

Motivation for choosing the topic of this thesis

My interest in wine grew during the wine courses I took, and it is now an important part of my life. As my wine education progressed, my interest in wine grew, and I began to explore new wine regions. I developed a particular interest in the wine region of Barolo. During these wine courses, I learned that Barolo was regarded as one of Italy's greatest wines, and possibly one of the world's greatest wines, alongside Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Chianti Classico. However, it was never a particularly detailed topic in study guides like Burgundy. So, when I decided to investigate and begin reading about the region, I discovered it was quite complex, with all of the different communes and their associated styles, as well as the communes that can be subdivided into smaller subregions known as MGAs (Menzione Geografica Aggiuntiva). I wanted to learn more about these subregions, and particularly what the relevance of these MGAs within Barolo are.

The objective of this thesis

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relevance of MGAs within Barolo.

With the introduction of the MGA classification in 2010 the Consorzio of Barolo and the Barolo producers wanted to clearly define the boundaries of the vineyard's districts.

The MGAs are small subregions within the communes of Barolo. In addition to Barolo, wine labels can feature these smaller subregions. However, without an official hierarchy, it can be difficult to determine whether wines with MGA designations indicate that the wines produced from these vineyards are of higher quality, or if they simply indicate that the sourced grapes come from a smaller part of the region. What is the added value of the introduction of the MGA classification for the Barolo producers and does this classification lead to a more recognizable label for Dutch consumers?

Methodology

To give an answer on the question: what is the relevance of MGAs within Barolo, a qualitative research is conducted in the form of literature research about the Barolo MGAs, such as books and websites. Furthermore, quantitative research is conducted through surveys and interviews with various producers to gain a better understanding of the differences and relevance of these MGAs.

A survey among producers who support the MGA classification was held, as well as one of the few who still make Barolo in the traditional way, blending multiple vineyards rather than bottling each MGA individually. With these results there is tried to achieve a better understanding of these MGAs from various producers' perspectives.

In addition to the surveys with the producers, a survey with the Consorzio of Barolo is conducted, which is the organizing body that meets the needs of the producers and protects the regulations and winemaking laws.

To get a better understanding of the Dutch market with regards to the MGAs, interviews are being held with Dutch consumers and importers.

The content of this thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a clear view of MGAs through the use of literature and the perspectives of producers, Consorzio, Dutch importers and Consumer

The first section of the thesis contains additional information about Barolo, beginning with its recent history over the last 50 years, and the shift from producing Barolo in the traditional style to bottling single MGA Barolo's, followed by a brief overview and explanation of the legislation.

This thesis then introduces and identifies the communes of the Barolo region based on their soils. Furthermore, there is an explanation about the soils and aspects within a single MGA, and why these MGAs cannot be considered as a Cru or single vineyard due to their size, and why these sizes vary. Then there is a brief discussion of the differences in Barolo wine labeling.

The final section of this thesis discusses the producers' opinions on MGAs, the opinions of Dutch importers, and the knowledge of MGAs among Dutch consumers.

Conclusion

The findings of this thesis revealed that the producers do not regard the MGA Barolo as a higher quality wine than their Barolo classico. However, Dutch consumers clearly perceive MGA wines as of higher quality, and they are willing to pay more for a Barolo with an extra mentioning because they believe that this wine is of higher quality.

Furthermore, there are varying opinions on how the MGA classification was established, and some producers and importers believe it would be preferable to have a quality-based classification rather than categorizing all MGAs in the same quality hierarchy.

This thesis also revealed that the MGA classification, which was introduced in 2010, is thought to have increased consumer interest and improved sales. However, efforts must be made to increase Dutch consumer knowledge in order to gain a better understanding of Barolo MGAs.

As the results of the surveys and interviews with producers and Dutch importers show, I believe it would be wise to create a classification based on a quality hierarchy, similar to Burgundy, in order to create a more identifiable system for consumers. Use this to increase an already high-quality wine region to the next level.