

WEINAKADEMIE ÖSTERREICH

Thesis Abstract

The evolution of Vino Nobile di Montepulciano:
How to give this unique wine the attention it deserves.

Isabelle Lauwerys, May 2020

Motivation

Regularly working with Tuscan wines and more specific Vino Nobile di Montepulciano I always wondered why this wine found itself in a less favorite position compared to its neighbors Chianti and Montalcino. When talking about Tuscan wine few people spontaneously bring up Vino Nobile di Montepulciano. Even more, it is often regarded as lower in esteem compared to other Tuscan red wines. Books are written about Chianti and Montalcino alone but Montepulciano, if mentioned, never takes more than some lines in general wine books. In spite of high-quality wines being produced it is too often overlooked or misunderstood not only by end consumers but by wine authors and wine critics as well. Believing in the regions' potential I am therefore determined to identify the actions required to give this unique wine the attention it deserves.

Objective

The objective of the study is not only to explore Montepulciano's history and the factors that have led to its weakened position but even more importantly, to look for opportunities and strategies that can be elaborated to give Vino Nobile di Montepulciano a better recognition on the global market. This by searching for possible paths for producers to increase their popularity through innovative market development to reach end-consumers, wine critics and distributors. This research will critically analyze potential strategies and highlight possible bottlenecks as well.

Methodology

In order to get a full picture of the problems and possibilities for Vino Nobile di Montepulciano the thesis covers a broad field of research. Specialized literature and articles published in magazines were consulted. Although, as mentioned above, it was quite challenging finding information. A broad internet search was done, filtering out relevant information in the professional wine and trade segment. Tasting notes of wine critics were consulted and a multiple-choice questionnaire was made to reach the end-consumer as well. Interviews were conducted with producers, those active in the hospitality industry, in the distribution and the B2B sector.

Content

The introduction of the thesis demonstrates the lack of recognition Vino Nobile di Montepulciano producers encounter with their wines. The second part covers the historic background of Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, emphasizing on the key-features that had an influence on its recent market position. Overshadowed by its neighbors, I conducted research regarding their history and successes as well. Furthermore, I outline the confusion with the grape variety Montepulciano grown in Abruzzo.

The third section analyses the current situation of Vino Nobile di Montepulciano. The perspective of producers, distributors, sommeliers and consumers were listed and analyzed. Challenges faced by producers are highlighted and possible paths are suggested. The most current available data are used to stress the importance of future approaches. Marketing approaches are underlined emphasizing on why and how they should be implemented.

The last part of the thesis summarizes the steps to successfully reposition Vino Nobile di Montepulciano.

Conclusion

For too long Vino Nobile di Montepulciano relied on its past glories without questioning itself. While its competitors were innovative finding ways to position themselves on the global market, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano lacked investments, resilience and marketing skills. More than ever quality is remarkably high but because of the lack of a common commitment between producers and regional bodies they are unable to enter the market in a coordinated manner.

The identity crisis the region finds itself in can only be solved when a clear, uniform brand is being created. This means all parties should highlight the potential of sangiovese, this by decreasing the amount of other grape varieties. Furthermore, a compensation has to be made regarding the long and confusing name of "Vino Nobile di Montepulciano".

Without any doubt there are many opportunities for the region that, if implemented properly, will lead to international recognition. These opportunities are based on wine style, being a boutique wine region, sustainability, tourism, prize setting, the creation of a logo and focusing on targeted distribution channels.

It is crucial for Montepulciano to highlight its authenticity and point of difference by implementing up to date market tools and by informing end consumers and those active in the wine sector.

However, non-of the suggested strategies as delineated in the thesis will work if all local parties do not unite. Only when everyone involved is focused on the same goals, meaning realizing the same and all of the imposed suggestions, they can give this unique wine, once the pinnacle of Tuscan wine, the attention it deserves. Furthermore, in this rapidly changing, competitive environment producers and regional bodies have to be aware to react prompt and adequate to new trends and possible contenders.