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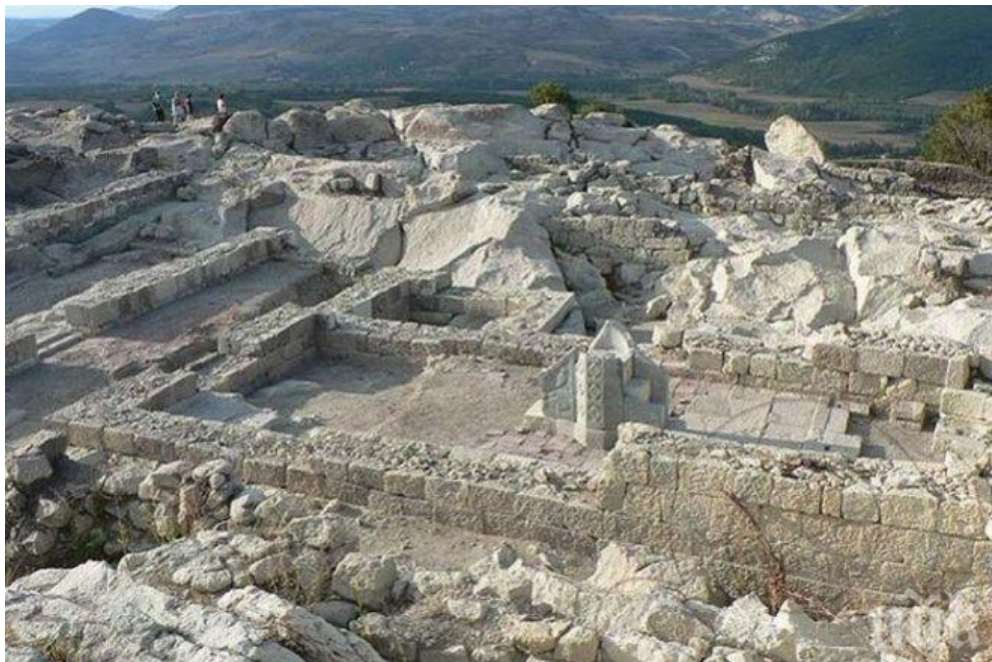
Viticulture in the Haskovo district

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Viticulture and winemaking have been and still continue to be an important part of the history of the Balkan Peninsula. Grapes and wine have always been a permanent part of the local plate. The ancient Thracians had their own name for wine. This is the word *zelas* and shows a very old millennial tradition in the cultivation of the vine and the use of wine. Wine is permanently present in the rituals, in everyday life, in the festive cycle and ceremonial of the Thracians in antiquity, which defines the ancient Thracian territory as one of the cradles of vine growing and the cult of wine. All numerous discovered monuments and artifacts are indisputable evidence that in the Balkans, and in particular the areas covering the Eastern Rhodopes, the rivers Arda and Maritsa and Sakar Mountains, as well as in northern Greece and the Aegean prove that the cultivation of vines and winemaking in Europe, as a conscious human activity, first originated and developed in these places.



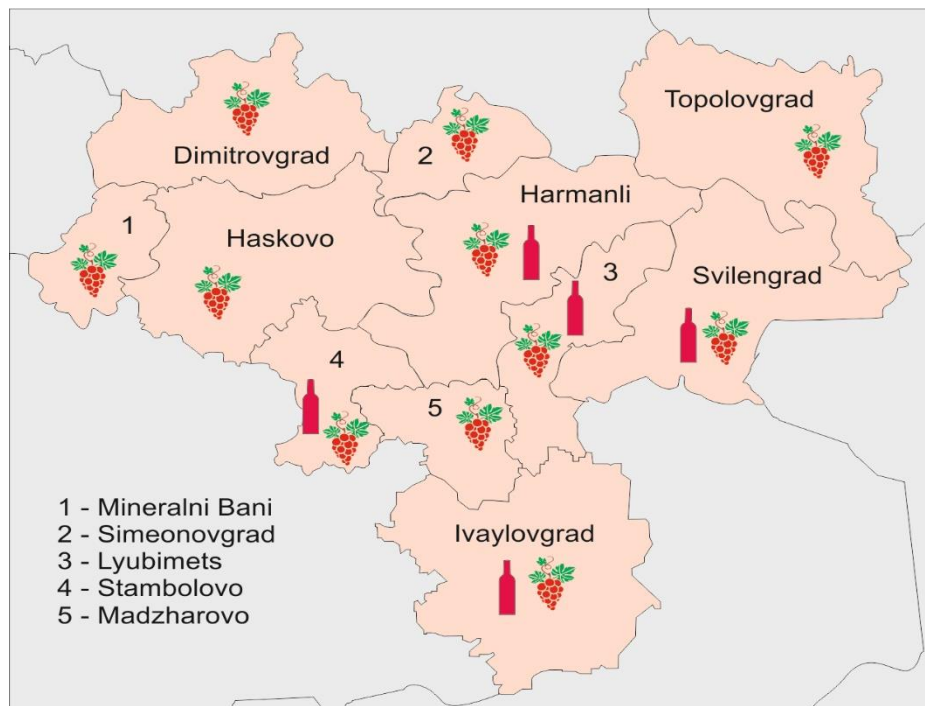
Subsequently, viticulture, winemaking and the cult of wine - the god Dionysius, were transferred to the Mediterranean and other parts of the European continent. Cultural and historical evidence and facts related to the development of viticulture and winemaking in themselves represent a unique competitive advantage for Haskovo region, which is still underused, both in terms of attracting more tourists and to promoting local traditions in wine production.





Haskovo Municipality is located in the central part of Southern Bulgaria, between the Rhodopes and the Balkan Mountains and is one of the constituent municipalities of Haskovo District and part of the South Central region. The municipality of Haskovo has a favorable climate, convenient transport and is a natural center of cultural life in the area.

In accordance with the guidelines of the European policy in the “Wine” sector, the Bulgarian wine sector part of which is the wine production in Haskovo region faces the challenges to increase its competitiveness, preserving traditions and increasing its social and environmental role in aspect of the regional development. The specificity of the production process in viticulture defines it as one of the most intensive sectors of agriculture in terms of labor resources.



In this sense, as well as in view of the positive dynamics of international trade in wine, viticulture and wine production could be defined as activities with potential for generating income and employment. Based on the specifics of combining factor conditions and organizational and economic relations at the regional level, each region can create sustainable competitive advantages that have a positive impact on the regional economy (Borisov and Radev, 2011, Kanchev et al., 2012, Miteva, 2015, Kirechev, 2012, Dimitrova and Simeonov, 2016).





Haskovo District is situated in the South Bulgarian xerothermal soil zone. The main and most widespread bioclimatic soil types in this area are cinnamon forest soils, resins and alluvial-meadow soils.

Cinnamon forest soils are the most widespread soils in our country and can be found only in Southern Bulgaria - on the southern slopes of Balkan Mountains and the main slopes of the other mountains south of it and related valley fields, hilly lands of Srednogorie, Kraishteto, Tundzha region, Strandzha, Eastern Rhodopes, Osogovo, Rila, Pirin, Rhodopes (up to 800 m above sea level). In total they occupy about 22.0% of the total area of the country. The typical forest cinnamon soils have a limited distribution in hilly and deeply indented areas. They are developed on a carbonate base and are characterized by a shallow profile, low power, dense construction. By mechanical composition they are light to heavy clay with humus content (3-5%).

South Central region which includes Haskovo district is the region with the highest percentage of gross grape production in gross crop production - 3.4% compared to 3.0% in the Southwest, 2.9% in the South East and 0, 4% in the three regions of Northern Bulgaria, according to the official information of the NSI for 2014 (Dimitrova and Dimitrov, 2017). This is indicative that in the regional plan the traditions in the sector are preserved to the greatest extent, viticulture and wine production are important for the livelihood of the local population, as well as for regional economic development. There is potential for improving the competitive position of local grape growers and wineries, which must be developed through appropriate economic and marketing approaches, mainly based on the specifics of local production, resulting from the great variety and unique characteristics of typical local vine varieties.

The implementation of some recognised European practices and standards is a goal that must be achieved if the area would like to develop as a wine destination. Practice shows that tourist sites with certain quality standards on the base service provided are more visited than others, where the requirements are lowered. Serving quality wines in a nice and hygienic environment by well-trained and polite staff is a prerequisite for a well-presented product. Conversely, if visitors try bad wines presented quickly and incompetently, there is a risk of building a bad image not only for the winery, but for the whole region as well.



There is a high interest and attendance in the Organized Wine Festivals and exhibitions. The right direction for the promotion and development of wine tourism is the organization of this type of events by some of the wineries in the municipality of Harmanli such as "Extreme wine tour 4x4". This initiative is relatively new and is still an underdeveloped product for attracting tourists. But following the latest global trends in wine tourism, initiatives of this type are enjoying great success and attendance.

Harmanli Municipality is located in southeastern Bulgaria, in the central part of Haskovo region. Its territory is located on the border between the Upper Thracian Plain, Sakar Mountain and the foothills of the Eastern Rhodopes. One of the most important prerequisites for the development of the wine sector in a region is the agri-environmental conditions. Most of the production processes in viticulture take place in the open, which makes the sector very dependent on natural resources. The most important are the relief, the soils, the climate and the waters. Most of this area is flat and the rest has mountainous and semi-mountainous relief. As already mentioned the territory of Harmanli municipality and the whole region around Sakar Mountain is one of the regions in which viticulture is developing at the fastest pace in the country. According to the municipal administrations in the district between 70 and 80% of the local population is engaged in agriculture as a main or additional activity, as viticulture is emerging as a major agricultural sector, and there is no lack of foreign investment in the sector. In these lands are some of the oldest vineyards in the Balkans. The chapel "Saint Trifon" is one of the symbols of the city. It was built in the distant 1884 on the initiative of the laity of the town of Harmanli with the active assistance of the Metropolitan of Sliven Gerasius and under the leadership of Archimandrite Adrian and priest Stefan Mirkov. It is located on one of the hills next to the city among massifs of vineyards, from which you can see the whole city and its surroundings. In 1990 it was almost destroyed. In 1997 the Vazrozhdnets Club took the initiative for its restoration with the active participation of the church and the entire population. On February 14, 1998 the blessing of the Metropolitan of Stara Zagora, His Excellency Pancratius was obtained. The construction is done entirely with donations. The break ground was made on September 22, 1999 by Vice President Todor Kavaldzhiev. The construction is carried out in 4 stages. The fourth stage ends on August 10, 2004. Located above the villa zone of Harmanli, with a beautiful view of Sakar, we understand why this is where the history of our most ancient drink originates and provokes the interest of many investors and winemakers.





Not far from here is a section "densely populated" with wineries. Malkata Zvezda, Chateau Kolarovo, Castra Rubra, the new Chateau of Terra Tangra, T-Wines - all names familiar to lovers of quality Bulgarian wines. At the entrance to Harmanli, right next to the gas station, the Sakar Enoteca is situated. The hall is designed for presentations, tastings and sales of boutique wines from most small wineries in South Sakar. The brands of some of the best wines from the region can be recognized on the shelves here.

Suitable for growing in the South Bulgarian wine region vine varieties are:





Dessert varieties of vines - Bulgar, Victoria, Palieri, Velika, Flame Seedless and others.

Wine grape varieties

Local varieties - Dimyat, Misket red, Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains (white), Mavrud, Pamid and Gamza (red)

Introduced varieties - Chardonnay, Rkatsiteli, Sauvignon Blanc (white), Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah (red)

Misket red is an old Bulgarian variety that has been grown since time immemorial in our lands. It is almost non-existent in other countries and its foreign names and synonyms are not known. It belongs to the Black Sea ecological-geographical group. It is found in all wine-growing regions of the country. Misket red is a late maturing wine variety. Its grapes ripen in late September or early October. The vines are characterized by medium to strong growth and the shoots ripen well by the end of the growing season and are *typically straight-growing*. It is characterized by a medium-sized, cylindrical-conical, sometimes with one or two wings, semi-compact to compact bunch and medium-sized, almost spherical grain. The fertility of the variety is very good. In modern plants the Misket Red variety is successfully grown on stem formations by applying short pruning of grape vines, and if necessary arrows are left. 20-30 bud spurs should be left on the vine, avoiding overloading in order to obtain quality grapes. The famous original quality white dry wines "Karlovski Muscat", "Sungurlar Muscat", "Brezovski Muscat" and "Straldzha Muscat" are produced from this variety. The first gold medal for wine from



Miskat Red was awarded in 1898 in the city of Antwerp - Belgium. The famous Euxinograd dry wines are produced by coupage of the Misket Red with the varieties Dimyat and Riesling Italian.

Dimyat was probably brought from Egypt to Thrace on the shores of the Black Sea by Greeks and has been grown since ancient times in our lands. It belongs to the Black Sea Ecological and Geographical Group. In our country until 1960 it was the most common wine variety of white grapes, which was also used as a dessert for fresh consumption and export. Dimyat is a late maturing variety, reaching maturity at the end of September. It has a large, conical, often winged, semi-compact to loose bunch and medium-sized or large oval grain. Its vines are moderately to strongly growing, and the variety has a very good fertility. It is recommended to grow on stem formations and short pruning with 2 buds. The white dry wines produced by it are distinguished by a pleasant straw yellow color, a light greenish tinge, fresh and harmonious taste, fine aroma and are suitable for some maturation and aging. Grapes with less sugar and higher acidity are used for the production of quality distillate wine materials. It is also used for the production of blended wines.



Tamyanka is a very old local variety. It is believed to have originated in the Middle East - Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt and others. In the areas around the Mediterranean it was grown thousands of years ago and is known by various names. The Romans called the muscat varieties Anathelicon moschaton because their grapes were heavily infested with bees and wasps. The

variety belongs to the Oriental ecological-geographical group. It is grown on larger areas in France, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and others. In the world this variety occupies an area of about 450,000 dka. Incense is a medium-maturing wine variety. Its grapes ripen around mid-September. It has a medium-sized, cylindrical-conical, semi-compact to compact cluster and medium to small, spherical, flattened from the top grain, with a strong musky aroma. The vines are characterized by medium growth. Suitable for this



variety are the stem formations with the application of a mixed pruning system. For the production of quality liqueur wines, the vines should not be overloaded with winter eyes and summer pruning should be applied. The strong musk taste is preserved in the wine. On the Crimean peninsula - Ukraine of this variety are produced quality wines "Magarch", "Massandra", "Castel", "Gurzuf". In Italy, it produces the famous sparkling wines "Asti Spumante".





Mavrud is an old local variety that has been grown in our lands since ancient times. It belongs to the Black Sea Ecological and Geographical Group. It is widespread mainly in Plovdiv and Haskovo regions. This is the variety that is mostly associated with Bulgaria and it is the variety that our country is presented on the world wine scene. Mavrud is a late to very late maturing wine variety. In the region of Plovdiv and Asenovgrad it ripens in late September or early October. The vines are characterized by strong growth and good fertility. In stem cultivation, shorter pruning of buds and a small number of short fruit rods (arrows) should be preferred with moderate loading of the vines. When the vines are overloaded with winter eyes during pruning, the quality of the grapes is greatly reduced. The grapes are used to produce high quality red table and dessert wines, which develop their qualities as they age. Mavrud wine is characterized by dark red to garnet color, good density, rich in phenolic substances and when aged acquires a wonderful harmonious taste. In addition to enough acids, grapes contain a lot of dye and a high extract.





Pamid is a very old local variety, a typical representative of the Black Sea ecological-geographical group. It is believed that the ancient Thracians cultivated it in our lands. In the past it was the most common variety in our country. In the South Bulgarian wine region, it ranks first among the wine grape varieties, and in the North Bulgarian - second place after the Gamza variety. Pamid is a medium to late maturing wine variety. Its grapes ripen in the second half of September. The vines are characterized by strong growth and straight-growing shoots. His fertility is very good. In the past, the vines of this variety were grown on Cup, and in modern vineyards - on the formation Moser, with pruning of pegs and arrows or on a medium-stem cordon with pegs. It produces mainly light red and rosé (rose type) dry light wines. They have low acidity and low extract, so they are not suitable for aging. The color of the dye and the quality of the Pamid wine can be increased by adding 5-10% of Alicante Boucher or Gran Noir grapes before fermentation or by blending ready-made wines.





Gamza is an old local variety, grown in the past on large areas in Northern Bulgaria. It is also widespread in a number of regions of Southern Bulgaria. Its exact origin has not been established. It belongs to the Black Sea ecological-geographical group. *Gamza* is a late to very late maturing wine variety. Its grapes ripen at the end of September and in the first days of October. The vines are characterized by medium to strong growth, and the fertility of the vines is very good even with short pruning of buds. When the vines are overloaded, the sugars, coloring matter and extract in the grapes decrease significantly and the quality of the wine deteriorates. A big disadvantage of the variety is the thin and fragile skin of the grains, which in a wet autumn crack and rot.



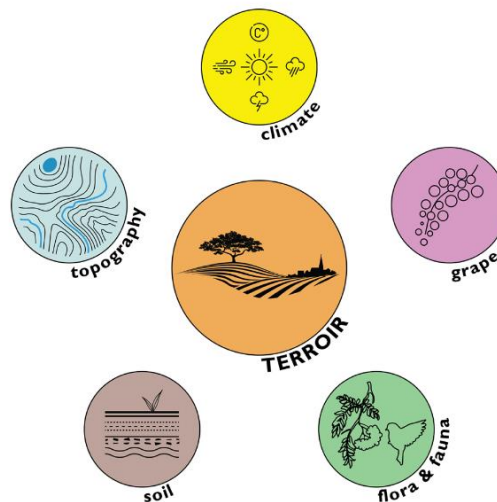
To reduce the risk of gray rot, the vines should be planted in ventilated, hilly terrain, and in rainy autumn the grapes should be harvested as soon as possible. Red dry wines of this variety are characterized by a bright red ruby color, delicate fruity aroma and typical resinous taste. They are harmonious, soft, with a pleasant freshness. They mature and form relatively quickly in 1-2 years, but are also suitable for consumption as younger wines.

Thousands of years of tradition and refinement. Thousands of years of emotional connection with the beloved elixir. Today, a glass after a long dynamic day acts not only relaxing but also regenerating - a moderate amount of wine is considered to be a source of beauty and health. No wonder that winemaking has survived since the advent of agriculture. The wine is as old as the world, but it has never ceased to be interesting and modern. Wine continues to provoke science with its mysterious and noble nature. No other drink has had such a powerful influence on the worldview of European nations. Wine is present in mythology, religion, art and literature. Wine is an inevitable sign of the social hierarchy, it is part of politics, it is an attribute of



diplomacy, it is a subject of fashion. Like any pleasure, drinking wine has its rules, rituals and accessories. Wine is not only a natural but also an intellectual product.

You've probably heard the word "terroir" - but do you know where it comes from and what it means? In fact, there is no literal translation of the word terroir. A French term that describes specific characteristics that a geographical region conveys over wine, coffee and tea. Soil, subsoil, the rock beneath it, their physical properties, climatic conditions, tillage techniques, the speed at which the soil dries, whether it accepts or rejects moisture, the altitude, the slope of the terrain, its orientation to the sun, the refreshing proximity to forests, water basins or rivers, the whole complexity of these characteristics determines the terroir, which is expressed in the character of the wine afterwards. Terroir can also be translated as “a sense of place“.



It is believed that the land on which the vines are grown, gives unique qualities specific only to the region. An important aspect of terroir is the amount of moisture that retains the soil and the availability of nutrients needed for vine development. At very high humidity, for example, the vines develop a significant leaf mass at the expense of the fruit. Very highly developed vines produce insufficiently ripe grapes, and the wines produced from them have an unpleasant plant character. That is why the so-called controlled yield. It is no coincidence that the best wines of their own nature bear the name of the place or vineyard from which they originate. Good terroir is strictly limited, and when combined with the right variety, really great wines are produced. The vineyards in South Sakar are located on the southern slopes of Sakar Mountain, in the valley of the Maritsa River. Their position is to the south, southwest and southeast. The proximity of a river valley and broken mountainous terrain form the climate in

terms of precipitation. The duration of the period without precipitation in the region is on average 210-240 days. The climate in the region is continental-Mediterranean. Winters are mild - absolute temperatures do not fall below 0-5 C. Spring is warm, occurs early and is followed by hot and dry summers. The total sum of degrees of the vegetation period is relatively high - 4000-4200 C. The frequency of spring precipitation is on average 5%. The average daily temperatures for the hottest months are 24-26 C, and the average value of the minimum temperatures for year n falls below 16-18 C.



Thousands of wine varieties are known around the world. In each wine country there are traditional local, cultivated for centuries, varieties of vines, as well as new, transferred or cultivated in recent decades. In modern winemaking there are several dozen varieties, which, in general, determine its character.

They have been proven to give the best results, the most interesting and rich in taste and aroma of wine. South Sakar is mostly known for the traditional varieties of red wines - Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, but for several years some wineries in the area quite successfully vinify from their own plantations wines of not so well known for Bulgaria red varieties - Marsalan, Malbec, Petit Verdot. The vinification of the white varieties planted a few years ago gives quite good results - the typical French varieties from the Rhone Rusan, Marsan and Viognier valleys, as well as the cultivation and vinification of the Bulgarian varieties Tamyanka and Pamid mostly by the team of Villa Basareya. Between Harmanli and Topolovgrad is situated the so-called Kolarovo vineyard. Founded in the 70s by the Austrian Prof. Moser, who



after long research has chosen the place as the most suitable place in Bulgaria for growing the Merlot variety, and in 1977 the planting of the massif in the village began and by 1980 its size was exceeded more than 7,000 acres. These were the vineyards, from which for almost 20 years almost all "Vinprom" in the country have bought and vinified Merlot from there. Although most of the land on which the massif was created has been returned to its previous owners, much of it has been preserved to this day. Most of the cellars in the area use this grape, which produces the best merlot in Bulgaria, due to the well-known fact that the old vineyards give thicker, more extractive and more structured wines. Such are the Malkata Zvezda, Villa Basareya and others. An interesting fact for the region is that for many years it was a border area and lacks any industry that pollutes the environment, which creates excellent conditions for growing high quality grapes and creating such modern organic wines. All this leads oenologists to believe that this region can gain world recognition and become an emblem of Bulgarian wine production.

Chardonnay - an old French variety. It is currently the most renowned for the production of white wines. It is grown in all wine countries around the world. In some wines there are complex accents of hazelnut, acacia, toast. But these characteristics are related to both the variety and the production technology. The most common in the aroma are shades of apple, melon, pineapple and citrus (grapefruit and lemon).

Merlot - an old French variety, which in our country is distributed mainly in southern Bulgaria, where it best develops its valuable qualities. Merlot is a medium ripening variety. The grapes ripen in early to mid-September. Wines made from Merlot grapes ripen faster and, due to their lower acidity, are more harmonious when young. They are fine, relatively soft, with a good extract and dark red color. There are nuances of red fruits (cherry, plum) in the aroma, and as they age in a barrel, they develop jam aromas.

Cabernet Sauvignon - it is one of the old high-quality French varieties. In our country is the most common red grape variety. Cabernet Sauvignon is a medium-ripe variety. It usually ripens in the middle and second half of September. The aromas are generous and develop tones of green pepper, ginger, tobacco and green pepper. They are very good when aged with oak barrels, which gives an excellent bouquet and rounded taste - cinnamon, spices, chocolate and toast.



Syrah is a medium-ripening variety. The aroma has nuances of black pepper, leather, tobacco, and sometimes herbs (mint, thyme) and spices (cloves). A variety with a lot of dignity and a great future. Syrah is an ancient variety, considered one of the most aristocratic in the world. There are different versions of its origin. In Australia it is called Shiraz, but in Europe we have adopted its French roots and call it Syrah.

Mavrud - high quality Bulgarian red variety. It has been grown since ancient times. Thermophilic and pretentious. Grapes are very rich in extract and dyes. The wine is dark red with a garnet tinge and good density. Shades of small red and berries can be felt in the nose. Very suitable for aging. When aged in oak barrels, it develops chocolate notes in the bouquet and shades of black pepper and cinnamon.



We reveal the secrets of making quality wine. First of all, the exact date of the grape harvest is important, then the hygiene of the dishes and the premises. The third condition - the use of sulfur dioxide (the only chemistry used in winemaking). Equally important is the proper course of alcoholic fermentation. We also debunk the common misconception that the recently fashionable rose is a mixture of white and red wine. In essence, this is a wine made from red grapes, but by "white" technology. And since rose is unpretentious to the food it is consumed, and it is a worldwide trend, that is why almost every wine cellar produces it. One of the most ancient wines in the world, rose deservedly regains its popularity in recent years. Although it holds only about 5% of wine consumption in Bulgaria, there are many rich, interesting wines of this type that are worth looking for to enrich your palate.



With the development of wine consumption and its production and quality control, several areas for organoleptic assessment have emerged. The purpose of the tasting is to measure and analyze the qualities of wine that can be perceived by our senses: sight, smell, taste. These qualities of wine are called "organoleptic", and the set of methods by which they are measured - "organoleptic analysis". The word "organoleptics" comes from the Greek language: organon - organ; lēptikos - prone to take, receptive. The phases of organoleptic analysis are: tasting, observation and analysis. The last phase is the most important and the most difficult and requires serious theoretical training and many years of practical training. Who can become a wine taster? Virtually every one of us. Only about 5% of the world's population has physiological disorders of smell and taste that prevent the training of the senses; everyone else can learn to taste.

Tasting sensor system



The first step in tasting is to know how our senses work, respectively what are the mistakes of perceptions that we should avoid. Irritations from the environment reach our senses through receptor cells. From there, through our nervous system, they reach the relevant centers in the brain, where they are processed and analyzed. The response that the brain sends to our motor centers creates a constant network of information and interpretation.

Our consciousness functions precisely thanks to the impressions that surround it, and we - thanks to what we see, hear, smell, taste and touch.

The scheme by which the sensory mechanism of tasting works is:

- Stimulation (aromatic or taste stimuli)
- Sensory organ (sensory receptors of taste and smell)
- Sensation (reflex response to sensory receptor stimulation)



- Neurons (nerve cells that transmit sensory signals to the olfactory cortex of the brain and to the spinal cord)
- Perception (interpretation and recognition of aroma and taste with the help of consciousness, practice and memory)
- We distinguish between sensation and perception: perception is the conscious registration of a sensation as a result of its interpretation!
- The most widely used are the 100-point and 20-point systems, and the world-famous and most commonly used is the 100-point system of Robert Parker. Parker's system works with a quality scale from 50 to 100 points. Numerical evaluations are used only to highlight and supplement the descriptive tasting notes that are Robert Parker's main means of expression. Here's how to understand Parker's numerical estimates:
- 96-100 points: a remarkable wine with a deep and complex character, possessing all the attributes of a high quality wine of the given variety or type. Consuming wines of this caliber is an unforgettable reward for the effort made to find and buy them.
- 90-95 points: exceptional wine with incredible complexity and character. In short, these are great wines.
- 80-89 points: wine above average to very good, made with finesse, demonstrating different degrees of aroma and character. No noticeable and obvious flaws.
- 70-79 points: medium quality but well made wine that does not differ in anything special. In one sentence: straightforward, frank and harmless wine.
- 60-69 points: wine below average with obvious shortcomings, such as increased acidity and / or tannins, lack of aromas, possibly errors in aroma and taste.
- 50-59 points: considered unacceptable wine.





Every self-respecting wine lover should know wine accessories, not forgetting that practicality is always leading, not price or design. Here are the six accessories that make it easier to perform wine rituals:

Corkscrew - corkscrews are diverse in design and shape. The spiral is the most important element and it should have a sharp tip and rounded edges so that it pierces but does not tear the cork. The best proven form is with a bendable knee that opens the bottle on the principle of the lever. And the lowest efficiency is shown by the corkscrew, type "ballerina", which, unfortunately, has "taken over" most households.

The glass - experts are unanimous, and practice has proven that the glass is of great importance for the way we perceive a wine. The shape and volume emphasize certain characteristics of the wine profile. And together with the serving temperature, they play a decisive role in the overall impression that the wine leaves in our country.





Decanter or carafe - Serving wine seems an easy task: open the bottle and pour. However, almost every wine lover has heard of another ritual: decanting. For many, this is a shrouded in mystery action in which only those who understand are engaged. The reality, as often happens with wine, is different and has its own simple explanation. Behind the word "decanting" lies the process of aeration or contact of wine with oxygen from the environment. This is done to activate the aromatic profile of the wine and in most cases is expressed in pouring the wine from the bottle into another container.



Wines with lees are decanted, regardless of their age, as well as in cases when the cork is broken and particles of it have fallen into the wine;

Decanting wines between the ages of 5 and 8 only makes sense if their bouquet is slightly reductive (stewed, suppressed) or shows any irregularities. In such cases, one to two hours of contact with the air can improve the condition of the wine.

Decanting old wines (over 10 years old) is not recommended. Their bouquet, accumulated slowly over years of reductive aging, weakens very quickly on contact with oxygen. If we still decide to decant due to the presence of abundant sediment, it is done in a special decanter, the so-called duck. The wine is carefully poured down his sloping throat and, without shaking or subjecting him to any concussions, is consumed immediately.

How do we decant?

1. If we have a cellar or store our wine in a horizontal position, place the bottle in an upright position for about 24 hours before consumption. This way, any sediment will collect at the bottom of the bottle and pouring from one container to another will be easier.

2. Prepare the decanter container (decanter or carafe): clean it with water or special means (pearls for decanter cleaning) and make sure that there are no side odors in it.

3. Open the bottle and pour into the decanting container. It is best to do this on a bright background: daylight or a strong lamp. Lighting a candle, against the background of whose flame we pour the wine into the decanter, sounds romantic, but it is an outdated and really inexperienced





technique. We need a light background to monitor the movement of the sludge and to avoid it entering the decanter.

Vacuum stopper for wine as part of wine accessories - it often happens that you can not drink an open bottle of wine. Once opened, the wine is susceptible to oxidation, ie. of deterioration of its qualities. That is why it is important to close it well and store it in the refrigerator (applies to both white and rose, as well as red). A good option is an affordable vacuum plug or stopper with a vacuum pump.

Cloth for polishing glasses - 95% of wine glasses should be washed by hand and dried with a suitable cloth that does not leave hairs and absorbs water well. Wipe with a clean, non-washed with fabric softener and and never hold the cup by the base while polishing. Hold it at the bottom to avoid twisting.

Unlike wine, which first appeared in the East, somewhere in today's territories of Georgia, Armenia, Iran and Turkey and in antiquity slowly moved west, the wine barrel is a western invention that moved east. It was invented by the Celts around III-II century BC. Centuries later, its silhouette is now found in Roman mosaics. Until then, the wine was stored and transported in ceramic pithos and amphorae. By the way, this practice in some countries (especially in the Caucasus) was preserved until the end of the Middle Ages and even until the last century. Towards the end of Antiquity and during the Middle Ages, the barrel gradually established itself as the main wine vessel in Europe. Initially, it was preferred because it is more convenient for transporting liquids, but over time it became clear that wines develop in barrels and their taste is refined. By the way, the concept of tonnage in shipping is derived from the French word tonneau (barrel). The capacity of the ships was determined by the number of barrels they could carry. It is curious that in the cooperage craft from Antiquity to the present day almost nothing has changed, except for the introduction of iron hoops.



Modern winemaking uses stainless steel, reinforced concrete and glass vessels, but the classic barrel for quality wines remains the oak barrel and there is no prospect of this ever changing. No other material can do its quiet and noble work so well. In the past, chestnut, acacia



and fir were also used, but today it is more exotic. Oak is indispensable. It is valued for its mechanical properties - strength and flexibility, but more for some chemical properties and fine structure that helps the favorable "breathing" of the wine. Of the substances it extracts from oak, phenolic compounds (tannins) are the most important, and vanillin has the strongest effect on taste. The quality of oak wood, as well as grapes, depends largely on the soil and climate. Poorer soils in drier areas provide better quality material. Only trees grown in the forest are selected, not solitary ones.



They have straight trunks and a finely porous structure. In Europe, two main types of oak are used - *Quercus robur* and *Quercus sessilis*. The white oak *Quercus alba* is most valued in America. In France, the best material is considered to be from the oak forests of Tronçais, Allier, Limousin. In our country the Strandzha oak has the best qualities, but material from Stara Planina is also used. Before reaching the cooper's workshop, the timber goes through a complex preparation. Plates are split from the trees in a specific way (along the radius), because this way the permeability is lower. Then the planks are lined up in an open and ventilated place and dry for 2-3 years. It is assumed that a board 1 cm thick should dry for a year. It is desirable that they get rained and snowed. In modern winemaking, two types of barrels with a specific aromatic profile are permanently imposed - French and American. The former give finer and more delicate nuances in the aroma, while the latter have more vanilla and spicy tones. Some believe that American oak has sharper aromas than French, because in the United States the wood is often artificially dried, but the prevailing opinion is that the wood of the American white oak itself contains more substances with spicy aromas. A particularly delicate moment is the burning of the arcs. This operation causes changes in the chemical composition of the wood, which also change the taste of





the wine. The main degrees of scorching are three - Light, Medium and Heavy. In barrels subjected to low scorching, the aromas of the wood are less integrated into the wine. At medium scorching the process is more expressive. Then the tones of vanilla, toast and spices stand out. When strongly scorched, some of these aromas become too aggressive and suppress the varietal characteristics of the wine. Oenologists explain these changes with the appearance of new substances (aromatic aldehydes) in the decomposition of lignin from wood in the process of heat treatment.

Of particular importance is the volume of the barrel. Some wineries still use large bearing barrels between 2 and 5 tons and even larger, but most prefer smaller containers. Everyone has advantages and disadvantages. In small vessels, the processes are faster, but the liquids evaporate more intensely through the arcs. In adults, maturation is slower but more difficult to control. Standard volumes of barrels vary between 200 and 400 liters (205 liters in Champagne, 225 liters - barrique in Bordeaux, 228 liters in Burgundy and 300-400 liters in Australia and New Zealand). A barrel can be loaded three to four times, after which it becomes unusable. This explains the relatively high prices of "reserve" wines. In Bulgaria, the largest producer of barrels is the village of Vrachesh, 3 km from Botevgrad. There are about 30 barrel workshops and most make between 100 and 500 barrels per year. The ancient craft says that hundreds of years ago there were many forests in the area - valuable material for the barrels, and mostly boys were born, so they had to make a living. They work mainly with material from Strandzha and some parts of Stara Planina. The Latin name of the oak is *Quercus petraea* (European white oak). It is extracted from the forests of Stara Planina, Strandzha and the Rhodopes. In structure it is very similar to the French oak, with a fine-grained structure, but with a lower contribution of tannins. Bulgarian producers adhere to the traditional manual processing and making of barrels. The effect of aging in barrels can be achieved without barrels.





Many growers do this by adding oak chips or oak shavings during fermentation. Thus the wine acquires a certain nobility, without its price flying to the heavens. If the label of a wine says that it has matured in contact with oak, it is most likely this method. Recently, some wineries have been experimenting with red wines in old cognac barrels, and the results are very interesting. The wines are thick and voluminous with an exotic cognac-liqueur tone in aroma.



In Bulgaria, wine tourism (also enotourism) appeared in the 90s of the XX century. By itself, this type of tourism involves tasting, consuming or purchasing wine from or near the source. The advantage of wine tourism is that it can be practiced all year round. Through the implementation of wine tours, the wine lover gets acquainted with the taste of wine, is informed about its content, the method of growing vines, the method and conditions of production and storage of wine.

Wine tourism can be classified into the group of rural and agricultural tourism, as well as hobby tourism. Wine tourism is a type of alternative tourism in which the main purpose of the trip is considered to be the tasting and consumption of wines that the region offers. In addition, of course, tourists can enjoy other benefits nearby. The practice of wine tourism can be combined with other forms of tourism, which include observation of cultural and historical sites, nature walks or tasting of delicious local dishes. This type of tourism also helps to get to know the region and the way of life of the population. Tourists get acquainted with the traditions, holidays and customs of the region, participate in various events (eg grape harvest), festivals and holidays. Wine tourism



is proving to be a natural center of attention for tourists with these new (or rather rediscovered values) for several reasons.

There are 260 wine producers registered in Bulgaria:

- Over 110 wineries offer wine tourism.
- Most of the cellars offering wine tourism are family, with small and medium production capacity.
- Some municipalities are already being advertised as wine tourism destinations and attracting tourists.
- In Italy, wine and culinary tourism contribute more than € 4 billion in revenue annually.
- Average daily cost of a tourist who prefers wine tourism - between 80 - 120 euros.
- Destinations with well-preserved tangible and intangible cultural heritage, authentic products and holidays are preferred.
- Wine regions around the world rely more and more on wine tourism as a source of income, employment and sustainability.
- Creates synergies.

First, wine production cannot happen without a connection to nature. Not just the vineyards, but the soils, the mountains, the rivers, all the vegetation around, the traditions of the people in the region, their habits and methods - wine is made from everything that the French combine in the untranslatable word "terroir".

Second, it has authenticity in it. The cellars are often located in regions with centuries-old, even millennial traditions of wine production. In small villages or directly in the middle of nature - between the hills. Often in these regions there is something to see and visit - Thracian remains, Byzantine fortresses or natural landmarks.

Third, wine is a pleasure.

It is always nice to walk through the vineyards, to be taken around the cellar and to be shown how to make wine - step by step, to feel the mysterious feeling in the dungeons among the barrels. It is always nice to taste the wines, discover the differences and find an explanation for them and combine it with local culinary specialties.





And as a bonus - to seal the memories in a box of wine and negotiate them for years. For tourists it is a quality experience, and for the cellars - a business, and a serious one.

What can Haskovo District offer to its visitors?

- ✓ Eco-trails and routes
- ✓ Organic production
- ✓ Local culinary specialties
- ✓ Wine and culture
- ✓ Bike tours
- ✓ Cultural and historical heritage
- ✓ Balneo and SPA
- ✓ Destination for 4 seasons

Next to the Enoteca is situated Villa Besarea - a winery that produces about 70 tons of wine a year. We are greeted by the oenologist Kamen Koev, which also confirms that wine is a social drink and brings people together. Villa



Besarea is characterized by no vineyards. However, it has found a way to build relationships with grape growers in the area. By capturing part of the production in "green", they support the grape growers in the period of costs for growing the vineyards before the grape harvest.

"Good grapes make good wine, so we stick to good grapes," says Kamen Koev.



11 km from Harmanli, in the direction of the village of Kolarovo, is situated “Malkata Zvezda” Winery. Its name comes from the location of a nearby crossroads of Roman roads.



Established in 2005 and with a stock of 180 decares of its own vineyards, it also offers skilful wines. The cellar is small, modernly equipped and has underground rooms for aging of wine, as well as a unique atmosphere for guests wishing to experience the "magic of wine". Since 2015, Svilen Georgiev - oenologist is responsible for the production. He contributes to the modern feeling of our wines by applying modern methods of vinification, but with respect for tradition. Located at the foot of South Sakar and only 11 km. from the town of Harmanli, “Malkata Zvezda” is lucky to be in the heart of this place so special for Bulgarian wine with fabulously beautiful nature, generous sun and suitable soils for growing vines. The microclimate, the terroir and the wine traditions are the reasons why the owners choose this place for their wine project. Mr. Nikolay Ivanov and Mr. Georgi Georgiev have the desire to preserve the exceptional terroir and style of the wines from South Sakar with their pronounced fruitiness and good tannin structure.





In the village of Kolarovo, built entirely of stone, is situated the wine cellar "Castra Rubra". Its own vineyards are over 1800 decares, including over 15 grape varieties. The winery emphasizes the perfect quality with minimal interference with grapes and wine. The

idea of its creation is to be built next to the grape plantations, in order to flow into the production process as quickly as possible.

It is the most modern winery for the production of middle and high class wine - this is how its manager

Tsvetan Georgiev presents it. In the middle class of wines, they stay in oak barrels for 10-12 months before bottling, and in the high class of wines - from 18 to 24 months. However, in addition to modernization in grape processing, Castra Rubra is the only winery currently using "compacting" land use technology. Some of its new massifs have vineyards with the smallest distance between the rows - 1.80 meters, compared to the old standards of 3.40 meters.



"Castra Rubra is compact to be comfortable to work with." The winery has an administrative part, a laboratory for the three oenologists of the winery, who define the "exact





time for grapes". These are the 7 days in which the grapes, according to the rootstock and variety, are ripe and harvested.

The fermentation hall, in which the "smooth fermentation" takes place and its regulation with the temperature of the environment in the hall. In the deposit we are exposed to the biggest fraud for the forbidden "second" and "third" wine. In order for a wine to be of good quality, 1 liter of wine is obtained from 3 kg of grapes. In the hall for the highest class of wine we enter



into a conversation about the oak barrels. Unleashing, filling with grapes and subsequent fermentation in the barrel itself. The winery has three glass rooms with different temperature control, a room for storing wine in a bottle. "Wine is a living organism. You close it in the bottle and under

certain conditions it can get better and better ", shares Tsvetan Georgiev. Working with high-quality cork is also important. The perfect cork is 7 years old. The cork is produced from the bark of the oak tree of the *Quercus suber* family, which is distributed mainly on the west coast of the Mediterranean - Spain, North Africa and especially Portugal (the local oak forests produce 50% of the world's cork). The shape of the cork is cylindrical, and its length can vary between 25 and 60 mm: the longer, the more potential for aging in the bottle is assumed to have the wine closed with it. However, regardless of the properties of the cork, there is one topic that cannot be ignored: a defect that is common in corked wines caused by the chemical 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA): the so-called "corks". guilt ". The aromas of such wines are often compared to the smell of a dog's wet fur. This unpleasant effect, together with the fact that it makes wine unfit for drinking are the main reasons for looking for alternatives to closing wine bottles.

This material does not allow oxygen to enter the wine, but allows the wine to age in the bottle itself. Wines with a screw cap are for quick consumption, "said Georgiev. There is a



humidification system in the barrel storage room of Castra Rubra and the barrels are checked weekly. If necessary, they are topped up, and the service life of the barrel itself is a maximum of 7 calendar years. They are then recycled, used for other alcohol or for decoration. Up to 2,300 bottles per hour are filled in the bottle filling room. Three bottles are labeled at the same time and a necklace (excise label) is placed according to the order. "The main amount of wine is sold in China and the United States, and in small quantities on our market," said Tsvetan Georgiev.

In the immediate vicinity is situated Chateau Kolarovo, a boutique wine cellar founded in 2009. It is located between the southwestern slopes of South Sakar and bears the name of the village in which it is located. It has 150 decares of well-maintained vineyards of the Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Mavrud, Syrah, Petit Verdot, Malbec varieties



and 50 decares of 40-year-old Merlot vineyards from the famous Kolarovo vineyard. You will recognize it by the tables and chairs made of oak barrels in front of it. The wooden benches and tables overlooking the vast vineyards predispose to the tasting of boutique wines from ten varieties of grapes, harvested from his own 200 decares of vineyards in the village of Kolarovo. It is here that the oldest preserved vineyard (50 years old) in Bulgaria is located. Its size is 7000 decares and is currently managed by two cooperatives.

Enotourism in Bulgaria has undergone and continues to undergo many positive changes. This type of service is becoming increasingly popular in our lands. And why not? We have enough resources to satisfy a large number of tourists who love wine experiences. We have a rich history, beautiful unspoiled nature and masters who turn grape juice into a divine wine delight. As the saying goes, wine speaks a universal language, it is a way of being. An ancient drink, but always modern and up-to-date! Divine and enchanting, and no doubt social - gathers communities and unites!

