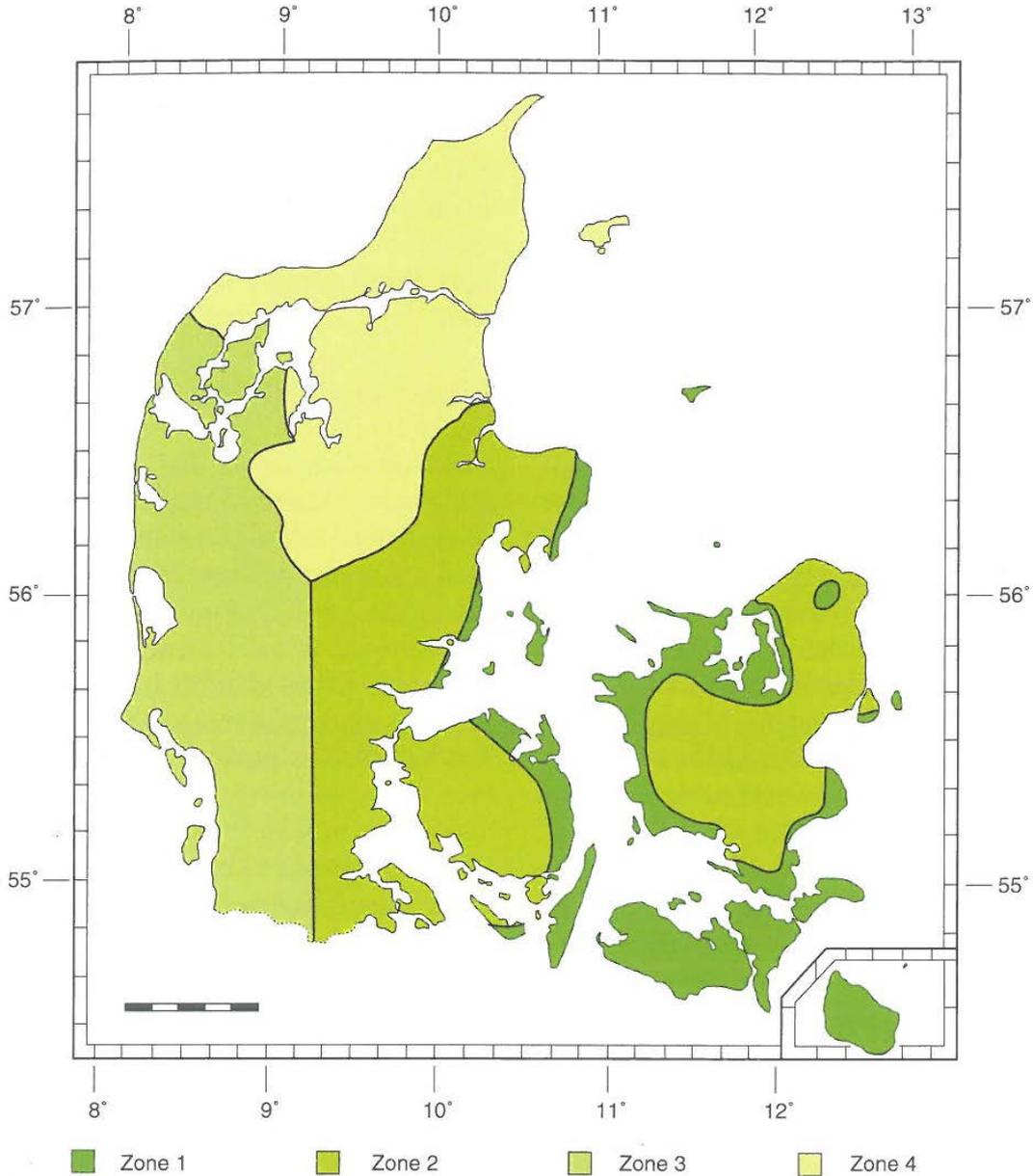


Denmark! How Cool Is That?

Quality Opportunities in a Cool Climate



Hans Werge

Candidate No. 10039055

Abstract

Motivation for choosing the subject

Being a Danish wine enthusiast with a love for many different wine styles and a curiosity for trying new things, I wanted to get to know the wine production and wines of my own country deeper. Traditional wine literature provides basically no knowledge of Denmark as a wine producing country, so I thought the writing of this thesis was a nice opportunity to investigate the current conditions in Denmark. Further, having worked professionally with wine for the past 15 years, and only experiencing success in the sales of Danish wine in the past year, I had grown a curiosity for investigating the opportunities of quality wine production in Denmark and their positioning in the market. My company experienced the lowering of prices of good Danish wines, without a drop in quality, and this helped sales a lot on the way. Why is this? Given the northern latitude of Denmark, I also wanted to explore the possible challenges presented by the climate; Is it in fact too cold to produce world class wines in Denmark?

Problem/objective

The objective of the thesis is to explore the opportunities – if any – for the production of quality wines in a climate as cold and rainy as the Danish. Hence the Title: Denmark! How cool is that? Is it in fact too cold for the production of quality wines? If not, what styles of quality wine can be made? In answering these questions a relevant spectrum of commercial Danish wine producers was visited and interviewed; one dedicated red wine grower, one grower with the ambition of producing red wines in the warm vintages and sparkling wine in the cool vintages and two dedicated to the production of both sparkling, white and red wines. Further, it will include the studying of the Danish climate and comparing it to the generally accepted minimal requirements for temperature and sunshine to allow for the production of quality wines. Additionally, it includes findings, experiences and research by the Danish Vineyard Association.

Methodology

The research methodology for the thesis include on-site winery visits and interviews, tastings of multiple Danish wines to allow me to form my own impressions and opinions, reading and studying two of the few books, that have been written on Danish wine and a book more generally about cool climate viticulture and enology. Additionally the Oxford Companion to wine has been studied as has multiple web sites and two magazines, one Geographical publication and one published by the Danish Vineyard Association.

Content

The content of the thesis starts with a short introduction to the wine related history of Denmark, the acceptance of Denmark as a wine producing country in the EU, and a quick overview of the current state of the Danish wine producing scene.

Then the climate of Denmark is investigated in detail concerning heat, sunlight, precipitation, wind and the risk of spring frost. The country is divided into four quality growing zones based on their climatic conditions and is compared to important, well-established regions of Europe; Champagne, the Ahr Valley and Mosel.

Based on winery visits and tastings, the wine styles produced in Denmark are investigated, and the thesis describes some of the most important grape varieties grown in Denmark. Further, the quality and potential of various different wine styles are discussed, as is their performance and success in the market.

Finally, a conclusion on the current state of the Danish wine production is attempted.

Conclusion

The thesis concludes that Denmark is certainly very cold compared to the established growing regions of Europe, though the other climatic parameters can be close to ideal with careful site selection. There are styles, that command premium pricing already now, and styles that are qualitatively successful, yet difficult to produce economically sustainable.

The conclusion of this thesis is thus, that the future of Danish wine is uncertain. With the current temperatures of the growing season, Danish wine will remain a niche, that will only produce near outstanding quality levels at best and only in the warmest growing seasons. This is economically unviable as a steady income cannot be guaranteed. Economic considerations are made further difficult from the fact, that two styles of wine Denmark produces successfully every year, are hard to make money from. However, with increasing understanding of site selection and global warming to heat up the growing seasons more than they are today, Denmark may end up being more than a niche in the future. This thesis advises that if you are to pursue an economically sustainable living off wine production in Denmark, you should pursue the production of traditional method sparkling wine, and in addition to expertise of quality wine production, you should bring a healthy dose of patience and optimism.