

Abstract

Rare and unusual blends attract wine lovers' and collectors' attention all over the world.

Despite the high prices, there's always a demand for these wines. Quantities are always minuscule, some bottles are difficult to get even in the region itself. It brings additional charm to the topic. From a different point of view, forgotten champagne grapes, called "les cépages oubliés" in France, are on the verge of extinction in Champagne, and the author always wanted to find out the reasons.

The motivation for choosing this topic.

With champagne sales being increased by 20% in 2019 in Ukraine, 90% of sales represent the Brands (Grande Marques), with growers holding a tiny per cent. Wherein the customers' are willing to get more exciting flavours, and they are ready for experiments.

The decision to conduct research dedicated to rare and "inferior" grapes of Champagne came after numerous trips to the region. The wines were perfect, but sometimes even the professionals lacked the knowledge on them.

The project aims to evaluate the situation in the region, and how it all corresponds with the results of personal research, undertaken with the help of the world-known ampelographers, historians, oenologists, CIVC, wine scientists and experts, wine importers and a number of vinegrowers and Champagne Houses.

Problem / objective

Climate change seriously affected Champagne. Though it is indisputably the golden age for the region nowadays, the forecast for the future decades is challenging. Acidity goes down, while alcohol increases. Champagne needs new solutions, and one of them might be in a comeback to forgotten grapes, due to their longer ripeness and high acidity levels.

This project aims to study "inferior grapes" and make a conclusion regarding its market potential and perspective in the reality of global warming.

The steps being taken to conduct the research (methodology)

The primary research section reveals the author's findings and analysis of the data.

To gain a greater understanding of the situation with the rare grapes and Meunier, why rare grapes were abandoned and if there a possibility for their return, as well as the potential for 100% Meunier champagne, the research was conducted in three stages:

- Secondary research: gathering and reviewing existing secondary sources to understand the history, consequences, current situation and market potential;

- Primary research: searching for primary documents relevant to the aims of the paper – correspondence with the winegrowers, champagne distributors, the results of the blind tasting;
- Data analysis: evaluation of the current situation on the grounds of statistics and business reports.

The author faced problems with the information sources, as the advent of COVID-19 made impossible travelling, delivering the wines to Ukraine, and finally communication with the growers as they were busy in the vineyards (it was forbidden to attract the labor externally, and growers had to count on themselves).

The author requested but was not granted access to the technical information of the Grande Marques, noting they were reluctant to share this kind of data.

CIVC provided access to the vines archive, and they were very kind with sharing information on the growers cultivating “forgotten grapes”.

Jose Vouillamoz contributed significantly, sharing the sources necessary. The major part of ampelography literature was in French.

There also was challenging to organize a blind tasting, due to prohibition for mass gatherings and lack of bottles necessary in Ukraine. It was possible to arrange at the very last days.

Content

Despite the difficulties mentioned, the author managed to gather a significant volume of information, from history through the vines and terroir, to marketing strategy suggestions and impact and consequences of global warming. With the new information coming, and new reports being published, the situation in the region got worse, as 2020 is going to be the year with unprecedentedly low champagne sales.

The author analyzed all incoming information and gave recommendations on the sales and marketing strategy.

It is all outlined in the body of the thesis.

Conclusion

Although the research was conducted under extremely tough conditions it precisely reflects the current state of affairs with the inferior champagne grapes and outlines the roadmap for these wines to notably contribute to the fame of the region.