

Two Italian Giants Launch Annual Guides for Wine, Olive Oil

Susannah Glod (February 15, 2016)



Last week saw the launch, in New York, of two Italian guides in English. The first by famed wine critic Daniele Cernilli called the “The Ultimate Guide to Italian Wine 2016” and the second by olive oil specialist Marco Oreggia entitled “Flos Olei 2016.”

The guides were introduced in a press conference on February 8th at the Yale Club in Manhattan and were part of a larger event in which a number of the wines and olive oils reviewed in the books were on offer to the press, trade and consumers. Specifically 130 wines from 56 producers, and 90 olive oils from 21 producers were available to taste. Cernilli, a co-founder of Gambero Rosso who worked with that organization for 24 years, began his own website www.doctorwine.it [2] in 2011. The first edition of his guide was published in Italian and launched in Rome in 2015. Cernilli noted that his guide is different because he focuses on a much smaller number of wineries and wines: 876 estates and 2,168 wines. He also notes that he has tasted over 150,000 wines in his long career. The guide uses a three pronged system to rate wines. First it uses a one to three star rating for the winery itself. The star evaluation is based on a number of factors including the importance of the brand, its strategic role within its area, its development in recent years and its reputation for consistent quality and international image. In the current edition of the guide, 86 wineries received 3 stars, up from the 73 wineries awarded in the previous edition of the guide. Next it uses a point system, using the 100-point scale for individual wines. The third prong is the price/quality evaluation.



He also awarded prizes in 11 categories among them prizes for red, white, sparkling and sweet wines of the year. Other categories include emerging producer of the year, oenologist of the year, cooperative cellar of the year, winery of the year, best quality/price ratio, best overall widespread quality, and an award for sustainable viticulture of the year. Wines from all Italian regions were reviewed. Cernilli said he focused on wines that were represented of each particular producer. Wine guides, even ones from Italian entities are becoming increasingly more available on the US market but books about olive oil still seem to lag behind. [Marco Oreggia](#) [3] is determined to fill that gap. His book, "Flos Olei", has been published in Italian and English for the past 7 years.

Oreggia's guide covers 49 countries from all of the continents. He reviewed over 500 producers and 692 olive oils. During the event at the Yale Club, Oreggia showed the approach to olive oil tasting which was new to most of the audience members. He noted that olive oils are primarily judged on the nose and palate rather than visually. In fact he said that traditionally olive oils are judged in dark blue glass. During his seminar he noted both the importance of olive oil in terms of health and its curative properties. He also noted that olive oil could be damaged by light, heat and oxidation if left open for long with air. He stated that he thought every home should have a number of different olive oils to pair with foods, just as one does with wine. Oreggia wrote the guide together with Laura Marinelli, a fellow food and wine journalist. The two manage a large team of collaborators throughout the world in order to have local knowledge of what is going on in countries in the olive oil sector.

They make a point of adding a new country to the guide every year. This year the new country was Armenia. Like Cernilli, they use a rating system based on the 100-point scale. They also have many different categories by which they judge the olive oils including eco-sustainability. They also gave out prizes in 20 categories among them emerging farm, frontier farm, farm of the year, importer of the year, restaurant of the year, and best extra virgin olive oil of the year. The guide is available in print or through the App store. Italian and Spanish olive oils also have special Apps dedicated to them. The olive oil sector in Italy has had considerable attention of late also because of a recent 60 minute segment on olive oil. According to Oreggia, olive oil is a complex world and his guide looks to shed light on representative producers of extra virgin olive oils worldwide.

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[2] <http://www.doctorwine.it>

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