

Vinitaly US Tour 2011: Between Tradition and Innovation

N. L. (October 20, 2011)



Italy in 2010 was the biggest exporter of wine in the United States, the largest market worldwide both in terms of volume and value. Vinitaly in the World analyzes the keys to this success and how it can be maintained finding ways to innovate, taking advantage of opportunities arising from new technologies and trends.

First the good news: in 2010, Italian wines exports to the U.S. reached a total value of \$1.26 billion, with a market share close to 30% (in 2000 the value of exports of Italian wine was \$570 million with a share of 25%) and with a total volume of almost 2.5 million hectoliters of wine (+8% compared to 2009), overtaking Australia.

A success all the more important when you consider that the United States is not only the world's leading market but also an increasingly mature and knowledgeable one with 20% of regular users (increased from 10% in 2000 and 16% in 2009) and with a strong affinity for the latest technology use of the internet and social media to discuss and keep abreast of the market and wine world.



Quality or competitive pricing? Old favorites or new products? Brunello or Franciacorta? Tradition or innovation?

These are just some of the questions being asked on how Italian wine can keep building on present success in the United States. Through seminars, such as the one at the Italian embassy in Washington on October 17th: "Taste for quality: the success of Italian wine in the United States," moderated by Stevie Kim ([Vinitaly International](#) [2]) with a panel of industry experts: Lorenzo Galanti ([Italian Embassy USA](#) [3]), Michael O'Brien (General Counsel, [Palm Bay International, Inc](#) [4] & [National Association of Beverage Importers](#) [5]), Ettore Nicoletto ([Santa Margherita Wine Group](#) [6]), Alfio Moriconi, ([Total Wine & More](#) [7]), Marilisa Allegrini ([Allegrini Winery](#) [8]) and Matteo Lunelli ([Ferrari F.lli Lunelli SpA](#) [9]), the Vinitaly US Tour, attempts to find answers to these questions and consequently help producers develop future strategies adapted to the U.S. Market.

The seminar tried to synthesize Italian wines' success factors such as: the wide selection it can offer at every price range, its popularity as the perfect wine for food & wine pairings, its appeal related to Italian lifestyle. This and many more are the reasons that have made Italian wine the most popular on the tables of Americans. However, the main question remains: how can Italian producers maintain their lead, in an increasingly competitive environment that has seen a gradual but substantial change of wine consumers and consumption habits in the United States?

The "new" habitual consumer is young ("Millennial" or "Generation X", 18 to 45 years), not only consumes wine during meals or in restaurants but also at home with friends, likes to identify with a certain type of lifestyle, is tech-savvy and uses the internet not only to make online purchases and to research, discuss and talk about wines on social networks, blogs and discussion forums.

How can we improve the current distribution strategy, marketing and communication for Italian wines in the United States? What should be introduced? How can Italian wines innovate whilst remaining true to their origins and anticipate future market needs?

An example is the market for sparkling wines. In 2010 imports in this sector increased by 25% compared to 2009, reaching \$625 million (an increase in volumes to 570 thousand hectoliters (+18.8% on 2009)).

And Italy? In 2010 the U.S. exported a total value of \$130 million (21% market share) an increase of 11,7% over 2009, while France, Australia and Germany increased by 31%, (respectively, 39,6% and 31,6%).

The spumante market is "booming" despite being hit the hardest by the recession in 2008 and our producers may have failed to make full use of it, or perhaps only partially so, given the significant growth of export volumes from our country, from 150 to 187 thousand hectoliters.

This indicates that Italy has increased sales of sparkling wine but at a lower average price, thus

highlighting a gap to be filled on the high-end market, which will requires a greater communication and market penetration effort.

Innovative strategies, marketing and new technologies? Can the image of Italian wine be "updated" without being distorted?

Solutions? Media, Social Networks, Blogs, packaging, investing in distribution channels (large importers and wineries), Wine Lovers, Italian-Americans or Italians known to American

audiences, Wine Enthusiasts, testimonials in the television, radio and film arenas are initiatives that can not only increase public awareness but also give a better understanding of the extraordinary world of Italian wines and would be a few ideas worth developing and implementing.

Merging theory with practice, the Vinitaly US Tour, continued on October 19th in New York at the



Metropolitan Pavilion, with seminars to complete the discussions on the issues raised: How to build your business in the U.S. market, The influence of Social Media in the wine market, the impact of technology on the market and online sales, as well as tastings of Morellino di Scansano, "Volcanic Italy" wines from Soave and Etna, and "From the Alps to the Mediterranean sea," a journey through Italian wine regions.

The tour concluded with the event "Italian women in Wine," opened by Italy's new Consul

General in New York, Natalia Quintavalle. Organized for the second year in a row by the [American Cancer Society](#) [10], this event raised \$45,000 last year. Participants had the opportunity to meet famous Italian wine-producing women including: Marilisa Allegrini ([Allegrini](#) [11]), Elisabetta Geppetti ([Fattoria Le Pupille](#) [12]), Camilla Lunelli ([Ferrari](#) [9]), Cristina Mariani-May ([Castello Banfi](#) [13]), Daniela Mastroberardino ([Terredora](#) [14]), Francesca Planeta ([Planeta](#) [15]) and actively contribute to the fight against cancer.

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