

Abstract for the thesis:

The Znojmo Riesling Revival An Exploration of the Local Terroirs, Wine Styles and Marketing Approaches

Znojmo is both a wine region and a city with a long history of quality wine production in South Moravia, the Czech Republic. Since the fall of communism in 1989, the country and the region have undergone extensive improvements so that today, a range of high quality single-vineyard wines from Riesling and from a host of other grape varieties are commercially available. Such a revival was used as the inspiration for this paper.

The objective of this thesis is to answer the following questions:

1. How can the terroir of the Znojmo wine sub-region in the Czech Republic be described?
2. Does the expression of Znojmo terroir in top single-vineyard Riesling wines result in being able to:
 - a. distinguish between Riesling wines from individual sites from each other within the Znojmo region?
 - b. readily identify a regional style and character that can be identified in blind tastings with Rieslings from other wine regions?
 - c. be considered at the same level of quality as Rieslings from other renowned wine regions from abroad?
 - d. give a detailed description of a distinctive style of Znojmo Riesling generally?
3. What implications do these results have on the way in which Znojmo wines are categorized by the local appellation laws and the way in which these wines can be marketed to the final consumer.

Professor Cornelis Van Leeuwen of Bordeaux University defined terroir as: “*the set of interactions between the vine and the climate, soil and human management*“ Based on this definition, Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this paper are assigned to examining the interactions between the vines planted in 3 outstanding vineyards of the Znojmo wine sub-region and their interactions with the climate, the soil and human management. Section 5 presents and summarizes the original research of this paper that addresses the questions in part 2 above and is based on a series of blind tastings conducted by a panel of wine professionals. Section 6 use the results of this research to suggest ways in which the marketing of Znojmo Rieslings and other wines from the region can be improved.

The climate of South Moravia and the Znojmo wine sub-region is cool and continental. The 3 vineyard sites under examination, namely Šobes, Weinperky and U Tří Dubo are all planted on South to South-East slopes of 210-300m above sea level which maximizes the amount of sunlight captured while creating a high diurnal temperature range which favours the production of fresh white wines with high aromatic expression.

One of the main impacts of soils on terroir is that it can induce limiting factors that favour quality wine production. These limiting factors include a limited supply of water and

Nitrogen to the vine that lowers vine vigour and favours a more open canopy. This in turn helps prevent disease and favours a more complete and uniform ripening of the grapes.

The Šobes and Weinperky vineyards are planted on poor, rocky soils that are capable of creating a limited supply of water to the vine and thus contribute in part to the quality of the resulting wine. Water can also be a limiting factor in the TY duby vineyard, but here, it is due to the high drainage associated with very sandy soils.

Soils with poor fertility and with limited water supply may improve wine quality, but balance is needed. This is why some of the management practices include the building of terraces to prevent excessive soil erosion and the use of irrigation in particularly hot summers. In good years, natural yeasts are used in the winemaking, which requires very judicious use of chemical sprays towards the end of the growing season.

Based on a series of triangle tests, it appears that the Znojmo single-vineyard wines can be distinguished from each other in difference testing. This occurred in 4 out of 6 cases and even though this type of test only proves that a difference exists, but not what the difference is, a strong case can be made that it is the terroir expression of the wines that is creating the difference.

In the second part of the tasting, Znojmo Rieslings received very similar scores to those of other cool climate areas such as Luxembourg and Switzerland and only slightly lower scores than the Rieslings from the Mosel, Alsace and Wachau. This suggests that the quality of Znojmo Riesling is competitive with some of the best Rieslings in the world. In addition, in 3 out of the 4 flights, the Znojmo sample was correctly identified, suggesting that Znojmo has a shared regional character that is distinctive.

In section three of the tasting, quantitative descriptive analysis was performed on smalls flights of wines in which Rieslings from Znojmo and other renowned wine regions were compared. Znojmo Rieslings seem to have a slighter higher level of floral intensity than the other regions. Mosel wines follow a similar profile although tend to be higher in fruitiness, persistence and maturity. Both Wachau and Alsace have higher scores than both the Mosel and Znojmo on most of the components, but especially for acidity, body, persistence, minerality and kerosene. It appears that Znojmo produces light-bodied, delicate and floral Rieslings and have more in common with Mosel Rieslings than with the more powerful and full-bodied Alsace and Wachau Rieslings.

It is noteworthy that the Czech Republic and the Mosel share, not only similar wine styles, but similar quality classificatons based on must weight of grape juice and residual sugar levels in wines, whereas Wachau quality classifications favour dry wine production according to level of alcohol while Alsace wines favour a vineyard-based classification, with the option of making dry, off-dry or medium-dry and medium-sweet wines. It seems that perhaps experimenting with drier styles of wine production as well as establishing a hierachy of vineyards may be some lessons that the Znojmo wine industry can learn from when it comes to making improvements in the future.

Despite the fact that there is a long way togo before Znojmo can be declared a reliable, high quality Riesling producer, it does seem that there is a bright future ahead with plenty of potential.