

TERRACOTTA VESSELS AND THE RESPECT TO THE OLD AND TRADITIONAL WINEMAKING. SENSORY EVALUATION OF WINE QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Wine has played an important role in human history. Wine industry is always innovating and trying to keep its product in a hot spot. However, nowadays the wine market is saturated with very similar products and if you really want to start a successful business in this sector you have to come up with something especial and different. This is especially true because consumers are every day more demanding and the sector has to fulfill their needs and demands. Some of the most influential personalities in wine are asking companies to come back to their origins and basically use local grape varieties and traditional winemaking processes to prepare high quality wines. The ancient Romans and Greeks used large clay pots (vessels or amphoras, in Spanish they are called "*tinajas*") for fermentation and now some modern winemakers are starting to use this technology again and are following the footsteps of our ancestors. These clay amphoras will produce a wine with unique attributes to improve the consumer experience. The most important fact is that clay vessels will not mask the true personality of the wines behind intense wood notes; the wines will appear simply as they are. In this way, the delicate but complex sensory profiles of some local wines will stand out from the crowd. Recently, qvevri wines (spontaneously fermented in amphora-like clay vessels) and other forms of low-intervention winemaking have become popular among producers and consumers. However, only a few hundred thousands of such wines are produced annually, and they are designed for consumers willing to pay medium-high prices. The clay amphoras will be a perfect tool to differentiate products, improve their quality and increase the variety of complex flavors of regional vineyards. However, the knowledge of what is happening with the wine inside the vessels is non-existent and deep and scientific research is needed. For instance, the effects of the clay type and composition, the "firing" temperature, the storage temperature, etc. need to be evaluated and clearly established. Results will be presented regarding volatile composition, mineral contents, and sensory profiles. The sensory profiles have been generated using systematic descriptive sensory evaluation and the application of this science on wine will also be discussed. Besides, this type of wine is prepared using local grape varieties "*Mandó*" and "*Monastrell*".

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