The World of Italian Autochthonous Grapes

and the unveiling of the list of these grapes selected for the “Commemorative Bottle: 150 Years Of Italian Unification” project

Global wine production amounts to 300 million hectoliters, 60% of which comes from the European Union. In total, Italian wine represents 17% of global production and 30% of EU production.

According to the Associazione Enologi Italiani, the number of wine growers in Italy stands at 670,000. They produce a wide variety of products, ranging from the most prestigious wines to be served at special occasions to the simplest wines for everyday consumption.

Every year Italy produces some 47 million hectoliters of wine, 33% of which has a Designation of Origin, 27% has a Geographical Indication, and 40% bears more generic labeling. Wines that have a Protected Designation of Origin (denominazione d’origine protetta - DOP) number 382 in total. Of these, 330 are also DOC (Controlled Designation of Origin) and 52 are DOCG (Controlled and Guaranteed Designation of Origin). IGT and traditional local wines number 119.

Italy is a boot-shaped country extending out to sea, protected to the north by the high Alps, and crossed longitudinally by the mountains and rolling hills that constitute the Apennines. Its position and the interplay of geographical features such as mountains, hills and the sea create specific climates and micro-climates that are particularly suited to grape-growing. It is not surprising, therefore, that Italy has been known for thousands of years as Enotria or the land of wine.

Indeed, Italy is the only country in the world in which vines grow almost uninterrupted from the extreme North to the deepest South. Its tapestry of vineyards is one of its most characteristic features.

Vines and therefore wines represent a common thread running through and linking the various territories and thus the 20 different Regions of Italy, creating a fabric of traditions, culture and history that are quintessentially Italian.

For this reason, Giorgio Napolitano, the President of the Italian Republic has given his enthusiastic support to the proposal put forward by Ettore Riello, the President of Veronafiere and Vinitaly, to create two bottles of wine to celebrate
the 150th anniversary of the Unity of Italy: one bottle of “Italian White Wine” and one bottle of “Italian Red Wine” to celebrate the history, traditions and culture of Italian viticulture.

The wines in these two bottles are the result of the blending of 20 white wines and 20 red wines, obtained using autochthonous grapes from each region of Italy.

The wines were selected and fine-tuned by the Associazione Enologi Italiani, the Italian association that brings together and represents enologists and experts in the wine sector.

Each of these bottles, therefore, is a concrete expression of the unity of Italy: a product – wine – that symbolizes the traditions, culture, art, technology and industriousness of its people.

These bottles of “Italian White Wine” and “Italian Red Wine” are the only official wines that will be used to celebrate the 150th anniversary of national unity. They have been approved by the President and officially recognized by the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic.

The packaging represents the colors of the Italian flag. The green represents the vineyards that extend throughout Italy and are the raw material from which the wines are made. The commemorative bottles will be presented to the President of the Italian Republic who will in turn present them as gifts to eminent world leaders. The “Italian White Wine” and the “Italian Red Wine” are officially available in three formats: a jeroboam (three liters), a magnum (one and a half liters) and a standard bottle (0.75 liters).

The bottles themselves are unique, as they were specially designed by the renowned Italian architect Aldo Cibic under the creative direction of Riccardo Facci, as were the label and the packaging. Thus, while the creativity was very much in line with ancient Italian tradition, the inspiration was decidedly more contemporary and personal, in a style reminiscent of the clean lines of Giorgio Morandi’s famous paintings.

The shape, the labels and the contents of the bottles will be revealed at the official presentation which will take place in Rome.

As mentioned earlier, the wine itself was crafted by the Associazione Enologi Italiani and is equally original and unique.

The “Italian White Wine” and the “Italian Red Wine” were both created using a combination of 20 autochthonous grape varieties and thus each single Region is represented, as are each of its Councilors for Agriculture.

The wines were tasted and evaluated by a dedicated panel of expert enologists nominated by the Associazione Enologi Italiani. The Association
then decided what percentage of each wine would be used to compose the final blend. The final wine will soon be bottled and left to age for a brief interval before being presented to the Italian President.

The white wine represents a blend of wines made with autochthonous grapes that were harvested in 2009 and have not undergone any ageing or process in contact with wood. The red wine, on the other hand, was made from vintages ranging from 2005 to 2009 that have also been aged in wood.

Giuseppe Martelli, the President of the Associazione Enologi Italiani, guarantees that the wines are of high quality and express the right balance of nobility and personality.