

## CHIANTI CLASSICO'S STYLE EVOLUTION. WHICH STYLE WILL SUCCEED?

WSET DIPLOMA, UNIT 7- Thesis

### ABSTRACT

#### 1. Motivation for choosing this topic

Currently Chianti Classico as a wine-making region is a hot issue – from total modernisation by the beginning of 2000s, characterised by a significant improvement of quality, to introduction of Gran Selezione category that has provoked a lot of debate on the new classification. The dynamically developing area invites to make a deeper analysis and study the diversity of styles and the trends. The author is a wine importer, carrying among fine wines several Chianti Classico producers in the portfolio, and a big lover of Chianti Classico.

#### 2. Objective of the Thesis

The objective of this thesis is to study the arduous development of Chianti Classico as a region and its wines, looking through changes in their composition and style. Analysis of current trends and near future of Chianti Classico wines, on the way to which there are challenges to reveal and to break through.

#### 3. Methodology

The author carried out a research of different sources: various internet resources, articles of the wine magazines Decanter, Wine Spectator, Harpers, books of wine journalists and wine writers specialising on history, winemaking and wines of Chianti Classico, Tuscany and Italy – Hugh Johnson, Nicolas Belfrage, Maria Salemi, Stephen Brook, Ray Flower, Sheldon Wasserman, Jansis Robinson and others; e-mail and personal communication with several producers, e-mail correspondence with the Chianti Classico Consortium, personal experience from different tastings, wine trips to Tuscany, visiting and tasting at Antepima Chianti Classico in Florence in Florence in 2016.

#### 4. Content

In the introduction the objective of the thesis is stated – to explore multiple faces of modern Chianti Classico, well-known as a brand name, but uncertain perception of the wines, need of consumer education

Outlining current trends and possible future of the style of Chianti Classico, the composition strategy that might eventually prevail. Sangiovese as a noble and outstanding variety, capable of producing on its own wines of elegance and finesse.

**Demarcation of the territory:** brief overview of the birth of the region as a wine producing country; Baron Bettino Ricasoli and his formula of Chianti Classico; 1904 – first Chianti Riserva produced by Antinori

**Territory changes:** foundation of Consortium in 1924; Commissione Dalmasso of 1932; expansion of the historical zone.

Resetting of borders in 1967, main communes and their brief overview

### **Development of the region in the 50s-beginning of 70s**

Annulment of mezzadria system, stop of share-cropping; 60-s flooding of Chianti Classico with new names – a lot of acquisitions made;

High-yielded clones of Sangiovese in favour; focus on quantity; quality plummeting; resulting style of Chianti - thin wines with no ageing potential.

### **The region and the style of wines in 70-90s**

Restrictive DOC practices –appearance of super-tuscan wines, some of them 100%

Sangiovese – giving examples. Goria Law – VdT elevated to IGT level: an upgrade of what?

### **Era of influential winemakers**

The new wave of winemaking, emphasis on the work in the winery, period of innovation, international taste bringing a change in the style. Outline of a few prominent oenologists: G. Gambelli, G. Tachis, F. Bernabei, M. Castelli etc.

**Legitimate formation of Chianti Classico:** brief overview of all regulatory changes in the composition of Chianti Classico from 1966 till 2006. Consortium's role in the recent development of Chianti Classico - **Chianti Classico Project 2000** and

Initiated by the Consortium in 1987 to modernize viticulture in the region and improve the quality. On research grape varieties, rootstocks, planting density, vine training, soil management, clonal selection. A lot of innovation for the producers.

### **Chianti Classico revolution: the year 2013**

New hierarchy with Gran Selezione; challenges for consumers.

### **Chianti Classico of 2000s. Challenges for a consumer**

Discussing multiple facets of Chianti Classico: three definite styles - with addition of foreign grapes / with addition of local grapes / 100 % Sangiovese

Big producers as well-known names conducting the quality to the market. Uncertain perception of the wines. Necessity of consumer education to be oriented in a wide array of producers and diversity of styles.

### **Current trends and possible future of Chianti Classico.**

Outline of current trends: remarkable improvement of quality, more frequent use of autochthonous grapes, organic farming, reduced yields, respect for the environment, move towards terroir-driven wines, back to traditional winemaking.

### **Pure Sangiovese as a successful strategy**

Sangiovese as an outstanding variety, one of the most versatile grapes, adapted to a variety of soils, capable to produce on its own wines of depth, length, finesse. Best of Sangiovese in examples.

## **5. Conclusion**

Based on the literature and internet research, communication with winemakers and personal experience the author sums up the factors of Chianti Classico's centurial development, current trends from Chianti as a style of wine to Chianti as an origin of wine, making a conclusion on pure Sangiovese as possible future of Chianti Classico style.