

I was lucky enough to be born in one of the most beautiful places in Italy: The Valpolicella.

I have decided to focus my Wineakademiker thesis on the main protagonist of the economic growth in the Valpolicella in the last 30 years, a wine with a strange name but easy to pronounce: Amarone. A wine famous all over the World, with a very interesting story to tell and unique organoleptic characteristics that come from native grapes dried for months.

The *appassimento* method has been one of the keys to the domestic and international success of the complex, intense, full-bodied Amarone in the last 30 years.

Recently, consumer trends have gradually moved towards more aromatic, fresh wines, lower in alcohol and tannins. On the contrary, many Amarone wines, particularly due to global warming, have reached levels of alcohol never experienced before.

Therefore, nowadays, the focus of a local winemaker is no longer on must weight but mainly on the grapes' acidity levels at harvest and the full maturation of the grapes in terms of ripe tannins and aromas.

This research aims to explore the impact of climate change upon the *appassimento method* in Valpolicella and how the drying process could still play a key role for the success of this wine.

The methods I used for my research are based on qualitative and quantitative datas, collected interviewing some of the most important winemakers in the Valpolicella Classica area and collected in the web, newspapers, wine magazines and wine books. All datas have been, in a second stage, analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods.

The content of my research is divided into 4 main points (chapters):

- 1) The origins of the *appassimento* method and how it developed in the Valpolicella Area: from its beginnings to the present days;
- 2) The three main phases in the production of a high quality Amarone. Production, drying process (traditional, vertical and modern) and vinification;
- 3) The reasons behind the success of the Amarone in the last 30 years;
- 4) The impact of global warming on the winegrowing of grapes in Valpolicella and on the *appassimento* method. How to continue to play a key role for the success of Amarone.

As a conclusion of my research, there is no doubt the drying process will continue to play a key role in the success of Amarone in the future.

Shortening the drying could never be the only solution to limit alcohol levels or residual sugar of Amarone because an excessive reduction would limit its complexity.

In the modern *appassimento* system, when drying is speeded up due to increasing air movement in the drying rooms, the accumulation of sugar levels is more stimulated.

Corvina will continue to be the backbone of Amarone also in the future and, with an increase in global warming, there is no doubt that the historic and traditional hillside wine-growing areas, such as the classic Valpolicella, have a greater resistance to adversity and weather changes than the vineyards of the recently planted areas

Last, the key to limit the level of sugars in the grapes dedicated to *appassimento* is to be found in the canopy management. Investing in research for sustainable irrigation, new heat and drought rootstocks and innovative drying processes, will be crucial for the Amarone producers to succeed in the near future.