

A Match Made in Heaven



The Close Bond Between Wine, Food and Regional Identity in Italy

Alan Tardi, CSW Society of Wine Educators Virtual Conference October 15, 2021

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What constitutes a *good match*?



- Complementary, harmonious
- Brings different elements together in a way that allows them to retain their integrity while creating a more compelling interaction
- Wine + Food pairing: Inherently different substances that complement one another
- *Good Match*: When the wine and the food taste better together than they do on their own
- But there are more than two participants....

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WINE

FOOD

PEOPLE

PLACE

3

ITALIA

Numerous examples of very close and very diverse inter-connections of wine, food, place & people

- Alps to Africa: Huge diversity of climate & topography from north to south
- Coastal to Continental: Surrounded by water on 3 sides
- Influences from east, west, north & south
- Old & New: mosaic of 20+ independent and radically different city states
- Retain individuality even after 'reunification' of 1861



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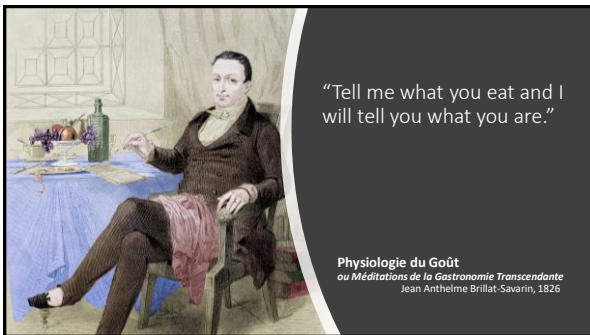
ITALIA

Wines + traditional dishes of a given area = cultural/individual identity

- Makes Members part of a distinct local culture & community
- Visitors can also explore and participate
- Inherently close connection between wine, food and people:
- *Who we are is closely connected to what we eat and drink*



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"Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are."

Physiologie du Gout
ou Méditations de la Gastronomie Transcendante
Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, 1826

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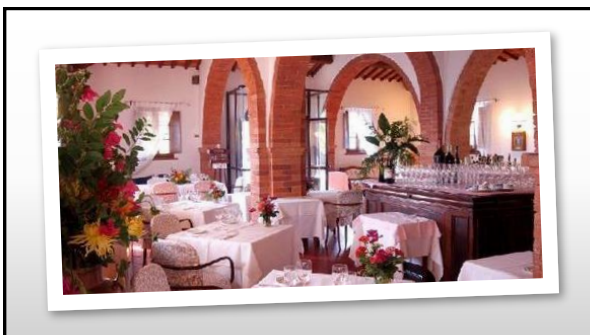
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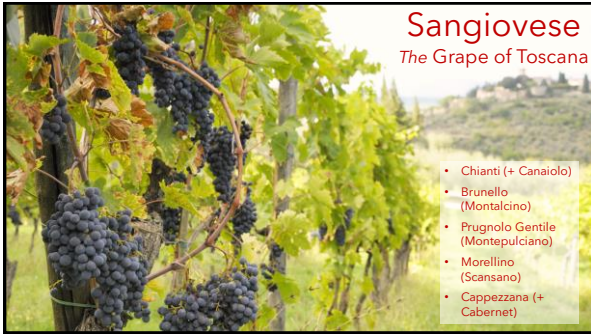
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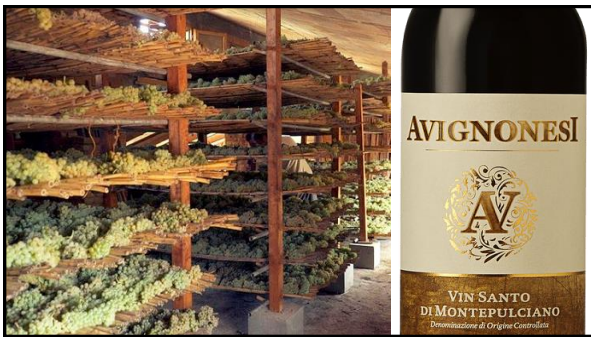
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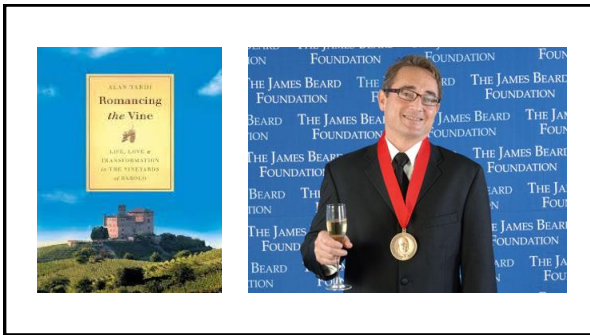
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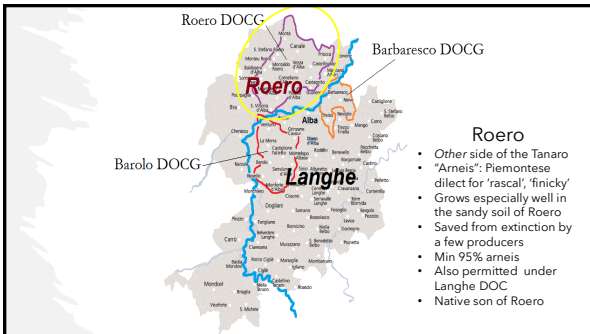
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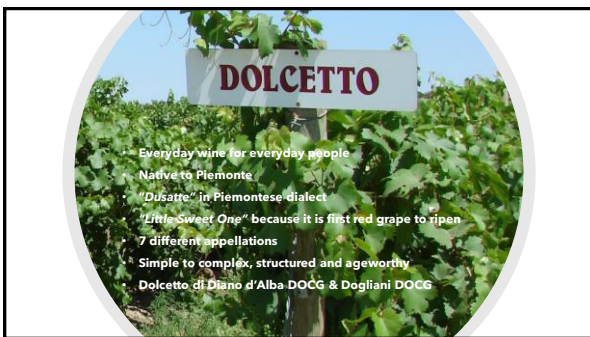
NEBBIOLO

- From Piemontese *Nebbieu* ("fog")
- 100% nebbiolo for Barolo & Barbaresco
- Other names: Spanna (Alto Piemonte), Picotener (Canavese), Picotendro (Valle d'Aosta), Chiavennasca (Valtellina)
- One of the Trio of 'Noble' Italian grapes
- Site-sensitive; tannic; age-worthy
- Most prestigious grape of Langhe/Roero, Piemonte
- Typically given as gifts to important people & saved for important occasions

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Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba DOCG

Tajarin al Ragù di Carne



- One of the best expressions of Dolcetto
- 76 registered subzones within the appellation called *Sori*
- Fresh ripe fruit, med+ tannin, persistent acidity, round, solid, earthy
- Notable wine, unobtrusive character

+

- The other traditional pasta of the Langhe
- Often made with abundant egg yolks
- Typical phrase "*dui tajarin*"
- Dense, rich, delicate but resilient texture
- Concentrated but not heavy tomato-based meat sauce with hint of fresh rosemary



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Dogliani Superiore DOCG

+ Cisirá



- Full-bodied, taut, brawny
- Med+ tannin, med+ acidity
- Dark cherry/plum fruit
- Austere, earthy, asphalt, licorice, spices (cinnamon, blk pepper, anise), leather

+

- *Minestra di Ceci* (Nucetto), leeks (Cervere), & tripe
- Typically served at festival in Dogliani *Giorno dei Defunti* Nov 2nd along with wide selection of Dogliani by the glass
- Ritual gathering in piazza; cold morning, hot soup, potent wine...



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Campania

- Pivotal center that helped shape the viticulture of Italy and the development of the western world
- **Antiquity to 8th C BC:** Etruscans expanded their influence south to Campania
- Brought their practice of training vines up into trees



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Campania

- **8th-6th C BC:** Greeks establish settlements in Southern Italy, bringing their low vine training techniques and their cultural significance of wine



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Campania

- **4th C BC to 5th C AD:** Romans (Latini) expand from Lazio dominate the entire peninsula
- In Campania, Romans encounter Etruscan-Greek wine culture, adopt it, and use it as a colonizing tool to further expand their empire



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In conclusion...

"The smell and taste of things bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection."

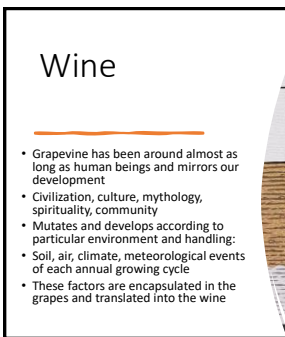
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Food

- What foods resonate for you?
- These types of food experiences (smell, taste, texture) are repetitive: they don't change. Predictable = comfort
- Personal & individual: they help define who we are
- Imagine expanding these experiences to an entire community in a particular place
- Creates a bond, a collective identity, an often repeated 'ritual' that designates who/where they are
- Can be shared with others from 'outside'


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Wine

- Grapevine has been around almost as long as human beings and mirrors our development
- Civilization, culture, mythology, spirituality, community
- Mutates and develops according to particular environment and handling:
- Soil, air, climate, meteorological events of each annual growing cycle
- These factors are encapsulated in the grapes and translated into the wine

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Wine + Food

- Inherently different but mutually complementary
- Both are tended to and prepared by human beings
- Both reflect the specific place they come from
- Both provide pleasure and sustenance while reflecting and reinforcing the identity of the people that produce and consume them
- When the match is a good one, the combination is much more than the sum of its individual parts, while each part retains its own character & integrity

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Buon Appetito

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