



OPERA WINE AND THE SILK ROAD 4.0

At the preview of the prestigious Vinitaly, the spotlight was on China. Because it is on the best moment to invest here and Italian wine makers can't waste this opportunity

Considering the extraordinary tools that the digital revolution has provided, it is mandatory for the Italian wine sector to 'travel the Silk Road' once again. The opportunities that a country such as China can offer our country's wine makers today, is extraordinary.

This was the main theme throughout the sixth edition of **OperaWine, which is an exclusive event dedicated to the top 104 Italian wine producers** that are selected by the prestigious American magazine Wine Spectator, and which precedes the opening of Vinitaly by one day. The honourable host was **Stevie Kim, managing director of Vinitaly International, who identified in China** "a 'challenging-market' where Italian wine registered promising growth last year equal to 33%."

WINE SPECTATOR'S ENDORSEMENT OF ITALIAN WINE

While China might represent the future, the United States represent a safe and secure harbour for Italian wine exports. This is according to **Bruce Sanderson and Alison Napjus, senior editors for Wine Spectator**, which is an American magazine that is considered, by many wine experts and producers in both Italy and around the world, as the wine Bible. During the year, 20,000 wines, of which thousands are Italian, are tasted and reviewed. "Italian producers have enormous

talent. They know how to work while respecting their territories," state Bruce and Alison. Americans' favorites you ask? Well that depends on the taste of those that try the wines, of course certain icons can't be overlooked. Alison Napjus declares, "If you like Tuscan wines, then **Antinori** could be your favorite, while there are **Allegrini** for Venetian wines and **Mastro Berardino** for those that love wines from the South. Then there are also the real rock stars,

such as **Emidio Pepe**, a small producer that is known the world over." Wine Spectator looks to France, as well as Spain, after OperaWine and its 100 best labels. Sanderson says, "Wine Spectator is actively busy with wine from all over the world, not only wine from the United States of America and California, but also from other imported countries like Italy, France, and Spain. Every country has a different type of wine to offer and Wine

THE 1919 GIANT IS 'THIRSTY' FOR ITALIAN WINE

The 1919 giant is thirsty for Italian wine **Robert Yang, president and CEO of "1919"**, was the indisputable protagonist of the sixth edition of OperaWine. 1919 is the Chinese giant of online and offline (more than 1,000 stores in the entire province) distribution that has urged Italian wine makers to accelerate the internationalisation process towards the Chinese market. "It could be the last train towards the East," warns Yang, "and your country can't afford to miss it. The competition is fierce. France, Australia, Chile, New Zealand, and Spain are present, and they make trade policies that are more invasive and more solid than yours. Italian wine is not among the top five yet and needs to roll up its sleeves and get to work if it wants to create a larger space for itself. **Chinese consumers are very familiar with Italian clothing and cars, but not with**

wine, which is one of the better choices to pair with traditional Chinese cuisine. Chinese also like to drink while eating." According to the executive, this is one of the best moments to invest in China. "We are aiming to reach at least 500 million renminbi for Italian wine between online and offline sales with no less than 2 million bottles sold of which at least 1 million will be 5 star wines."



Robert Yang and Andrew Tan with Stevie Kim



CHATTING WITH THE MAIN PROTAGONISTS

Everyone has the same stand and the same visibility. All concentration is placed on tasting the 104 exceptional selections chosen by Wine Spectator; no distractions are permitted. Some have been there since the first edition while some are there for the first time. All agree that OperaWine is an enormous opportunity for them.

Fratelli Tedeschi are playing on their home turf as it is one of the historic companies from Valpolicella. The radiant and proud **Sabrina Tedeschi** says, "We have been present since the first edition and I think that it's the result of all the hard work that we have put in through the years. Behind OperaWine is Wine Spectator, this therefore, means working to produce a high quality wine and to obtain a score that will allow us to be chosen again." From Veneto to Tuscany with **Giacomo Neri, owner of Casanova di Neri, an agricultural company:** "We've been chosen since the first edition and this is an enormous satisfaction because it confirms our constant quality through the years. I have immense respect for Wine Spectator and for the work it does in the United States

and around the world of promoting wine." And his Brunello on the Silk Road? "The United States and Canada continue to be the best performing markets; South America is growing and Asia is slowly but consistently increasing by small steps." Among the ever present players come endorsements of territories that are less noble or known such as **Colli di Luni in Liguria with the company LVNAE.** Diego Bosoni, son of Paolo the owner, is in charge of the commercial and communications side of the company and sees it like this, "it's recognition for our company, the work we do to enhance the vineyards which are native to the territory, as well as a means of promoting our territory." Lorenzo, owner of **San Martino**, is also excited for "our first time at OperaWine," and is aware of the wonderful opportunity for his company and its territory in being selected: "I hope that my presence, as well as Elena Fucci's, can contribute to getting **Aglianico's** name out there. It is one of the most important wines in Italy but is penalised by a territory that doesn't move much. We are doing well internationally in both the United States



and Northern Europe. As far as China is concerned, it's a very large market and in order to penetrate it we need to have a territory that supports us and allows us to penetrate the markets of the elite." As we move to the South, **Carmelo Morgante**, owner of the Sicilian company by the same name, is at OperaWine for the first time and feels it is a big opportunity. "We have a strong presence in the United States, but the Chinese and Koreans are moving here today and tasting my **Don Antonio 2012...** I'm certain that also thanks to the synergy with Wine Spectator we'll reach excellent results in new markets." We close with the words of Elena Pantaleoni, who entered the top 100 with an orange wine such as **Ageno**, "I was thrilled and proud that Wine Spectator and Vinitaly decided to insert a wine as particular as Ageno."

Spectator is busy discovering them." **Thomas Mathews, executive editor of Wine Spectator**, reassures those worried about Trump's administration's protectionist actions by saying, "**Good wine makes good friends, therefore the wine industry won't suffer political changes and Italy will continue being in first place for imports in the United States.** The sparkling wine market, created and supported by prosecco, will always thrive, although new players may arrive such as **Lambrusco, Moscato, and Franciacorta.** Furthermore, noteworthy years, such as **Brunello 2012 or Barolo 2013**, will be brought."

THE 20 NEW ENTRIES OF OPERAWINE'S TOP 104

Cooperativa Produttori Barbaresco, Cantina Antoniolo	Piedmont
Cantina Santadi	Sardinia
Tenuta di Biserno, Rocca delle Macie	Tuscany
Cesari, Gini, Zymè	Veneto
Garofoli	Marche
Gosjean	Valle d'Aosta
Vie di Romas	Friuli Venezia Giulia
Tenuta delle Terre Nere, Morgante	Sicily
Salvatore Molettieri	Campania
Antinori with Tenuta Castello della Sala	Umbria
Elena Fucci, San Martino	Basilicata
La Stoppa, Tenuta Pederzana	Emilia Romagna