

Weinakademie Österreich

UNIT 7 THESIS ABSTRACT

(Prošek) – „He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named“

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The Italian sparkling wines Prosecco enjoy the rights granted by the protection of Designation of Origin since 17 July 2009. The production is restricted to Italy's north-eastern extremes of Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Just down the Adriatic coast, lies the Croatian region of Dalmatia, rich in winemaking history. Dalmatia is renowned for a wine called Prošek, a small-production dessert wine made from sun-dried grapes.

Per Council Regulation (EC) 1234/2007 of 22 October 2007, if an area of production includes a geographic place having the same name of the grape, nobody outside that area can produce a wine bearing a similar name.

As Croatia was preparing to enter the EU, former Italian Agriculture Minister, Luca Zaia, stated that Croatia must stop production of Prošek as a condition of its membership. Italian Prosecco producers are concerned that, the two wines might be confused. Names were declared too similar, and it was claimed that Prošek might mislead and confuse customers.

Prošek was not protected on national level and therefore could not obtain protection on EU level.

With Croatia's accession to the EU Croatian wine is not allowed to be marketed under the name Prošek anymore. EU Commission additionally allowed to all Prošek producers to sell all wine produced before July 1, 2013.

Prošek is produced from any one or a blend of several different varieties – white and red – indigenous to coastal Croatia. All those varieties can accumulate a lot of sugar given enough time to ripen and Prošek is made from grapes harvested with a sugar level of 110° Oechsle. The fully ripe grapes in perfect condition is hand-picked and let either on the sun or in the shade to dry further. The dried grapes are crushed and the must is macerated for 2-5 days, when the juice is pressed off the skins. Fermentation can be extremely slow – often lasting up to a year or longer. At the end you have a still wine with 13%-22% abv that has been aged in wood for at least one year. The resulting wine is thick, sweet, but well balanced by the acidity, characterized by the ripe aromas of dried fruit – dried apricots, dried figs and raisins

– and orange peel, as well as aromatic floral notes. Ageing contributes to its complexity, adding tertiary aromas of honey, caramel, toasted hazelnuts, toffee, vanilla and developing savory notes. Prošek can age for a very long time. The color can range from deep gold to amber, neon orange, maple syrup, and dark brown.

Grapes for Prosecco are harvested with low sugar levels and high acidity. The non-vintage wine is produced using the tank method, whereby the secondary fermentation takes place under pressure in large steel tanks. The idea is to “capture the fresh fruitiness” of the Glera grape and highlight the wine’s distinctive “icing sugar and lemons” character. The wine is then bottled under pressure to retain its carbonation and quickly shipped off to market. Prosecco is a sparkling wine with an average 11% abv. Depending on the level of carbon dioxide, Prosecco can be either *Spumante* or *Frizzante*. Styles include Brut, Extra Dry” and “Dry”. Prosecco is light, bubbly, delicately perfumed with notes of citrus, apple, melon, and spring flowers. Prosecco is simply straw-colored or light to medium yellow with a watery white rim.

Traditional Prošek is typically made by small, family-owned wineries, of which less than 30 are registered producers with an annual production of 15,000 liters – or 30,000 500 ml bottles. Prošek production equals less than 1% (.025%) of the total amount of wine made in Croatia and 0.006667% of Prosecco production.

Croatia filed an application to protect the term Prošek, but the European Commission requested that the Ministry withdraw said request. Not much is known about the EC’s request or why Croatia’s Ministry of Agriculture failed to explain the EC’s request to Croatian winemakers timely. For the time being, it is up to Croatia to get the ban lifted.

The two wines have nothing in common, but pride, mistaken perceptions, protectionism, and power often wins over common sense.

We confirmed differences between two wines, explored legal issue and set some recommendations for Prošek producers if they decide to go in legal battle for their heritage. Also, we defined roles of key Prošek stakeholders together with SWOT analysis.

To quote one of Prošek winemakers: "The winegrowers must get together and decide what to do. We can't give up".

Conclusion: take up that challenge!