

THE VALORIZATION OF THE ROMANIAN WINE HERITAGE. CASE STUDY: THE OLTENIA REGION

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Abstract: Oenological tourism has grown in Romania in recent years, and during the pandemic of 2020 and 2021, it was the lifeline for some travel agencies operating outside the country. They reshaped themselves and followed this niche, causing the wineries to keep their gates open even in extremely restrictive conditions for mass tourism. The most active areas in the field of oenological tourism during pandemic were Muntenia and Oltenia regions.

This paper presents an analysis of the situation of the wine heritage in the Oltenia region to see the offer of oenological tourism in this historic area and from the point of view of vineyards and quality wines, internationally recognized. Some of the most famous wineries from the 5 counties included in this region are analyzed, as they are reflected from the interface with potential tourists, represented by the website of each one. In a case study, the representatives of a winery presented the development projects on the tourist line in the field of wine and terroir that makes it known. Also, the representatives of a specialized travel agency perform an x-ray of a winery visited at random in order to discover its tourist potential. A survey conducted among students at the Faculty of Tourism Geography of the University of Bucharest reflects statistics on wine consumption among young people, culture in the field and preferences for wine tourism. One of the important conclusions of the paper is that although the potential of the Oltenia region is very high for tourism based on wineries and vineyards, this heritage is very little used. The attention of winery businessmen is directed towards massive wine sales, attracting tourists is not one of their priorities and investments in tourist infrastructure are very rare.

Keywords: oenological tourism; wineries; vineyards; tourist potential; Oltenia region; wine culture; wine consumption; Wine heritage, wine trips.

1. INTRODUCTION

Wine tourism comes in support of those looking to relax beyond the big cities. Lately, most people are looking for quiet tourist destinations, where they can

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find old traditions, simple lifestyles, and many of them opt for holidays in rural areas, being very new to a healthy and responsible lifestyle¹.

Wine trips are very suitable for the new requirements, usually taking place on the territory of nearby wine villages or wineries and where tourists can have relaxation, socializing, tasting food and organic drinks, outdoor exercise etc.

Tourists are more interested in the activity that takes place in a winery, wanting to experience some of the work done to obtain grapes and wine. A wine can be tasted anywhere, but only those who practice wine tourism in the true sense of the word can feel its flavor, knowing its history, the way it was prepared².

Wine tourism could be a solution for oenologists: with the help of visits to wineries, consumption and sales of wine products and beverages would increase. At the same time, it would have stimulated direct trade from producers, with no need for intermediaries³.

Oenological tourism is also seen as a regeneration from an economic point of view not only for winery owners, but also for the localities where it is practiced. With the increase in demand for wine tourism, we can see increases in income from tourism and viticulture for the host localities: local businesses are developed, local communities are involved, other leisure activities can be initiated for tourists in the vicinity etc.⁴.

Wine tourism is the image of a good integration of natural resources (vineyards) in the tourism sector. Therefore, wine tourism is characterized by all the tourist activities carried out in wine regions: visiting wineries, tasting wine assortments and purchasing them, including accommodation and food, and other activities of relaxation and socialization⁵.

In fact, the main motivation for wine tourism is to visit the vineyards and taste the wines. This could not be achieved without three key components: *wine producers* (who deal with plantations, produce wines, coordinate winery activities and agree to have their land visited), *travel agencies* (who play a very important role) important in attracting tourists, promoting wine destinations and organizing holidays) and *tourists* (those who are consumers of wine tourism, who choose to invest time and money in these holidays). Starting from the three substantial components, wine tourism is a way to promote destinations, based on their identity,

¹ C. Nazzaro, G. Marotta, F. Rivetti, *Responsible Innovation in the Wine Sector: A Distinct Value Strategy*, in "Agriculture and Agricultural Science Procedia", 8/2016, pp. 509–515.

² G. Carra, M. Mariani, I. Radic, I. Peri, *Participatory strategy analysis: The case of wine tourism business*, "Agriculture and Agricultural Science Procedia", 8/2016, pp. 706–712.

³ D. Quadri-Felitti, A.M. Fiore, *Experience economy constructs as a framework for understanding wine tourism*, in "Journal of Vacation Marketing", 18 (1)/2012, pp. 3–15.

⁴ E.T. Byrd, B. Canziani, J.H. Yu-Chi, K. Debbage, S. Somez, *Wine tourism: Motivating visitors through core and supplementary services*, in "Tourism Management", 52/2016, pp. 19–29.

⁵ P. Dubrule, *L'oenoturisme: une valorisation des produits et du patrimoine vitivinicoles*, in "Ministere d'Agriculture et de la Peche", Paris, 2007.

bringing consumers (tourists) closer to producers, who can be directly involved in viticultural activities and purchase the desired products⁶.

2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the paper is to identify the elements of wine heritage in the historical region of Oltenia – vineyards, wineries, museums, other related cultural and economic elements and to make a quantitative and qualitative analysis of how to capitalize on the wine potential of tourism, putting this region in the national context of capitalizing on Romania's vineyards and wines.

The paper involved extensive documentation, based on documents – books written by oenologists, sommelier, maps, atlases, sites of over 100 wineries, social networks, interviews and questionnaires with owners / representatives of wineries and vineyards, with the representatives of some specialized travel agencies. However, the analysis started from the results of a survey on young people's perception of wine and wine tourism, conducted at the Faculty of Geography of the University of Bucharest.

3. THE TERRITORIAL CLASSIFICATION OF WINE REGIONS

In Romania, the viticultural areas amounted to 177,497 hectares in 2018, including: grafted vineyards on fruit, hybrid vineyards on fruit, table grapes and wine grapes.⁷ These areas are grouped in viticultural regions, as follows: Oltenia Hills region and Muntenia, the Moldavian Hills region, the Dobrogea Hills region, the Danube Terraces region, the Banat Hills region, the Crişana and Maramureş region and the Transylvanian Plateau region⁸.

The most well-known and correct territorial group of the Romanian grape culture belongs to the famous academician Valeriu D. Cotea, in the reference work "Romanian Vineyards and Wines"⁹. The distribution of vineyards in the regions is based on the experience of viticulturists and geographers, the main criterion being a physical-geographical one, and its second being the anthropo-geographical criterion, related to the tradition of cultivating noble calves, involving historical names and places. Thus, the vineyards in Romania, which in 2000 were over

⁶ D. Getz, G. Brown, *Critical success factors for wine tourism regions: a demand analysis*, in "Tourism Management", 27/2006, pp. 146–158.

⁷ National Institute of Statistics, available at <https://insse.ro/>

⁸ Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, available at <https://www.madr.ro/>

⁹ V. Cotea et. all, *Romanian Vineyards and Wines*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2000, 2003, 2005.

250 thousand ha, were grouped in the following taxonomic units: areas, regions, vineyards, centers and vineyards¹⁰.

Each region has its own wines and traditions, trying to attract as many consumers as possible, through natural products, winery visits or tastings.

The Moldavian plateau is the wine region with the most vineyards (10 vineyards, see Fig. 1) in the peri-carpathian region, but also in Romania: Cotnari, Iași, Huși, Dealurile Fălciului, Colinele Tutovei, Zeletin, Dealu Bujorului, Nicorești, Ivești and Covurlui. It is followed by the viticultural region of the Getic Plateau, which includes vineyards starting from west to east, from Mehedinți, Dolj, Vâlcea, Argeș counties. (Severin Vineyard, Craiova Hills, Drâncei Plains, Drăgășani, Sâmburești, Ștefănești Argeș). On the third place are three historical viticultural regions, with 5 vineyards each: Transylvanian Plateau (Târnavă Vineyard, Alba, Sebeș-Apold, Aiud, Lechința); The viticultural region of Piedmont from the Curvature Carpathians (Panciu Vineyard, Odobești, Cotești, Dealurile Buzăului, Dealu Mare) and the Bănățeană-Crișană-Maramureșean viticultural region (Banatului Vineyard, Miniș-Măderat, Diosig, Valea lui Mihai, Silvaniei). The viticultural region of the Dobrogea Plateau includes four historical vineyards (Sarica Niculițel, Istria-Babadag, Murfatlar and Ostrov). In the viticultural region of the sands of southern Oltenia there are three historical vineyards (Dacians, Calafat and Sadova-Corabia), while in the viticultural region of the Romanian Plain are registered the Greek Vineyard and the independent viticultural centers of the Romanian Plain (Drăgănești-Olt, Urziceni, Fetești, Giurgiu, Ulmu-Călărași etc.).

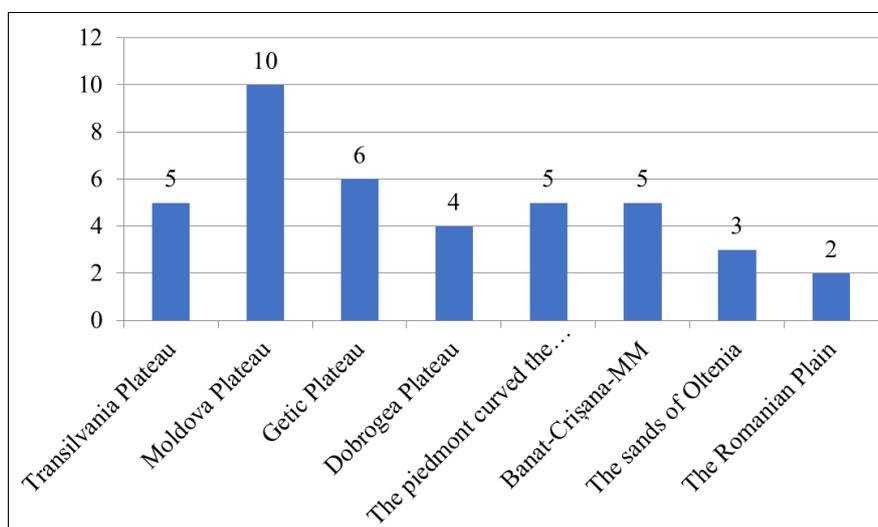


Fig. 1. Territorial distribution of vineyards in the wine regions of Romania.

Source: Personal processing based on Cotea V. data, 2003.

¹⁰ V. Cotea et. all, *Romanian Vineyards and Wines*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2003.

In 2018, the main wine-growing areas in Romania were cultivated with: Fetească Regală, Merlot, Fetească Albă, mixture of noble varieties, Riesling Italian, Aligote, Sauvignon, Cabernet Sauvignon, Muscat Ottonel, Băbească Neagră, Fetească Neagră, Roşioara and others, representing 90,391 hectares¹¹.

In another group of wine regions, the most famous wineries in Romania are inscribed on the tourist map¹². According to this classification, Muntenia would be the region with the most wineries and areas with wineries (41 wineries, see Fig. 2), distributed on the Wine Road in Prahova and Buzau counties.

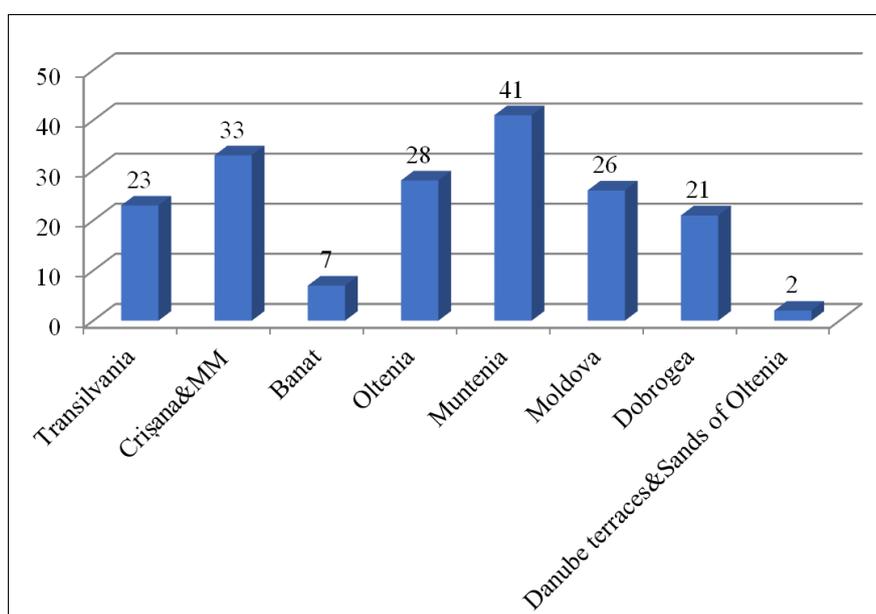


Fig. 2. Distribution of wineries in the main Romanian wine regions.
Source: Personal processing based on crameromania.ro data, 2021.

The second place would be the Crişana-Maramureş region, north of Oradea, with wineries related to Valea lui Mihai, Diosig, Silvaniei, Sătmărulei Hills Vineyards. Oltenia appears on the third place with 28 wineries and domains with wineries. It is followed by the regions of Moldova (26 wineries and areas with wineries), Transylvania (23 wineries and areas with wineries), Dobrogea (21), Banat (7) and, respectively, the Danube Terraces and the Sands of southern Oltenia (2 wineries and areas with wineries).

According to the quoted source, in 2020, there were 185,520 ha of vines, of which 70, 59 were planted with the most internationally known varieties: Fetească

¹¹ Romanian Ministry of Agriculture, available at www.madr.ro

¹² For details, see crameromania.ro, *The map of wineries in Romania*, 2021.

Regală (12,410 ha) Fetească Albă (12,141 ha) Merlot (11,404 ha), Italian Riesling (7,121 ha) Sauvignon Blanc (5,740 ha), Cabernet Sauvignon (5,483 ha), Aligote (5,281 ha), Muscat Ottonel (5, 228 ha), Fetească Neagră (3,125 ha), Roşioara (2,567 ha) , the rest being other varieties.

Regarding the consumption of wine/capita, INS statistics show that in the last 20 years, it has fluctuated between 16 l/capita and 30 l/capita annually. The years with the highest consumption of wine/capita in Romania were 2004, 2013 and 2019 (see Fig. 3).

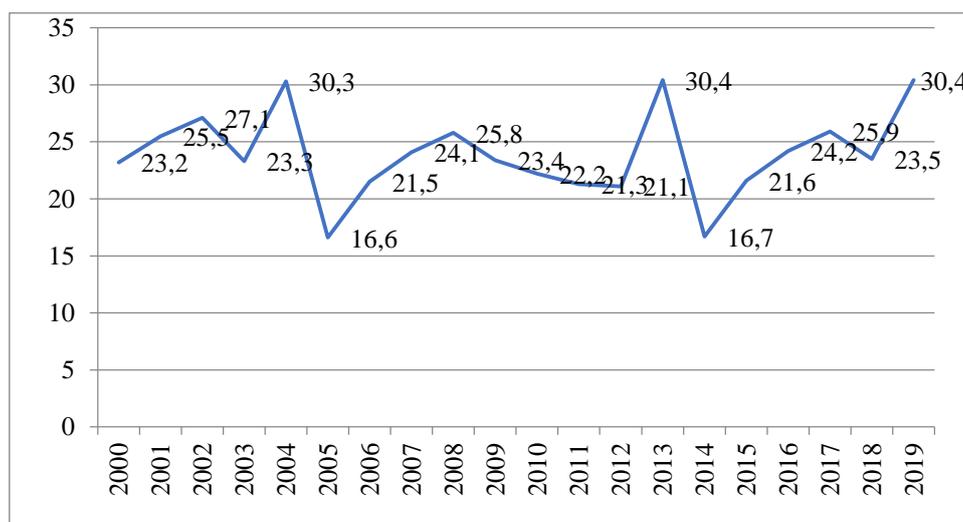


Fig. 3. Wine / capita consumption (liters) in the 2000–2019 period.

Source: Personal processing based on INS (The National Institute of Statistics-NSI) data.

4. INDIVIDUAL WINERIES AND DOMAINS THAT INCLUDE WINERIES FROM OLTENIA

The Oltenia region, which includes 5 counties (Mehedinţi, Dolj, Gorj, Olt and Vâlcea counties) of Romania, has a significant wine heritage, represented by 7 historical vineyards, with over 30 individual wineries and areas including wineries, a Wine Museum in Drăgăşani, to which is added a historical didactic resort, which has the potential including a museum of Vine and Wine, near Craiova. Including the desert area of Oltenia (The Sands of Oltenia Region), in its south, there are three vineyards with wineries that appear on tourist maps¹³. The wine heritage with tourist potential consists of hundreds of hectares of vineyards belonging, in most

¹³ *Ibidem.*

cases, to families or companies with mixed shareholders, Romanian-foreign (French, Italian, American, etc.), with noble vine varieties, replanted in the last 20 years with own investments and European funds.

The need of local communities to develop with the help of tourism is very high, the mentioned counties being among those with the highest unemployment rate in the country. However, such a niche tourism as wine tourism does not seem to be the savior of the local economy, despite the potential given by the physical-geographical conditions and despite the notoriety of some of the winery owners, including the governor of the Romanian National Bank and one of the most famous ministers of justice. Below we present an analysis of some of the wineries in Oltenia, based on their official presentation and references from bloggers and travel guides.

4.1. THE WINE WITH THE BOYAR'S NAME AND THE 7 ARTS TO SELL IT – BANU MĂRĂCINE WINERY

Banu Mărăcine Teaching Station belongs to the University of Craiova. Wine area: Viile Dealurile Craiovei, Banu Mărăcine wine area (Dolj County). Banu Mărăcine was founded here in 1995 for the production of red wines intended mainly for export. However, the land on which the vines could have been replanted was largely returned. Hrubă Banu Mărăcine, considered the treasure of the resort, built between 1984 and 1990, remained in ruins for almost 20 years after the Revolution, and can be visited¹⁴. Until 2009, the wine cellar included only bottles of wine from 1970 and empty barrels, one hundred years old. The period of maximum prolificacy was between 1970–1980. In the past, wine from grapes or peaches was produced here¹⁵. In 2009, a 7Arts Winery project revitalized the area, the 30 hectares vineyard was re-established, and the old winery was completely rebuilt and equipped with state-of-the-art technology, at the foot of the hill with the vineyard¹⁶. Both local varieties such as Tamaioasa Romaneasca, Feteasca Alba, Feteasca Neagra, as well as international varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah are cultivated. The image of the bottles reflects the content: traditional and international varieties are expressed in a modern style. Thus, DOC Banu Maracine reappeared on the viticultural map of Romania. 7 years after replanting, 7ARTS wines were launched, promoted with labels painted by artist Angela Szabo (See Fig. 4). The company sells wine on dedicated sites, investing in advertising aimed at wine consumers, the concerns for organizing tastings and various cultural events related to wine being non-existent.

¹⁴ For details, see <https://www.xaaranovack.com/degustare-de-vin-la-statiunea-didactica-banu-maracine/>

¹⁵ For details, see https://vinul.ro/banu_maracine.html

¹⁶ For details, see <http://7artswinery.ro/ro/about-us.html>



Fig. 4. Wine bottle with personalized label by a painter.

Source: https://vinul.ro/banu_maracine.html.

4.2. THE ART OF TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE TERROIR AVAILABLE IN ROMANIA – VINARTE DOMAIN

Crama Stârmina, Mehedinți and Crama Bolovanu, Sâmburești, Olt, belonging to Domaine Vinarte SRL, company founded in 1998. Vinarte domains amount to 250 hectares (190 hectares – Castel Stârmina, 60 hectares – Crama Bolovanu). Every year, 1.5 to 2 million bottles are bottled here. “Vinarte takes full advantage of the terroir available in Romania by supplying fruit from two of the best locations: Sâmburești and Stârmina. The different conditions encountered allow our specialists to grow grapes of the highest quality, local and international varieties from which complex wines are obtained, with a distinctive character”, the representatives of the field say on the presentation site¹⁷. The main grape varieties grown here are: Fetească Neagră, Negru de Dragașani, Novac, Tămâioasă Românească, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Italian Riesling.

Vinarte domains have registered their wines in specialized online stores, with intense promotion and are part of a dedicated application, where wines are communicated and offered in preview. Discounts and events (in HoReCa or visits to wineries) usually not available to the general public appear in the application. It is about the application TreiPentruVin.ro, – a wine community, interactive and open, which presents specially chosen packages, with wines and educational and funny content.

¹⁷ For details, see <https://vinarte.ro/>

4.3. THE CATLEYA ORCHID, THE SYMBOL OF LOVE, FROM PROUST TO CORCOVA

After 2007, three French people passionate about wines and in love with Romania, chose this Proustian image to symbolize the wines obtained from vineyards replanted on the old lands of Prince Bibescu. They are the creators of the Catleya domain, which produce wine ranges that evoke the terroir of Corcova described by Marcel Proust, passionate about wines produced from vineyards and sunny hills in this area of Mehedinți¹⁸. The story of the wines is accompanied here by the story of the friendship between Prince Bibescu and the French writer, who received as a gift numerous bottles of wine brought from Corcova to Paris even when he was ill, wrote the famous novel *In The Search of The Lost Time/A la recherché du temps perdu*. Prince Bibescu is said to be one of the characters in this novel. The three Frenchmen built a bridge over time, using the Catleya orchid symbol, from the same novel, to promote and popularize Corcova wines, under the Catleya domain label (see Fig 5). “Because it evokes both the beauty and the pleasure of time, the scent of the flower or a wine, Proust’s Catleya exactly reflects the synesthetic experience you feel when you taste one of our wines”, it is written on the site¹⁹. Here we find an online store for the sale of wines in Romania and France, but not invitations to tastings at dedicated events. Monovarietal wines are presented, made with the greatest attention to nature and the details of their elaboration, always with wild yeasts, which are found naturally on the skins of grapes. A luxury range includes wines made only in the excellent years, from the best grapes, with all the care, experience and skill of the French oenologist Laurent Pfeffer. Here are wine editions from 2013–2020. The site presents the terroir, the winemaking process and the people working in the field. However, oenological tourism information is missing.



Fig. 5. Catleya orchid, the Proustian symbol from Corcova.

¹⁸ For details, see <https://www.catleyawines.com/ro/histoire.html>

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

4.4. CORCOVA WINE AND SPORT AS A PRETEXT FOR WINE

In the case of Corcova Roy & Dâmboviceanu Winery, the promotion activities aim primarily at mass wine consumption, without too many concerns in the field of wine tourism. The investments are aimed at wine production and sales through stores. The owners promote wines on social networks and on the sites of online stores dedicated to the wine industry. The concern for the massive sale of wines prevails, to the detriment of sustainable economic and cultural promotion, the tourist development of the area being secondary. In any case, the indications of oenological tourism on the site are missing, and the information regarding the organization of events involving both wine promotion and tourist activities are not officially offered, neither as a marketing initiative, nor to written or telephone requests. Although it sporadically organizes tastings, based exclusively on personal relationships of Romanian owners, this winery is not open to the tourism economy. Despite the potential of the area and the business that would help the development of Corcova and the eastern part of Mehedinți County, respectively, the western part of Gorj County, affected by poverty, a single event under the Roy & Damboviceanu brand involving tourism is notable Corcova Trail Race²⁰ for Mountain Lovers Bike. Held over several days (3 or 4), the event brings together cycling enthusiasts and involves partnerships with guesthouses in the Corcova-Baia de Aramă area. One of the races in the competitions starts in the courtyard of the Roy & Dâmboviceanu Winery and takes place on different types of terrain, including on the country road among the vineyards that gives the famous wine of Corcova. The event is meant to be more of a festival, and the goal is to get to know the wines and sell them on this occasion²¹. Although the winery has a link to its own website directly from the website of the organizers of the sports event, there are no mentions of organized tastings and visits to the winery, the invitation being to buy wine at its store.

4.5. THE WINE OF A REFUGEE POET IN A PORT ON THE DANUBE

The Cetate Cultural Port is located on the banks of the Danube, between Calafat and Turnu Severin, on the place where, from 1880 until the middle of the last century, there was an agricultural port where wheat and flour were exported to Budapest, Vienna and the German Danube cities²². Since 2007, the Poet Mircea Dinescu started to renovate / restore all the buildings in Cetate Port and after building a modern kitchen and a mini-hotel, the place became accessible for tourism as well. Also in 2007, after the installation of a new pontoon, the port was reopened, which now receives regular cruise ships or private boats.

²⁰ For details, see <https://corcova.ro/povestea/?lang=en>

²¹ For details, see <https://www.finestore.ro/corcova-roy-damboviceanu>

²² For details, see <https://vinulluidinescu.ro/>

Dinescu's wine is produced in the southwest of Oltenia, at the winery located between Giubega commune and Galicea Mare. The grapes used for wine production come from the two vineyards of 50 ha each, one being right under the wing of the winery, the other at an elbow of the Danube, on the hills of Mehedinți.



Fig. 6. The revolutionary poet Mircea Dinescu promoting wine bundled with culture.
Source: vinulluidinescu.ro/

4.6. ROMANIAN WINE PROMOTED UNDER THE ITALIAN NAME

Mennini winery, from Dragasani Vineyard, located in Strejesti, is presented as a natural paradise of vineyards and orchards, over 300 hectares, of which over 70 hectares are occupied by high quality vines. It is mostly replanted in compliance with the norms of a modern viticulture, oriented towards the production of local varieties such as: Burgundy Mare, Negru de Dragasani, Tamaioasa Romaneasca and Muscat Ottonel, but also international ones such as: Chardonay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Mennini winery with a capacity of over 1 million liters, was built in 2012 and is equipped with modern technology necessary for the production of high quality wines²³. The most famous wine here is a wine named after Paolo Mennini, an Italian from Tuscany who fell in love with Romania. The presentation site is a dynamic one, without elements related to local oenological tourism, with a shop section and a news section announcing the awards obtained this year at the Gilbert & Gaillard International Challenge, organized worldwide. Mennini winery gets 5 gold and one silver medal. The black wine from Drăgășani named Mennini won 2 gold medals, one being sparkling.

²³ For details, see <https://cramamennini.ro/en/>

4.7. AVINCIS WINERY CONNECTED TO TOURISM

Avincis winery promotes intensely its wines in tourist packages, in close collaboration with travel agencies. The offer of tastings and visits to the vineyard is presented on the site, with distinct sections, easily identified by keywords. Avincis organizes wine tastings: for groups of at least 5 people based on prior reservation, subject to availability. You can choose from packages with three wine tastings: one includes visiting the winery and the estate of Vila Dobrușa and snack – 50 Lei/person and five wine tasting packages; another one includes visiting the winery and the estate of Vila Dobrușa and snack 70 Lei / person²⁴.

The imprint of foreign investors is present in the entire activity.

The founder of GIOTTO Consulting SRL Italia together with Stefano Saderi – GIOTTO consultant, provides technical consultancy for the organization of the winery, the choice of wine production technologies, consulting in the vinification phase, laboratory analysis for wines and training of winery staff. According to the site²⁵, the GIOTTO team also provides agronomic consulting for the organization of vineyard activities: land and vineyard preparation, selection of equipment for vineyards, harvest management and training of vineyard staff.



Fig. 7. Panorama over the Avincis winery and vineyard.

Source: <https://www.avincis.ro/viziteaza-domeniul.htm>

However, the foundations of Avincis were laid by the former Minister of Justice, Valeriu Stoica, together with his wife. Valeriu Stoica is an AVINCIS

²⁴ For details, see <https://www.avincis.ro/degustare-de-vinuri.htm>

²⁵ For details, see <https://www.avincis.ro/viziteaza-domeniul.htm>

associate, declared passionate about wine for several decades, and coordinates the activity of the oenological council, being actively involved in both the activities in the vineyard and in the winery.

Avincis is one of the few wineries that meet the requirements of wine tourism organized by specialized agencies in this niche. The representatives of the Elf&Travel Tours Agency visited the winery in order to prospect the offers for tourist. They told us that to the Avincis, the steps in the direction of tourism development are far ahead of other wineries in Oltenia and even in the country.

“I visited the hotel, it’s interesting. There are 13 rooms, named after Avincis wines, chic, tasteful, the apartments are huge, some have a dressing room. The ceiling of the rooms is made of glass, which offers beautiful night landscapes, and in the morning, the sunrise is clearly different. The winery is fenced, with fences and a gate through which no one enters or leaves unnoticed, which is very good primarily for families with children. I understand that a spa area is also being built, which shows a huge investment in tourism. We were guided and presented to us professionally, we were treated as business partners. The tasting area is well organized, neat, with attention to detail. I tasted a sparkling wine, you can do various types of wine tastings accompanied by platters. The wines are good, slightly expensive, but understandable considering the well done marketing. Vineyard walks are possible. They are good hosts, used to tourists and tourism, which is less common with winery owners. The location is extraordinary, northern, with a panoramic view of the Olt River. In Drăgășani you can also stay at the hotel, but you can’t go with our tourists because on Saturdays and Sundays, there are weddings and baptisms and these events do not match the type of tourism we practice”, Lucian Tănase, travel agent and guide tourist at Elf&Travel Tours Agency, asserted.

4.8. ISĂRESCU HOUSE AND THE WINE THAT SELLS ITSELF

In the hilly landscape of the Drăgășani area, which resembles that of Tuscany, there is the Drăgășani vineyard which covers an area of 16,000 ha, comprising several hills – the most important of which are Dealul Viilor, Dealul Dobrușa, Dealul Sutești and Dealul Crețeni²⁶. Here, after the restoration of the destroyed by the phylloxera plantations, along with the local varieties, many varieties appeared in the Bordeaux area – Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. It should be mentioned that the Drăgășani vineyard is located, like the Bordeaux area, a few tens of km south of the 45th parallel. In order to support the restoration of the vineyard, the Ministry of Agriculture and Domains established in 1897 the Drăgășani Nursery. In 1936, the Drăgășani wine-growing resort was established, which made new varieties, especially by improving the local varieties – Selected

²⁶ For details, see <http://casaisarescu.ro/>

Crâmpoșia, Negru de Drăgășani, Novac or the Victoria table grape variety. Very closely related to Dealul Viilor is Casa Isărescu, a winery that has entered a restricted tourist circuit, oriented more towards the sale of table wines (see Figs. 8, 9).



Figs. 8,9. Views from Isărescu house winery
Source: casaisarescu.ro/

4.8.1. The last two years have been the best for the business

Founded in 2003, by members of the family of BNR Governor Mugur Isărescu, the company that owns the winery has 23 permanent employees; for agricultural works in the vineyard, day laborers are also used (during the work season, an average of 15 workers / day)²⁷. The company's representatives told us that the vast majority of the investments were made from their own sources. The pension was built partly from European funds (POR–200000 eur) and APIA support for reconversion into agriculture, money that was used to restore the old plantations. Also, all the profit resulting from the establishment until now has been distributed exclusively for the development of the company²⁸.

The last two years have been the best for the business. In 2019, the profit was 847,000 lei²⁹. In 2020, the company reported an increase of 122%, from 846.00 lei, to 1.8 million lei (385,000 euros)³⁰.

The recipe for marketing success includes: direct sales to customers and online; direct promotion, discounting. However, the Isărescu brand is sold due to the notoriety of the NBR governor, which is the main image vector of the company. In the online environment, the most used is the site www.casaisarescu.ro, the promotion on social networks being done voluntarily by various consumers of wines from Casa Isărescu.

²⁷ The representative of Casa Isarescu, Mihaela Florescu, provided us with this information based on some questions that we sent by e-mail.

²⁸ *Ibidem.*

²⁹ *Ibidem.*

³⁰ For details, see https://www.economica.net/afaceri-de-pest-un-milion-de-euro-din-vin-pentru-mugur-isarescu-in-2020_516102.html

Although the site includes with priority the presentation of wines in detail, for the purpose of sale, the concern for providing cultural information is obvious. The images with the bottles are accompanied by all the data regarding the sensory characteristics of the wines (description, variety, technical file etc.) but also by the oenologist's recommendation to serve at certain temperatures and at various dishes. The Vintage section includes reviews on the wine from the best year of the vineyard – 2008. In the Locations section, we are shown the place where tastings can be made – Crama din Dealul Viilor/ The Winery from Vineyard Hill. The history of Drăgășani vineyard is well documented, from scientific sources. The site is among the exceptions that make direct reference to Oenological Tourism, with a button and menu dedicated to the field. Here are presented in images taken by professional photographers the guesthouse, the tasting room and the wine cellar. Other information is missing, the offers will be presented upon request, after contacting the representatives of the winery.

The company produces only DOC wines – Denomination of Controlled Origin. The prestigious Gault & Millau wine guide awarded several prizes for Romanian wines. Casa Isărescu received the Award for the best Cabernet Sauvignon, 90 points.

4.8.2. Wine tourism is still waiting at Casa Isărescu

Casa Isărescu distributes directly to customers, online and through its own store, it has not appealed to other collaborators – distributors of products and image. Collaboration with travel agencies for events is not on the agenda of Casa Isărescu. In the pandemic, the company did not suffer due to the lack of tourists. In 2020, no winery events were organized. In 2019, almost 1100 visitors and tourists participated in the tastings, but there were countless visitors to the winery and for walks on the wine field³¹. In the pandemic, the only plans were made for tourism.

“We did not have to make changes in the pandemic, we did not lay off the employees who took care of the pension even if the activity with the tourism clients stopped during the pandemic, they took care of the maintenance of the pension. The pandemic did not affect our main activity, the agricultural one of wine production and which represents about 97% of the turnover, the tourism activity was the one affected by the pandemic but 3% of the turnover is not to be taken into account”, Mihaela Florescu, the representative of Casa Isărescu, told us. According to the same source, Casa Isărescu would also develop in the direction of Wine Tourism, increasing the capacity of the accommodation infrastructure.

“We are optimistic. We hope to get over this bad period for wine tourism and to be able to develop this part of our activity, especially since recently (I am referring here to the period before the pandemic), we had a positive feedback regarding the activities carried out within the pension. The requests were numerous but

³¹ Data provided to us by Casa Isărescu.

the reduced accommodation capacity (6 rooms) had its say. For the development of this business and in order to meet the clients, the construction of some bungalow houses is underway, which we hope will be ready by the end of this year”, the representative of Casa Isărescu also told us.

5. WINE CULTURE AND YOUTH CONSUMPTION HABITS – SURVEY

In order to see the culture in the field of wines and the wine consumption habits of young people, we conducted this year a survey among young students at the Faculty of Tourism Geography of the University of Bucharest. We chose a sample of 50 students, aged between 21 and 30 years. Of these, 34 are female. The young people were asked to answer a questionnaire with a set of 16 questions aimed at probing the degree of culture in the field of wines and oenology, determining indicators related to the quantity and quality of wines consumed, their context, including certain tourist destinations related to wine tasting.

Of the total respondents, only 10% said they do not consume wine (see Fig. 10). Of these, most are women. Most of the respondents answered that annually, they consume between 0 and 5 l of wine (42%). Only two people firmly stated that they do not consume even one glass of wine a year (4%). In second place are those who could not specify how much wine they drink annually (28%), and in third place are those who consume between 5 and 10 liters of wine, equal to students who consume between 20 and 25 liters of wine / year, by 8% each. A percentage of 2% consumes between 10 and 15 l / year, while 4% consumes between 15 and 20 liters / year. Another 4% represents the young respondents who consume over 25 liters of wine / year. It should be noted that the latter have weekly concerns related to mountain tourism activities. To the question “What wine do you prefer?”, most, 34%, answered that they prefer rosé wines, while red wine is preferred by 22% of those surveyed. In third place are those who said they prefer any wine. White wine was indicated as the preferred wine in various circumstances by 16% of respondents. Only 4% said they choose to drink champagne most often.

The majority of those who consume wine, 56%, associate this drink with pork, beef and/or fish (See Fig. 11). Another important percentage, 23%, drink wine if they eat pasta. In third place are, with 9%, those who do not associate wine with food. However, 4% of those surveyed answered that they do not take food into account when choosing wine, as it is generally a table one. Only 4% combine cheeses with the wine consumed, and another 4% choose wines for various desserts (see also Fig. 11).

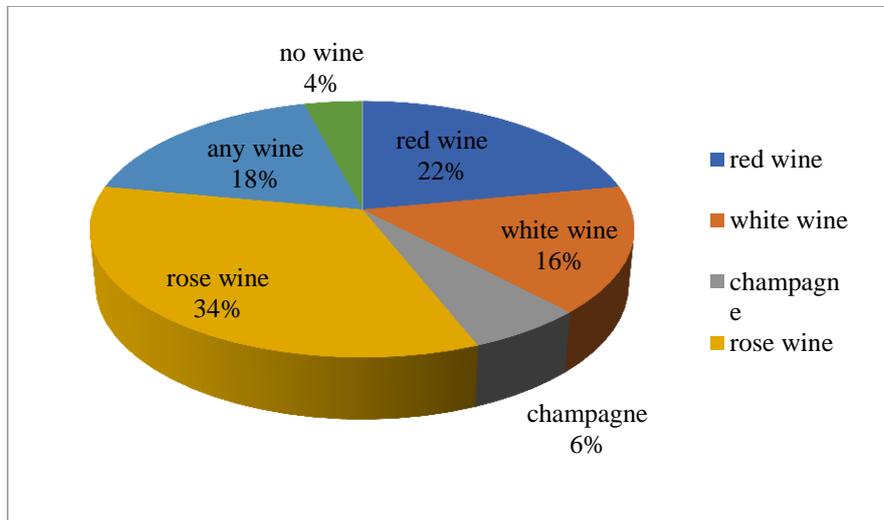


Fig. 10. Answers to the question “What wine do you prefer?” in the survey.

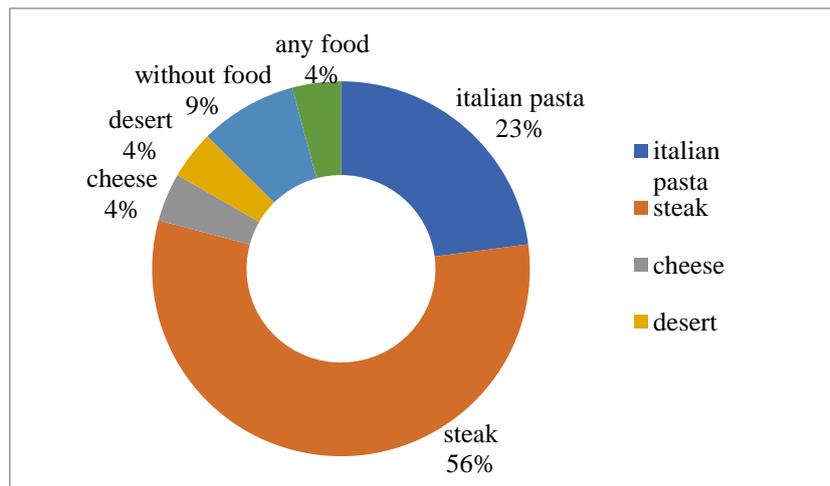


Fig. 11. Who consume wine, 56%, associate this drink with pork, beef and / or fish.

For most of those surveyed, the qualities of a good wine are primarily related to the organoleptic properties, which must be attractive (color, taste, aroma, clarity, texture, consistency) (See Fig. 12). The second important criterion seems to be the age of the wine because 13% indicated it as an indicator of quality. Grape variety is also one of the important criteria for 9% of survey participants. The alcohol content is not necessarily taken into account, only 2% being interested in a certain gradation of the wine. Champagnes are not preferred for the daily consumption of young people, only 2% stating that they are interested in the effervescence of wine.

One of the respondents indicated sulfite content among the criteria for choosing the wine that should not give headaches if it is good. The geographical indication was not among the criteria for choosing a quality wine.

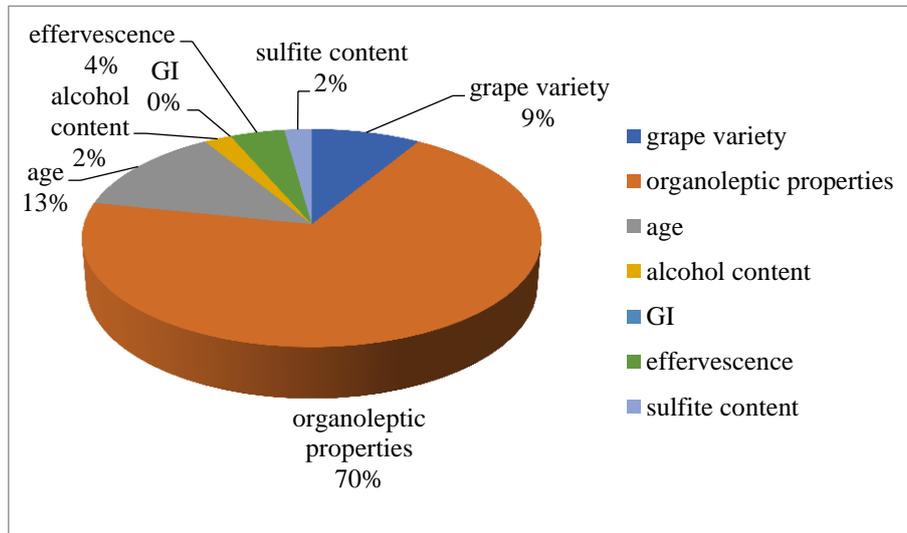


Fig. 12. The qualities of a good wine according to those surveyed.

Young people are demanding when they are offered wine. Over 73% of respondents stated that the wines offered to them must be in a glass bottle with a cork, while 13% firmly said that the bottle must also have a label. If it is about the wine offered, then 8% of those surveyed prefer it to be in a glass. For 6% of young people surveyed about wine consumption habits does not matter the container. None of the respondents indicated containers made of clay, plastic or other materials. Boiled wine is one of the favorites of young people, especially if it is winter. 72% of those surveyed stated that they drink mulled wine in winter.

When asked if they participated in a wine tasting, only 32% answered in the affirmative. Most of them attended tastings organized at wineries in Romania, but also the Republic of Moldova and Bulgaria. With two exceptions, young people participated in tastings before the SARSCOV-19 panic broke out, between 2010 and 2019.

Asked if they would be interested in participating in wine tastings if they were invited, most said yes. As for the destination, most indicated France. Italy was in second place, Romania in third place, the Republic of Moldova in fourth place, and Spain in 5th place. The Mediterranean area was nominated using exactly this phrase that includes countries including Asia bordering the Mediterranean Sea (See Fig. 13). Countries such as Portugal, Austria, Georgia and California seem to have

gained notoriety among young students surveyed in the field of wines, and are also nominated as potential destinations for a holiday that includes local wine tastings.

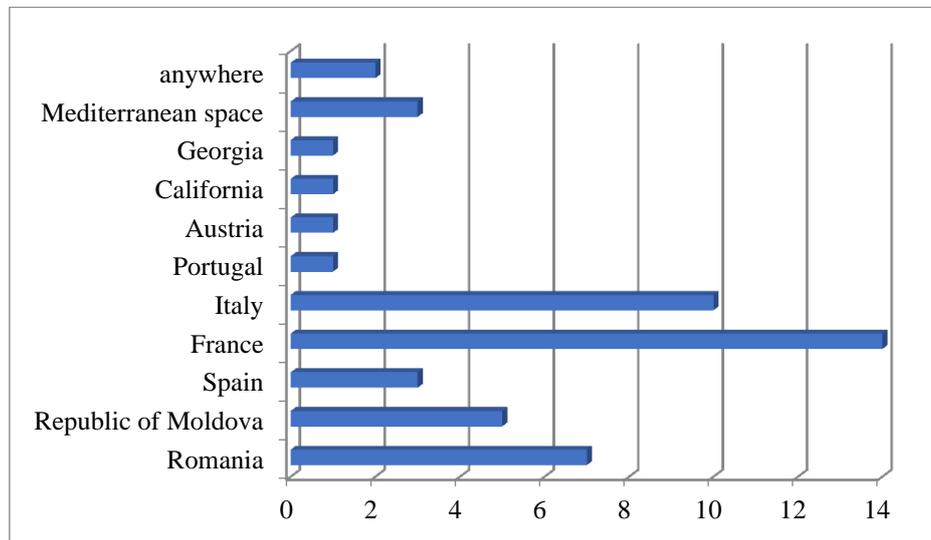


Fig. 13. Countries nominated as potential destinations for wine tasting.

Young students do not have a vast culture in the field of wine consumption and know tourist destinations with vineyards and wineries rather from books. The survey shows projections of desires rather than the result of cultural experiences in the oenological field.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The most important conclusion of this study is that the potential of the Oltenia region is very high for tourism based on wineries and vineyards, but this heritage is very little used. Another main conclusion is that the promotion of wineries and vineyards as tourist destinations are not made by tourism professionals. On the same time, winery owners don't cooperate much with travel agencies for wine testing events and culturalization of wine consumers in this field. When asked if they participated in a wine tasting, only 32% of students answered in the affirmative. Romania is not the most preferred for a vacation that includes local wine tasting, and that's because of inadequate promotion. Tourism professionals with higher education in the field must be co-opted and involved in the realization of business plans regarding the wineries and the oenological tourism.