



Counterfeiting,
Global warming,
the Chinese market:
just some of the issues
discussed during the World
Symposium. And there were
also tasting sessions of fine vintages

SPIRITO di VINO

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Italian style for wine's elite

di Mario Moreschi

It is not known whether Caroline of Brunswick, the Princess of Wales and bride of King George IV of England, was a wine lover, but she would certainly have appreciated the World Symposium taking place in her Villa d'Este. The princess acquired this symbolic Lake Como property in 1815 and Villa d'Este is known internationally as an exclusive Italian location that hosts famous and important world personalities from every sector. In this case, they hail from the world of the nectar of Bacchus. The Villa d'Este World Symposium is an authentic G7 for wine where the best global producers of quality labels meet for a long weekend in November in this magnificent location on Lake Como with journalists, experts, critics as well as a select group of enthusiastic consumers to tackle historic, social, economic, political and cultural issues relating to wine. Monsieur Francois Mauss is the patron of the event and president of the Gran Jury Europeen: he is a consultant and organiser of events and for three years he has been working on the concept of the global wine symposium: "Wine is an expensive product and has a rich history and culture, so we needed a high level charismatic location for an annual meeting of the various components of its supply chain", explains Mauss. Amongst the most noteworthy issues dealt with during the course of the 2013 Symposium, was that relating to the global increase in temperature:

the risk associated with global warming is a decline or even an extinction of the traditional wine-producing regions by 2050, as a result of a gradual movement of vineyards towards cooler latitudes in the north. This very movement could lead to an extinction of the vineyards unless they are replaced by genetically modified more resistant varieties. But the position of the French in this regard is well known: I remember the angry reaction of some vigneron from Burgundy to the experimental GM vineyards that were designed to resist lower temperatures. They simply removed the grafted grapevines without giving the matter a second thought!

The step from the theory in the seminars to the practice of wine-tasting is a very short one with a series of bottles that are in keeping with the quality of the event: in the Veranda Room there were tastings of Alain Vauthier's Château Ausone, the Rieslings of Egon Muller (7 years: Scharzhofberger Auslese 1959 and 1971, Scharzhofberger feinste Auslese Eiswein 1966, Scharzhofberger Spätlese 1983, Scharzhofberger Kabinett 1990, Scharzhofberger Trockenbeereauslese 2005 and Scharzhofberger Kabinett 201), a chronological Château Cheval Blanc tasting conducted by Pierre Lurton for eight years 2000, 1994, 1990, 1989, 1982, 1975, 1969 and 1967, or the four years 2005, 1999, 1985, 1979 of Romanée St. Vivant and the Echézeaux of Romanée-Conti for a journey through four dec-

Overlooking Lake Como, one of the most romantic lakes in the world, Villa d'Este (above) is surrounded by a private park of 10 hectares. The 16th Century villa, that was constructed as the summer residence of Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio, was transformed into a grand hotel in 1873. Today it has been completely refurbished. To the left, the corridors of the cardinal building.



It is an expensive product which has a rich history and culture

ades of the Domaine presented by Aubert de Villaine. The development of the Eastern markets has meant that the boundaries of circulation of fine wines such as these have been extended but they have also increasingly become subject to the risk of counterfeiting. As confirmed by Kelly Walker, a permanent member of the Grand Jury Européen. “The problem of fakes is a very topical one, especially with bottles like the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti - the home page of the official website of the DRC has a pop-up which contains a warning about this problem-, as is the growth of the Chinese market, which has been offset partially by an increase of local production”. China and its growing market, the main relief valve of the saturated European market, was then the topic of discussion – and it could not have been otherwise - of an ad hoc seminar entitled “Approaching the Chinese market”. This was conducted by the director of Business Development of the Sopexa Group and former director of Sopexa Beijing, Catherine Etchart, on the basis of her experience in the country.

To add to that there were more tastings from highly respected producers such as Trimbach, Dohnoff, Bonneau de Martray, Podere Forte, Szepsy, Tenuta Argentiera, Domaine Taupenot-Merme. Further tasting opportunities were presented by aperitifs, lunches and dinners: I remember from all of these a Charles Heidsieck Rosé N.V. and two other special wines that are amongst my favourites: Riesling Clos St Hune Trimbach 2007 and Roberto Voerzio riserva 10 anni Fossati Case Nere 2004, two real stars.

With regard to the producer from the Alsace, Jean Trimbach has clear ideas on the event: “The symposium confirms its status as a unique experience. This is the place for excellent meetings between winemakers, gastronomes, entrepreneurs of all types and collectors, who are united by a single passion”. For Renzo Cotarella, the managing director of Antinori, it is “a nice event where the pleasure of the relationship with wine can be experienced enthusiastically and not necessarily in a technical and professional



manner”. Rossana Gaja, following in the footsteps of her father Angelo Gaja, is responsible for the Italian market and the Pieve Santa Restituta estate in Tuscany, speaks highly about the seminars: “It was interesting to take part in the various seminars, with topical issues. The symposium is a container of ideas and provides an opportunity for constructive debate”. Egon Muller, another Riesling personality, whose winery is in Mosella, appreciates the practical side: “I very much like organising the multiple tasting sessions in Villa d’Este because I always hear very valid opinions and even unusual points of view from such a diverse panel”.

“A growth which can certainly be seen in new markets where the nectar of Bacchus is also being propelled by its fashionable status”, commented Antonio Galloni, a highly influential American of Italian origins, former associate of Robert Parker and now the owner of Vinous. “It is also true that in consolidated markets like the United States the growth in consumption is taking place especially through fine wines on offer in restaurants. Fine wine that require a degree of culture to be identified: “There is an increase in culture surrounding the world of wine, combined with passion and emotions”, explains Paolo Baracchino, a lawyer from Florence, and an historic member of the Grand Jury Européen who fulfils a notarial function by certifying the tasting processes and ensuring that bottles are served correctly during official events. Even Orazio Vagnozzi, another permanent member of the Grand Jury Européen, and collector of rare vintage wines

- he invested his first salary in 1982 acquiring en primeur a case of Château Lafite 1982 - is on the same wavelength: “The new generations are more knowledgeable than the older generations. Today people are more informed drinkers. Even supermarket chains have realised this: the quantity is decreasing in favour of the quality of the wine. In fact, global consumption of wine has not grown since 2000 – as it is still at 200 million hectolitres – with a shift in demand from West to East”. Less but better. 🍷

Directly above, wine tasting in the Veranda Room of Villa d’Este. Above left, holding the microphone, Francois Mauss, patron of the World Symposium (right, during the event) and chairman of the Grand Jury Européen: he is a consultant and organiser of events. He spent three years working on the concept which brings together the best global producers, sector operators and enthusiasts.



1. The beautiful driveways and gardens of Villa d'Este. 2. Antonio Galloni. 3. Romanée-Conti is always the centre of attention: the four years of Romanée St. Vivant and Echézeaux ready for the tasting in the Veranda Room. A journey of four decades of Domaine recounted by Aubert de Villaine (4.). 5. Marcello Fratini. 6., 12. and 21. Guided tasting session. 7. Federico Zileri. 8. Egon Müller. 9. Bottles of Richebourg and Grands Echézeaux del Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. 10. Robert Voerzio. 11. Jean Trimbach. 13. The halls and corridors of Villa d'Este also host statues of Italian sculptors like Canova and Prestinari. 14. Cécile Bonnefond. 15. Egon Müller's Riesling in the seven years presented for the tasting. 16. Pierre Lurton. 17. Paolo Baracchino. 18. Catherine Etchart, business development director for Sopexa, conducts the seminar "Approaching the Chinese market". 19. Laurent Vialette. 20. Christian Roger. 22. Jean-Charles Le-Bault de la Morinière. 23. Orazio Vagnozzi.