and complexity of the Roman wine culture. The Middle Ages and the next few centuries are the period of formation of the wine world as we know it. Processes instigated at that time directly influenced the development of wine culture both in Europe and the rest of the world. The summary recapitulates the rationale for teaching history to wine professionals.