Analysis of the Argentina´s varietal plantation

Abstract_Weinakademiker final thesis

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Motivation for choosing the topic

It is striking that coming from a country with a strong culinary and wine culture as Argentina, I had almost disconnected from my gastronomy and wine roots, until the beginning of my studies. I started my path through the captivating world of wine, doing my studies as a sommelier in Barcelona, back in 2010. I spent more than half of my life in this city moved by a strong curiosity in discovering other cultures and different points of view. Since the very earliest beginning my colleagues assumed that I was an expert in Argentinian wines just because it was my country of origin. That was the reason why I felt the need to deepen the knowledge of this Country. I suddenly became an ambassador for several wineries, guiding wine tastings and giving lectures about Argentina in wine schools.

Since 2015, I have the honour to collaborate with the National Tourism Ministry of Argentina representing and promoting the country at international tourism fairs. It was during the preparation for those first fairs that I started questioning the sources I was finding. The information was not completely clear for me and above all I had serious doubts about the varietal planting strategies that didn't make sense for me and therefore I didn't feel comfortable explaining it to others. I found grapes typically coming from warm climates planted in cold areas and vice-versa, as well as the recurrent appearance of some varieties alongside the whole country. Furthermore, when studying for the unit 3 exam of my WSET Diploma, I found a lapidary phrase in the *World Atlas of Wine*: *"For a long time, there was relatively little discipline in matching grapes to local conditions"*. This was the final straw for me. I felt the need to analyze Argentina's varietal planting from an objective point of view. The result of it is in your hands.

Objective

This thesis offers to the reader a look back in order to understand the present of Argentina´s varietal plantation. In addition, it describes the main quality factors of the wine areas which focuses to the production of quality wines, and a close look at the mean temperatures during the ripening months, by zoning them using the *Winkler* index and analyses the varietal planting of each area. Furthermore, verifies the existence of matching between climatology and current varieties, to finally recommend grapes in search of diversity and originality in the plantation, in order to avoid self-competition and varietal repetitiveness.

Methodology

First of all, I did an exhaustive investigation collecting all the available information from the wine regions, even using official contacts from the ministries of each province. Surprisingly, there was not so much recourses due to the youth and the size of some areas and that is why this work will represent a helpful resource for future students.
After compiling and interpreting all the available information regarding quality factors and plantation from official sources, I used, on advice of the research and study centre "La **Bulli**pedia", the climatological page www.clima-data.org to measure all the wine areas of the country and the examples given from others wine countries. Then, on the one hand, I interpreted all climate data and calculated the mean ripening month temperatures to classify all regions following the job of Dr. Gregory Jones (*cool, intermediate, warm, hot*). On the other hand, I calculated the heat summation in order to classify the regions by the Winkler index (*IA, IB, II, III, IV, V*). Carrying out this procedure was not easy because writing all the information and the data increased the word count dramatically, therefore I had to cut out regions with a general focus on volume or bulk wine, and instead solely analyse the quality ones. Finally, with all the data calculated and exposed together with the varietal plantation, I have analysed the 3 wine regions and proposed new varieties, arguing with the recommendations of Dr. Gregory Jones and the Winkler index, as well as comparing and contrasting the local climate to other similar regions in the rest of the world.

Content

This paper is divided into several sections in which I have tried to expose the information in the most tidy, clear and easy possible way.
In the introduction: historical facts that mark the current situation of the country and catch the reader via my objectives and methodology.
Next, in sections 1 to 3, the main regions are ordered from south to north, **Patagonia**, **Cuyo**, **Northwest**, amongst provinces and departments are described and the end of each main region includes a final analysis with recommendations of a new grape plantation.
Finally, in section 4 I present the conclusions based on the most relevant points exposed throughout the work and in sections 5 & 6, respectively, sources and acknowledgments.
The last section, the Appendix which I strongly believe will be very useful for future students since all the climatic tables are exposed together with the calculations made by myself exclusively for the purpose of this paper, which gather mean temperatures in the ripening months with the heat summation and the *Winkler* zones.

Conclusions

Frankly, the conclusions have been very surprising for me and hereby, I will present an illustrative example: During the research, observing the high percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon in the cold Patagonia together with Pinot Noir, I was wondering: “why Cabernet Sauvignon is planted in such a cold place?”. In the conclusions of this thesis, it has been shown that most of Patagonia is not as cold as it was presumed, so the question now would be: “why is Pinot Noir planted in such a warm place?” In contrary, it has been shown that warm zones are not as warm when compared to other zones with the same condition on a global scale.

In addition, the effect of altitude and its impact on grapes planted under these conditions has been discussed, and alternative grapes based on a developed hypothesis have been proposed. Finally, a repetitive appearance of the same varieties has been observed throughout the country. This is a double-edged sword since there is a risk of decreasing success by focusing all energies on these grapes and cause unnecessary self-competition within the country. Consequently, I have made a series of grape recommendations based on the climatology, and the commitment to indigenous varieties in order to offer diversity and uniqueness to the current market, which is already very much competitive.