

# The position of “Grüner Veltliner” wines on the Belgian market and what can be done to improve the “brand awareness”?

## Introduction

Wines from Grüner Veltliner, Austria's indigenous grape variety, are white wines in different styles matching particularly well with food. In countries like Germany, Switzerland and the USA a very good brand awareness of the Grüner Veltliner wines can be observed. Belgium is still behind on this point. But we have very well informed wine connoisseurs and a gastronomic culture which offers a lot of opportunities to improve the market position of this style of wine.

## What about Grüner Veltliner?

In this paragraph I describe the Grüner Veltliner as a grape and tell more about what it has to offer. It is by far the most important grape variety grown in Austria. The Grüner Veltliner wines are mostly dry giving a quality spectrum sweeping from light wines, over classic medium-bodied to very opulent and concentrated wines. Some sparkling and sweet wines complete the spectrum.

The creation of 3 regional classifications called “DAC's” provide, according to Willi Klinger from The Austrian Marketing Board, clarity and definition in the jungle of Grüner Veltliner styles. Others do have another opinion about this.

Austrian wine exports exceeded all expectations in 2007. It appears to have been the most successful export year ever. Austria's most important export market is by far Germany followed by Switzerland and the USA. Belgium is far behind our neighbouring country, the Netherlands, where the import of Austrian wines is more than a tenfold in volume and value of what we see on our market.

## How to improve the brand awareness of Grüner Veltliner in Belgium?

Here I describe the actual perception of Grüner Veltliner in the different Belgian market segments.

**Supermarket** chains think Grüner deserves a place on the shelves. Only one is quite active, others explore the Belgian market for Grüner now.

Grüner is not very well presented in **the Off-trade (retailers and caviste)**. We have one retailer specialized in Austrian wines present in all segments of the market. Only few retailers import Austrian wines and when they do they don't see the need to enlarge the portfolio because they see Austrian wines as a niche product. Some offer a representative range of Grüner Veltliners and are putting a lot of effort in convincing restaurant staff to put Grüner Veltliner on their wine list. Every now and then there is a restaurant owner that becomes a Grüner addict and wants also the more classic and powerful styles.

Belgium has a gastronomic culture. In the **On-trade (sommeliers and restaurant staff)** Grüner Veltliner is available if an up-dated sommelier is around. Some even serve it by the glass in a menu or as wine of the month.”

A distinction should be made between *Top restaurants and Wine restaurants* where Grüner Veltliner is well established. In *Trendy restaurants* there is interest but no consolidation. *Classic restaurants* are the biggest group of restaurants in

Belgium and there is definitely a lack of information about Grüner Veltliner. And despite the fact that Grüner Veltliner marries well with all kind of food it is rare to find an Asian, Turkish or Greek restaurant serving Gruner. Belgium has a broad education platform for wine. **Educators and Wine consultants** need to be informed in the best possible way. And finally **the ultimate wine consumer**. Myths are still going around and they need to be informed that Grüner Veltliner can be found at all price levels.

I also give some strategic choices to improve the brand awareness of the grape by setting targets for each defined segment of the market.

We should reach the ultimate wine consumer by indirect actions.

The objective for **retailers** should be to convince more of them about the benefits of Gruner. Those having Gruner in their assortment yet must be supported better so they make the switch to active promotion. New retailers need to be urged to start having Gruner in their portfolio.

**Sommeliers** working with Gruner should be given more profound information and young sommeliers should become acquainted with the different wine styles of Gru Ve and how they can match a broad variety of food dishes.

Those restaurants working without a sommelier, for whom the wine menu is often created by the retailer, should be informed why the retailer puts Gruner on their menu and how they can recommend it to the customers.

As soon as the consumer gets to know the wines in the horeca, the potential market for **supermarkets** will grow too and the wine buyers should be prepared.

When all three targets above have the Gruner wines in assortment, the availability of the wines will increase and actions targeted directly to the consumer can improve and consolidate the position of the Gru Ve on the Belgian market.

Finally I give an overview of what can be done to improve the image on a larger scale by joint actions across different sectors.

An **information point** in Brussels should be more than a restaurant but also a place where the Belgian professional and consumer can find out more about Grüner Veltliner. Also the *website* from The Austrian Wine Marketing Board should be promoted. Newsletters can be send out personalized for the first 3 target groups.

Create some independent “**Austrian Wine Educators**” who could help in their own country and language to promote Grüner Veltliner. These ambassadors can organize courses and wine incentives for the wine educators in Belgium with study materials from the Austrian Wine Marketing Board.

Education packs, tasting boxes, leaflets for wine department staff and retailers, wine drip mats with a speaking slogan for bars and brasseries and a teaser to bring all audiences to the website of The Austrian Wine Marketing Board are the main objectives for **promotion materials**.

All kind of **events** could be organized on small an large scale to convince the whole wine minded population in Belgium that Grüner Veltliner isn't merely trendy, but rather has a permanent place in the pantheon of important grapes, and a prominent place among food's best friends.

All this will give Grüner Veltliner a better position on the Belgian market assuring a growth of 10% within 5 years time.