

2009 - WORLD TOASTINGS QUALIFIED BY SPUMANTE WINES MADE IN ITALY. BUBBLES ARE NOT FORGONE, ESPECIALLY ABROAD. PRESENT IN 74 COUNTRIES. AN INCREASE IN WORTH OF 12 %.

It's been nearly a century and a half since the first bottle of *made in Italy* spumante wine was uncorked. 330 million "spumante" wine bottles have been consumed this year, 155 millions of which in Italy and about 100 uncorked just for New Year's celebrations. Export has been rising sharply, with increases of about 2 figures in the past three years, witnessing a recognition of the identity, value and commitment of producers to offer greater and greater quality.

The world of Italian Bubbles Wines is not "standardized", rather it highlights the peculiarities and differences in typology and character of every wine and every territory. A heritage of varieties, grapes, products and labels to oppose to the one-sidedness and single-label volumes of other areas in the world. The monopolies that allowed foreign producers to stand like giants over the past 50 years can no longer be maintained in today's subjective, private, individual market. On the other hand, spumante wines success must not induce to forget the need for innovation, marketing policies, identity pursuit, knowledge of all national products. There are 278 codes of production allowing to make spumante wines, nearly all of them without any compulsory policy about method and rules.

Italy. National production is rising. Asti and Prosecco are leaders. The Italian sparkling wines differ from all others in their wide typological wealth and in the huge range of their niche products. The Italian regions producing at least one spumante are 20, and 278 the Docg-Doc allowed to turn out at least one brand, for a total of about 345 million bottles. Asti Docg classes first, with slightly over 80 million bottles produced, followed by Conegliano Valdobbiadene Doc Prosecco, with 50 million bottles. As to the Classic method, leadership is neatly shared by Franciacorta and Trento, with 11 and 9 million bottles, respectively. Definitely in top position Spumante Prosecco, whether Doc or not, with 110 million bottles (30% of total amount), traded by 450 wine houses. Lombardy itself nearly reaches 18 million bottles of classic method (60%), over an overall 27 million. Veneto is the first Italian region in terms of production. Italy is the 3rd world producer, with 305 million bottles that pertain to the Italian (or Charmat) method.

Italian Market. Consumption data consolidated. 165 million bottles consumed in the year, about 10 million of which from France and Spain. In the gift sector, Spumante sales grow (+ 7%) and Champagne's are steady. Franciacorta and Trento lead in restaurants, wineshops and gift sector. Asti proves the undisputed king with traditional desserts, focusing 88% of total consumption at the end of the year. Glass wine consumption has increased by a significant 15% at winebars and restaurants. Goblet wine consumption has increased by a significant 25% at wineshops. 72% of home consumption is still concentrated between Dec. 10 and Jan. 6 (it was 84% in 1980). Price comes first in choice motivation at restaurants, both for spumante and still wines; it scores second in presents purchases at wineshops and delicatessen, replaced by packaging and brand at the top of choice motivation, while price is the last reason for choosing goblet wine consumption.

Export. So many toasts abroad featured by Italian bubbles. Nearly definitive the data (sources: customs bureaux, importers, exporters, firms, Ice, Istat, revenue office) signalling an increase in export, both in value (+12%) and size (+15%), a 1,850 million euro turnover and 173 million bottles dispatched in a year. Among the best performers, in terms of value and consumption, once again Great Britain, with a 14% increase, and the USA, with +12%; Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Austria and Sweden fare well, all between + 5 and +3 %; extraordinary the data from new countries such as Russia, India, Brasil, Uruguay. 74 countries import Italian spumante wines. On the European market, Germany keeps the leadership and the UK confirms the two digit positive trend of latest years.

For the first time, export surpasses home consumption. Italy 2nd world exporter. The European home market with 27 countries takes up 70% of total export. The Asti denomination has the primacy, with 62 million bottles in 60 countries. "Talking" labels support consumption; as a matter of fact, they contribute to de-matching and de-seasonalizing at the table, as well as spreading information about this type of wine, still not well known. It is necessary to take information straight to the consumer and send the message, on any occasion, that bubbling wines are everyday wines, to be drunk with any dish, at any time, for a snack as well as on a specific anniversary. Sales abroad fare better and better because, says Comolli: " *Italian spumante wines represent today's and tomorrow's way of drinking, being moderate and less alcoholic*".

Germany, one market chosen at random. It is the first country in the world for production and consumption: 480 million bottles produced and 600 consumed, with a national average of 6 bottles per head;

it imports 140 million bottles, over 41 millions of which from Italy, equal to a turnover of about 200 million euros, for 20 million bottles of Prosecco Spumante, whether Docg-Doc Conegliano Valdobbiadene or non-Doc, and 17 million Asti Docg.

"This means – says Giampietro Comolli, wine-economist and patron of the Italian Economic Bubble Wine Observatory (Osve© www.ovse.org) – that the world market acknowledges a greater value than in the past to Italian spumante wines, new markets are being acquired because of the consumers' falling in love with it, we are becoming the competitors of products even more titled, because today the world market is squeezing prices downwards and the brand "Italy" is a thriving one."

The case of Champagne, an evolving myth.

Many a French magazine are announcing that Champagne is facing a moment of great upheaval. On the one hand, a world market looking for products competitive for price, quality and origin, on the other hand a yield of vineyard plots growing dramatically. As a consequence, production costs are no longer proportionate to consumption prices. Great brands and leading labels are for the moment out of a superdiscount war, but the danger of a downwards spiral may be looming. The Champagne Interprofessional Committee estimates sales on foreign markets to - 20%. *" I think – says Comolli – it would be quite useful to ponder the world market situation before we take decisions at home, we have to appraise choices and signals from those who are more experienced than us, at least as far as our classic method is concerned, which has a separate life from charmat".*