



Mondo - Andrea Biscaro and the creation of wine culture in Thailand

Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 13 mag 2022 (Prima Notizia 24) Although young, Andrea Biscaro -herald of the Italy brand in Asia- has cultivated his personal passion for wines and their world to the point of turning it into his work that also has the characteristics of a mission: to create a real "Wine Culture" in

Thailand.

Andrea Biscaro, young, lustrous, bright and with a smile that greets his interlocutor with a very friendly manner, is a deep lover of the world of wines, especially Italian wines, for which he has lavished much of his professional and work experience. Today he lives and works in Thailand, a nation in which he has condensed his working world into a dimension that acquires special characteristics, namely, spreading a real "Wine Culture" in that Asian country. It is a Nation strongly tied to its historical and cultural roots, cuisine therefore, is one of the traits where National Tradition is widely respected and revered; at the same time, however, it is also a country that is open to the knowledge that comes from abroad, from the Western World in particular, and Italy, year after year, through world-famous brands, through Football, through the motorsport environment of absolute planetary prestige, through the fame that precedes its cuisine and its wines, has conquered a special space in the heart of Thai national life, nowadays, in fact, unlike in the recent past, it is much easier to find a pizza, Italian dishes, wines from our country and even a good cup of "espresso" coffee just about everywhere, in tourist resorts as well as in the cosmopolitan Capital, Bangkok. But if all this has happened, it is thanks to existential and professional figures like Andrea Biscaro, who have done and are doing pioneering work in spreading the "Italy" brand in Thailand. Today, Andrea Biscaro has materialized all this by founding a company called "Primo Wines," without neglecting to mention that he previously obtained the 3rd Level of Sommelier.

According to what paths did you end up living and working in Bangkok? This is quite a complicated issue, in the sense that -after graduating in Architecture from Udine, I entered a competition and ended up working in the United States, specifically in Yellowstone. The first job step was House Keeper, then I was promoted to Inspector, eventually, I was promoted to Manager. During the Yellowstone experience, which lasted five months, I met my current girlfriend, whose name is Naomi, originally from Taiwan. During that time we began to assume a more stable relationship between us over time. So, after the Yellowstone experience, I started to travel all over Asia, from Nepal (I also did the Everest base camp, solo), I traveled a lot all over Southeast Asia, for eight months, then I came back to Italy and started to work for a wine company, one of the most important in Italy, Colferai, in the position of Manager. Through this job, I had several experiences in Asia, meanwhile, with my girlfriend we had felt the need to establish more continuity and permanence, so we decided to live together, that was the moment when I moved to Bangkok, in 2019. So I started working with

different companies importing products that had somewhat disappeared here, such as wine in boxes. Then, unfortunately, came the Covid hit, a huge and unexpected problem. Considering the "Before Covid"/"After Covid" watershed, what scenario is occurring in Bangkok and Thailand regarding Italian wines? Are there signs that prompt cautious optimism? Before Covid, the wine import business was doing reasonably well even though Thailand has never previously been a big wine consumer given its climate. During Covid there was also a real disaster with regard to alcohol management. My personal opinion is that -although many restrictions have been lifted-there is still a form of Covid phobia around and many Thais are still afraid to leave their homes, go to clubs or go to crowded places. With the fact that nightclubs and venues closer to the youth scene are still closed, or with restrictions still in place today, it certainly does not help the sale of wine or typical products, such as sparkling wines or wines may be. What are the characteristics of the Thai market in terms of notions and appreciations towards Italian wines? To be honest, the Thai market is a fledgling market, at present there is not much knowledge about wines, there is no knowledge about wine quality, wine education, wine complexity, and anyway -in general- what a wine means. Many people buy wine only because it is an index of status. Knowledge about Italian wines, therefore, is quite limited, especially with regard to white wines, sparkling wines (think of a Franciacorta Metodo Classico) such knowledge almost does not exist, Prosecco is making some inroads but we still need to spread the Culture regarding what a Prosecco really is, so many people here still call it "Champagne." Regarding, on the other hand, appreciations towards Italian wines, here we mean in 85-90% of cases, red wines are in mind and in particular, full-bodied wines such as Brunello di Montalcino, Amarone, or very alcoholic and fruity wines such as Primitivo. Currently, how do Italian wines position themselves compared to classic competitors around the world such as the French in the first place all the way to Californian or Australian wines? Here we need to make a premise: Thai Laws impose very high customs duties on European and American products, therefore, the various competitors have different valence here in Thailand, in the sense that Australia and Chile by not paying duty can import and then distribute products with a more affordable price, because here we get up to tripling the original cost of the product compared to the time it is cleared through customs. Regarding more specifically the European competitors, let's say that France we can say is the state that absolutely prevails here, particularly the Bordeaux and then the reds with Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Among Italian wines, Tuscany stands out, with the various Brunellos, Chianti and Super Tuscans; Veneto also does well, with Amarone and Ripasso, and Piedmont, with Barolo and Barbera. Red wines from Abruzzo, such as Montepulciano, and Apulian reds, especially Primitivo, are also very popular. What tasks do you perform today in terms of spreading knowledge about Italian wines and what are your current projects in this field? After Covid, I focused much more on wine education rather than actual distribution. In the sense that -thanks to the creation of our online panel that is primowine.com and thanks to the new relationships with hotels and big groups, we are building a real School of Education in which we teach what wine is, we teach how wine is produced, what are the characteristics of various wines, various grape varieties, in a very simple way. This has made people really curious, the undifferentiated user-for example-doesn't even know how a sparkling wine acquires bubbles, here

they generally thought in a naive way, that -as in carbonated beverages- gas is added later. Or it was not known that some white wines could be made from red grapes. So, I have seen that there is a lot of curiosity, and that is good, in the sense that we are talking about an infant who is trying to learn. At the moment, my goal is to continue as much as possible to create Courses where we teach the concept of wine, the culture of wine and the emotion of wine. So these are Courses where you learn the basics but also how to open a bottle, how a wine is served, how it should be maintained. All this makes me hopeful for the future, because I have seen that-in simple terms, in the sense of popularization-people here are very interested. This, of course, is not only about Italian wines but about the whole wine world, because at the moment, in my opinion, before I focus on representing Italian wines, I would like to educate the customer with the basics. Only in this way is it possible to understand, step by step, the complexity and beauty that Italian wine and culture really have.

di Francesco Tortora Venerdì 13 Maggio 2022