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Research Paper

# The Evolution of Wine Lists in Belgian Restaurants

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Word Count: 4765

Abstract:

Creating a wine list is an important responsibility in the modern day Belgian Restaurant business. Drinks make up an increasingly important part of Food and Drinks Business Revenue and Profitability. The methods, tools and evaluation of the list is key to any successful business.

However, Belgian Food and drinks business is rooted in tradition and the conviction that price-quality ratios are key. As most businesses are small with less than 5 persons employed, they have little means for internal data analysis and external data are expensive for the size of the enterprise. The enterprises rely heavily on the education and innate business acumen of the individual responsible.

The first chapter outlines two very different models for composing a wine list: "Tradition and Taste" versus "Peter Klose's "Foodpairing" theory. In the end, both are defective and offer only limited guidance to the restaurant wine buyer. They do show rationales for composing a wine list and contrast enough to prove both have practical ideas for the wine buyer to base decisions upon.

While the "Tradition and Taste" theory is quite vague but omnipresent, the "Foodpairing" theory proposes a definite number of wines necessary to compose a gastronomic wine list: seventeen.

The second Chapter analyses 5 wine lists from the '90s. As they were very difficult to obtain, it is impossible to imbue statistical meaning to the exercise. However, indications are very clear, as only the three star Michelin list has any references from outside France. And even in this list, French references compose 93% of all listings. The 7% include Port, Sherry and Madeira.

The Third chapter takes a deeper look at modern day wine lists. As only 25 are included and selection is quite personal, once again statistical significance should not be focused upon. But again, the distribution shows meaningful data. France has receded to 48% and only one Michelin star restaurant was included in the list. Remarkable details show up in the presence of German and Californian

wines that contrast to the sommelier convictions that the qualities of these wines are not disputed, their commercial potential is low. This indicates that the ruling “Tradition and Taste” paradigm is being challenged. The discrepancies between ruling convictions and taste preferences of sommelier and the weighted presence of references on the wine list, indicate that a balance has not yet been achieved.

In the conclusion these points are summarised, and relayed back to both flawed paradigms and to the initial question: define the guidelines for the composition of a restaurant wine list.

It is beyond the limited reach of this paper, but Both paradigms must be unified and then synchronised with market trends. Perhaps a marketing extension can be envisioned, but building a guideline founded in rational theory would be a success in itself.