

# THE HUMANS OF WINE VOICES\*

**Martina Fiorino**

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Winery (Barolo, Italy)**



**Where are you based?**

I am based in Grinzane Cavour, in the Barolo region where our family estate is located.

**What is your job in the wine business?**

I mostly work in the commercial side of my family business focusing on clients' relationships and including wine promotions. Precisely I joined the family business one year ago after a two years-and-a-half experience as a wine buyer in London.

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

The production side of the business has not changed since we need to take care of the vineyards all year long. The consumption of wines has materially decreased because restaurants and bars have closed during lockdowns in many countries. However, there has been a change in consumer behaviour and some consumers have started to purchase more wines to drink at home leading to more online sales. Covid-19 emergency has also led to a global recession. A cautious consumer spending has also led to cheaper wines taking up a larger share of the online market vs more premium wines.

**How do you think this emergency will change the wine world?**

It is very difficult to predict what is going to happen and what the "new normal" is going to be. In the short term I think there will be a transition period governed by social distancing measures during which restaurants, wine bars will have to implement new strategies to allow people to gather and socialize again. They will have to reinvent themselves. This will also face consumers' attitudes to go back to their normal life. With the arrival of vaccinations, hopefully rather sooner than later, things will go back to what used to be normal with potential material changes in the hospitality industry.

**What has already changed in your job?**

A part from the production side of the business, everything else has completely changed. The first six months of the year are usually very busy for this industry as we attend importers' portfolio tastings around the world, international wine fairs and many other events to introduce the new releases. Except for very few events I attended at the beginning of 2020, all the others were cancelled. Promoting wines is now carried out virtually, sending samples around the world and meeting clients online to taste through the wines.

### What do you think are the main challenges for the wine business right now?

- Lower demand from restaurants, bars, hotels all around the world
- Lower consumptions of premium wines due to less occasions and cautious consumers
- Difficult to attract new commercial customers
- Aggressive pricing pressure from competitors due to lower market demand

### What do you think can be done to overcome them?

There should be a lift in lockdowns which would increase the number of occasions and public spaces where wine is consumed. This would help new potential clients develop new strategies and invest adding new producers to their portfolio. All the Consortiums of each appellation should control selling prices by setting minimum prices to address any aggressive price cutting. This protects the overall perception of the appellation among clients and it is something every winery will benefit from once the crisis is over.

### What are your activities on social media?

Facebook and Instagram are the two social media through which we communicate with our community. Sharing the beauty of nature and vineyards and our day to day work as a sign of hope, progress and positiveness are our main activities on social media. These are extremely important aspects in today's communication; clients and friends from all around the world want to know how things are here and through images/video they can virtually travel with their mind.



### How's the wine promotion going to change?

In the short-term, there will be more online activity done with current customers. In the medium and long term, I believe fairs and visits at customers' sites will go back to normal.

### What are the initiatives you are carrying out to reach your clients and your potential clients at the moment?

Thanks to the progress in technology we are able to meet virtually and keep working overcoming the distances. I think this a good solution for now but in the long term the wine industry will need to go back to what it was before. Sharing, conviviality and human contact are key aspects in the storytelling of wine because it is all about territory, culture and people behind the bottle and you can really understand wines once you experience these factors all together.



### What has changed in the work at the winery right now?

For us, nothing has really changed since we all live and work together. This is probably the beauty of being a family estate. We are keeping positive, staying healthy, and working together as a team to keep moving forward.

### Have your sales changed? More wholesale than retail/restaurants/private?

Yes, sales have slowed down and sales channels as well as purchasing patterns have changed. Retailers are taking the lead over restaurants. Online retailers are the best positioned since they are able to reach a wider consumer base with a larger selection. Restaurants are either closed or can do home-deliveries in which case they see reduced wine sales: the final consumer is cautiously spending and likely purchasing from retailers/supermarkets. In terms of purchasing patterns, consumers are approaching low and medium priced products leaving large unsold volumes of premium wines.

### How do you imagine wine tourism in the time of social distancing?

For the time being, digital tastings are widely practised to communicate with both commercial clients and wine lovers/private clients around the world. Once the restrictive measures will be reduced, I think little will change from the wine tourism we've known if wineries and restaurants can enforce social distancing measures at their venues and can guarantee clients the implementation of tools that sanitize the spaces and any surface they may get in contact with. Wine tours in open air wouldn't suffer much from such measures. Restaurants will be the most affected due to less capacity. What I have been doing these days is drinking soulful and undressed wines able to offer a form of escapism during this confinement time at home. With its aromas and flavours, wine allows you to travel with your mind and explore many parts of the world, digging into regions, their culture, their people and their territory. So my suggestion for these days is choosing a bottle of wine you like and let it drive you through the beautiful story of where it is produced. I think it is one of the greatest aspects of the wonderful world of wine.