

ABSTRACT

Corpinnat – Born in the heart of Penedès

Objective

To understand this new label and the whole sparkling wine industry in Spain. It is a very complex industry, consolidated and fragmented at the same time. Producers and vine growers are put under pressure because of the dominant focus on the low-end market. How can this industry evolve into a more balanced way, to grow not only in numbers but also in quality and reputation?

Motivation

I have been working for five years for the Spanish wine importer La Buena Vida in Belgium. Experiencing firsthand how the Cava category is suffering from a bad reputation with professionals, I wanted to understand the issues better. We are also working with Gramona, one of the founding members of Corpinnat. I have had the opportunity to visit them several times, and the work and vision they show for their product is inspiring. When I had to choose a topic for this thesis, it was very soon clear what it would be. I have noticed however that sommeliers are not always aware of what is happening these past years in this industry, not with the previous DO's and labels created and not with Corpinnat. So studying this topic is a way of understanding it more thoroughly for myself, but also to share this knowledge with sommeliers and wine lovers. When I can taste the wines of Gramona or other high-quality producers it is clear that these sparkling wines deserve more attention.

Methodology

I have used a variety of sources to deepen my knowledge about the current and past developments. By taking interviews with different actors inside this wine category, but also other wine experts closely linked to Spain I was able to get a good idea of what are the issues 'behind the scene'. The industry market reports gave me an analytical view with concrete numbers, although some company specific data were estimations, because of the lack transparency of the dominant producers.

I have also read plenty of articles from the local press, the professional bodies and international press and observers. I was able to find two research papers on the history of the Cava industry and have read two books as well.

Content.

1. Introduction: A short description with the main issues and objective of the thesis.
2. The Cava Industry: How did this industry start, how did it evolve and where is it now? The main bodies of this wine category, the legislation and the representation of the producers.
3. Identity crisis in Cava: The crisis the industry finds itself in, what are the reasons for these troubles? Describing the concerns in detail and the consequences it has on the industry today.
4. Corpinnat: The creation and development of this label. Who are the producers and why have they stepped out of the DO Cava? What are their intentions, production methods and challenges to face?
5. Is Cava ready for a change?: The DO Cava as well is evolving. What can we expect and what is standing in the way? Can they turn the page and bring this category in a better day light?
6. Conclusion: Personal view on the study and expected outcome for the sparkling wine category in Spain.

Conclusion.

The sparkling wine industry in Spain is in a transition, but it will take time and a common vision.

The Cava industry is dominated by large producers and their focus is on quantity instead of quality. To change this the regulations must change and although there are good propositions on the table, it will be difficult to concretise all of them. The zonification of Cava is key to its future development. If the majority of the production remains generic, changing the general image of Cava will be very difficult even with more marketing budget.

Corpinnat in turn is very much focused on quality and here the challenge is to communicate this to the professionals and consumers. It needs to grow in numbers and producers to have a stronger impact and the financial means for marketing. Too many labels and DO's cause confusion for the consumer, there is a need for unity. If they create a new DO together with Clàssic Penedès and more quality minded producers join, this can indeed be the new reference for quality sparkling wines in Spain.