



Nipped in the Bud between Madeira and La Mancha

Although many Maltese wines have been bestowed with Gold, Silver and Bronze medals, winning worldwide consumer confidence is all about delivering the message. Quality remains the most universal language.



Between Madeira and La Mancha

It is sometimes said that the term 'New World' implies a certain state of mind of the winemaker's rather than a geographic definition. This might be enough justification for placing Malta in the New World spotlight, although on the map, Malta is of course situated in the Old World of wine.

Although the vine has always had a natural place in Malta and Maltese people have made wine for centuries, as is the case in most New World countries, the modern Maltese wine industry has only recently enjoyed a great revival in the cellar and vineyard. The area under vine in Malta and Gozo is about one tenth of New Zealand's national vineyard and very tiny compared to any region in Europe. But, as in other New World countries, Malta's winemakers have enjoyed the same refreshing freedom and manoeuvrability and they have been very innovative and creative in their approach to viticulture and winemaking.

Experiments abound, with French and American oak barriques, for example, and with anything that helps to capture those elusive fruit flavours of the grape. Malta now has a small number of successful wineries able to compete not only on supermarket shelves, but also on airlines bringing many tourists to the sunny Maltese Islands, as well as in budding export markets. Whilst developing an appellation system, originally taking Italy and France as role models, just like New World producers,

Maltese winemakers have had to adapt methods to their own climates. More importantly, as in new emerging winemaking countries, Maltese vintners, too, have questioned what the consumer wants and have successfully produced highly marketable wines. Maltese winemakers have now embarked on a course of renewal that is unparalleled in their craft's history, ancient or modern. They are underpinning the reputation of their wines and pressing on to create innovative wines that are gaining international acclaim.

The temptation to produce more and more familiar, safe wine without much character is always there, but a handful of quality vintners in Malta seem to withstand the insidious trend towards wine-by-formula. They are drawing from a diverse palette of grapes to create unique wines that please different palates. This has come about at a time when basic winemaking technology and skills and hence wine quality has improved immeasurably. The result is wine that is interesting without being intimidating. Yet, ultimately novelty is not enough and it will be perceived quality and real value as much as genuine varietal content that will shape the future of Malta grown wine.

In this respect, it will be interesting to see whether the Maltese vintners will also bank some of their oenological future on the further development and use of the native varieties, Girgentina and Ġellewża.



If nothing else, the wines made from them are unique and should appeal to wine lovers who are seeking new horizons.

Just on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, Sicilian and Sardinian winemakers can boast a proud tradition in sporting their indigenous grapes. The smaller scenic Italian islands of Ischia and Capri, too, keep on producing famous wines from native varieties that are believed to be direct descendants of vines cultivated by the Romans and probably also by the Greeks before them.

In Malta, the tiring debate as to what is acceptable – indigenous or international – seems to have come to a close. If anything, it has actually gone on for far too long. There should be no squabble: just a commitment from the vigneron to grow the best possible grapes, native or not, for the winemaker to make the best quality wine possible.

It is good to see that the choice of Malta grown wines has never been greater and keeps on growing whilst winemaking standards have never been higher. For those to whom Maltese wines are new, reading this book should make the choice easier.

Hopefully, before laying this book aside and rushing off to uncork a bottle, you, the reader, will prepare for your reference shelves a fresh wine region file, which will fit snugly in between Madeira and La Mancha...

Sahha!



MALATINO

2005

TEMPRANILLO

LOCALLY GROWN



CAMILLERI WINES
MALTA



FURENTI

MERLOT
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

2007

CAMILLERI WINES - MALTA



CHESOVIN

LYSSES

BOZO

ORAR

2007

