

THE POTENTIAL OF PICAPOLL NEGRE IN THE DOQ PRIORAT

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ABSTRACT

THE MOTIVATION FOR CHOOSING THIS TOPIC

DOQ Priorat is one of the most famous Spanish appellations in the world. Each year, this small area draws more and more visitors and wine enthusiasts. All of them want to discover the history marked by the Carthusian monks, its authentic growing environment, and extraordinary wines.

The different grape varieties are the carriers of all these singularities that we find into a glass of Priorat wine. Grenache Noir and Carignan are the main players but there are other minor varieties like Picapoll Negre.

As a producer in this appellation, I always wonder myself why these minor grape varieties have a diminished role in our area. Picapoll Negre is a grape variety documented in Priorat since 1629, it had an important role in the area before the three American plagues but currently it is unknown even by the professionals.

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the DOQ Priorat uniqueness and the Picapoll Negre local history and its characteristics. Based on all this background, the project determines the potential of Picapoll Negre and how it can contribute to the added value of this Catalan AOC.

PROBLEM/OBJECTIVES

In a globalized wine world in which only 13 wine grape varieties account for almost 40% of plantings in the world, minor grape varieties could have more relevant role providing eccentricity and personality to the area.

Climatic change can modify the behaviour of wine consumption also wine styles. Exploring minor grape varieties can help out to face these tendencies. Furthermore, new generations even wine drinkers like to discover new grape varieties and wine taste is constantly evolving. Could Picapoll Negre have an important role in the DOQ Priorat as a grape variety? Do producers use it as a distinctive value? Many questions come up to me and I would like this thesis answers almost all of them.

METHODOLOGY

Firstly, I compiled all the information founded about Picapoll Negre in Spain and France. Not too many documents are available because it is not widely grown. The information used for this project come from different fields: history, viticulture, winemaking, and marketing being all of them related with the DOQ Priorat and this variety.

All this background has been used to determine the potential of the grape variety in the growing environment of Priorat and its winemaking. SWOT method has been developed to summarize the most important strengths and opportunities in terms of marketing and sales.

Some interviews have been done to different people, all of them working in the wine world but at different stages (grape growers, producers, sommeliers, wine journalist and wine amateurs). Their visions give a realistic approach to the role of this grape variety today.

CONTENT

The thesis is composed by different sections:

1st part introduces us the DOQ Priorat. This appellation is divided in 12 "Villages" (aka "Viles") showing differences relating to altitudes, temperatures, and rainfall but with a common soil locally known as "Llicorella".

2^{sd} section shows the long history of Picapoll Negre in Catalonia and in Priorat. The first document in Priorat about this variety dates to 1629, in which the Carthusian monks mentioned it.

The 3rd part exposes the agronomical characteristics of Picapoll Negre: budburst, maturation period, fungal diseases, and its attributes.

Next, section 4th, evaluates through a SWOT, the potential of this variety. It reveals the strengths and opportunities.

In the 5th part, the author assesses the possible added value of this variety to DOQ Priorat.

Finally, the author concludes in which a personal point of view and recommendations are done for those producers thinking in this historical variety.

CONCLUSION

Picapoll Negre is a historical grape variety rooted in the DOQ Priorat since XVII century. It shows a very good adaptability to the growing conditions of the area, but it is important to select the sites where it is established (warm and well aired sites with dry and poor soils) and the fungal diseases management.

Currently, it has an insignificant role in the DOQ Priorat, being only 0,4 hectares declared and limited knowledge about it is offered. Only few nurseries in the world offer Picapoll Negre plants. All these difficult the culture of this grape variety.

Picapoll Negre can contribute to singularity and identity, keeping diversity and wine heritage. Furthermore, it shows a favourable performance against the climatic change. Being a minor grape variety and used to produce high quality wines can increase the added value and marketing, increasing the final profit.