

Russian wine education – national and international

Abstract

This paper explores the unique characteristics of Russian wine education in an international context. The research focuses on its historical development and current state, methodology, and structure, as well as its relation to the major European traditions and future possibilities.

The first chapter includes a diachronic analysis of the Russian wine education tradition. The analysis spans three main stages – prerevolutionary times (up to 1917), the Soviet era and the most recent period (after 1991), followed by a review of the current situation of the Russian wine education market. The examination of its development through history resulted in the following findings:

- The roots of Russian wine education go back to the 19th century
- The Soviet period turned the focus towards volumes of product output rather than the quality and wine finesse
- Contemporary Russian wine education is a young, developing system
- Due to the extent to which Russian wine education has borrowed from other traditions, there is little methodological difference between it and its counterparts abroad

The second chapter is dedicated to the case study of Millesime School in Saint Petersburg, Russia. It was treated as representative for this research because of its top rank on the market and the government certification that let the school award formal diplomas of continuing education. Thus, the results of the case study are used as a basis to examine and describe the particularities of Russian wine education in general. The following key topics were explored individually: school philosophy and approach, lecturing staff and the programs offered. Particular attention was paid to the professional course of the school – its theoretical and practical issues. The algorithm for tasting description developed by the school was compared with two major traditions: WSET SAT and the UDSF (Union of French Sommeliers) approach. The case study demonstrated the following conclusions:

- Russian Wine education has a derivative nature
- Russian tradition is developing in the framework of the English education approach (and particularly WSET)
- Methodologically, Russian wine education fits relatively seamlessly into the international context

The third chapter introduces the SWOT analysis exploring the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Russian wine education. It also highlights the general trends common for Russian wine schools:

- Growing wine market and increasing wine consumption are the forces defining the development of Russian wine education
- As a young developing system, Russian wine education easily absorbs the best of existing approaches, though at the same time demonstrates all the weaknesses typical of systems whose direction is not set or remains in flux
- The major risks of Russian wine education are associated with the actions of government and imperfect legislation

It is through this structure and analytical lens that the paper examines the particularities of Russian wine education and its position with respect to the international wine education tradition.