

THE HUMANS OF WINE VOICES*

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What is your perception of the wine business during the Covid-19 Emergency?

Every business connected to leisure is drastically effected by the pandemic, and the wine industry is no exception. The wine industry is tightly connected with the restaurant industry which is facing an unimaginable challenge. That urges wineries, wine importers, and sommeliers to connect more with private clients though social media and online facets.

How do you think this emergency is it going to change the world of wine?

From the current developments, it looks like flying to wine regions won't be possible or will be drastically limited. The large wine tastings, where Somms meet with winemakers and importers won't happen until at least 2021, if not longer. Online meetings and social media will all take over as the new way of communication and will continue probably even after a vaccine has been created as financially it makes more sense than meeting in person.

What has already changed in your job?

My job has changed drastically due to social distancing - myself and my team used to go to clients homes to create food and wine experiences, which is obviously not possible now. Therefore, we had to reinvent our business, and think quickly and creatively to come up with virtual experiences to showcase our talents and expertise. We came up with virtual cooking classes with wine pairings, wine seminars, and yoga & wine seminars and luckily our followers and clients are quite excited about those initiatives. What I realized is that people are looking for ways to pass their time at home, forget about world troubles, socialize, and learn something new - which is exactly what myself and my team are here for!

What do you think are the main challenges for the wine business in this moment?

Many of the wineries and marketing departments around the world are used to physical meetings and their businesses depend on it. There is lots of catch up that some wineries and regions will have to do, as they have never focused on this type of communication. If up until now a winery could exist without a social media account, it becomes less and less possible.

What do you think could be done to overcome them?

We have to be resourceful, realistic, creative and optimistic at all times to shift our talents and services with the unexpected changes brought on by Covid-19. The more we work as a community and try to support each others businesses within our industry the better we will be as a whole.

What are your activities on social media?

I frequently post on Instagram and share stories, as well as stay active on Facebook to share wine ideas, wine regions, and my wine tasting experiences.

How is the promotion of wine going to change?

Much more promotions will move online: There will be less wine tastings and more virtual tasting experiences. Hopefully small tastings will come back, but it is unsure at the moment.

How do you see your role in the business changing right now?

Until now my service was mainly for the privileged five percent of wealthy people of our society. The pandemic changed my view on my profession as I started realizing how important it is to connect with all people through wine - it doesn't matter how much they can spend on a bottle. The sense of community and togetherness is what will save us from this global pandemic, therefore, making wine inclusive rather than exclusive became my mission as a wine professional. Since the pandemic started, I decided to offer my services at 'pay what you can' rate to allow all people from different socioeconomic status, develop their palate and get exposed to food and wine education. I believe that our humanity as individuals, professionals, and as a society is tested these days.

Do you think the consumption of local wine is going to increase compared to imported wines?

In every country it will probably change differently. From what I can see there will now be a general rise to support local businesses, wineries included. That said, with limited traveling in the near future many people can get the "traveling experience" through tasting wines from other countries. Therefore, imported wines especially in North America will always be strong.

What wines are you choosing at the moment?

I help my clients choose and purchase wines from my agents and from local wineries. What I noticed is that clients are looking for less expensive wines to enjoy on their day to day - Many drink more now, and with the uncertainty of the economy, they are willing to spend less per bottle. Many look for comforting wines to enjoy that will make them forget the troubles.

What wines would you recommend drinking during the lockdown?

Anything that will make you happy and lift your mood is a great choice! For me it is anything bubbly from Crémant to Cava or Champagne - I find that sparkling wines always lift my spirit, and create a little celebration feeling even through a pandemic.