

Dear friends, journalists, dear colleagues, producers and Assovini advisors,
Welcome to the seventeenth edition of Sicilia en Primeur.

Nobody of us would have ever imagined a scenario similar to that happening right now, constraining us all apart from each other, each one of us probably in their own home and city.

Today we should have been all in Cefalù, the magnificent location cited among the UNESCO patrimonies, suspended between and unforgettable sea, an observing mountain and, right in the middle, a cathedral so beautiful to resemble a dream.

We should have been at the end of the En Primeur tasting itself, at the end of the tours and at the end of one of the uncountable lunches we love to entertain you with here in Sicily: it's true, sometimes we exaggerate but we Sicilians are done this way! Still, I have the feeling that today, we would all rather be there.

Since the very first moment when the scenario started being worrying given the consequences the COVID 19 virus was bringing on, we decided - even when by the outmost the situation was underrated - not to postpone but to suspend this edition of Sicilia en Primeur, in the format we all know, love and that will come back.

With the same prompt reaction, we decided to transform it in a virtual appointment, the one happening right now and, most of all, in a charity event in favour of the Croce Rossa and of the Community of Saint Egidio, in support of those in need in our society.

Together with the Assovini board - and here I would like to thank the advisors, one by one naming them: Mariangela Cambria, Lilly Fazio , Josè Rallo, Michele Faro, Francesco Ferreri, Laurent de La Gatinais and Alberto Tasca - we decided to ask you just one hour of your time, or a little more, if not to exchange those scents, flavours, emotions that only a physical presence in Sicily could transmit us, at least the exchange of information and the update on the most important news and upcoming projects: exactly what we need in this altered scenario.

For this reason, after my regards and a couple of words and thoughts, president Rallo, will talk to us about the extraordinary work the Consortium DOC Sicilia is carrying on; Pino Cuttaia, president of Le Soste di Ulisse will for sure enhance your desire to come back to Sicily as soon as this will be possible and, last but not least, as happened in the last two editions - Mattia Filippi from Uva Sapiens, supported by the data coming from many of the members of Assovini, will present us the Harvesting 2019 as per what it has been. Our offices and our members are available for those who will want to, at their best convenience, taste the wines: you will just need to contact us.

I won't anticipate my thoughts regarding the 2019 harvesting; instead, I will take the few minutes remaining, to share with you a couple of thoughts regarding our Association and the times we are living.

Assovini is a small Sicilian miracle. I am saying this with a certain amount of emotion and a sprinkle of pride; it puts together more than 90 producers and almost 9 over 10 bottles produced in Sicily. It

walks along with the companies, in projects of promotion and in many fairs; this time we were able to attend Wine Paris, for sure not imagining it would have been the only one in 2020!

It interacts with the government of the Sicilian wine through a direct line, with the authoritativeness that our stories of entrepreneurs can allow us to do and with the strength of the numbers we carry. All this permitted us, even during this emergency, to be heard and understood while explaining the necessities of the whole sector and the crazy times we are living.

Assovini has recently inaugurated its own, new headquarter. Born, first of all, in order to better assist and welcome the members, it also has the tasting room, ideal starting point for your tours in Sicily: it is strategically positioned close to the airport of Palermo and the various junctions connecting different points of interest, allowing you to organize at its best your visits and tours across Sicily throughout all the wineries, from Marsala to Etna to Noto. We cannot wait to welcome you, when it will be possible, whenever you will step off the plane!

I am telling you all this only to make you understand that Assovini has a long-term project! Our nature of restless Sicilians continuously leads us towards new challenges and goals. Sicily has gone far in the world of wine and today it cannot stop, it needs to set its goals higher and higher.

The new challenge and commitment for Assovini is to actively engage to develop and communicate the values of Sicilian wine and, more than anything else, the sustainable nature of its productions. For too long we have been shy, for too long we have left space for other winemaking areas: even the presentation today - that I have previewed - will tell you how Sicily, together with having the biggest bio vineyard of Italy, also has a nature and environment suited for sustainability like no other territory.

The time has come for us to put the bell tower of sustainability at the center of the village! It is necessary to make the working people - and through them, the consumers - aware of the extraordinary patrimony and the enormous competitive advantage we have in being able to make wine in this big island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea.

For this reason - together with the Consortium DOC Sicilia - we will build a Sicily Foundation for Sustainability that will be the think-tank: in our intentions, towards the last mile to pursue in the development of Sicilian wine, the toughest, yet most beautiful.

Lastly, we cannot avoid spending a couple of words on the times occurring right now.

We have learnt again to ask "how are you".

If we were a little less, I would do it with each one of you: it is the most important thing, all the rest comes after.

For this reason, I will try to tell you how we Sicilians are doing. To do this, I decided to take in the picture two characters, two images that Sicily, this region being real, imaginary and literary, often proposes, especially to those in this environment: the fisherman and the farmer.

I will read an extract of the poem L'Approdo (in English meaning "The Landing") from Luigi Pirandello (for the foreign friends, he was Sicilian from Agrigento and has won the Nobel prize for literature in 1934). You will have to forgive me because, for the purpose of understanding, I had to translate the poem and this is always a tough work to be done without taking away some magic.

And at the end, here I am at the port. It still remains,
In my eyes a grim wonder, a grim
Vision, the terror of the storm;
But it will fade away in the quiet light.
I am safe, in the meantime, at the port.
Worn out, but safe.

This is how we feel; worn out but with the energy and rhythm that nature in this incredible spring, is gifting us with; ready to react and get back in the sea.

On the other side, we have the image of the farmer, there is no literature involved this time; here it is about us, us winemakers, us farmers: our lives. I feel like when - it has happened for sure so many times in our lives - a disruptive upheaval happens from nature, something we are not able to stop, something that won't stop- a hailstorm, a frost, a flood or a fire - and you are left on the ground.

When you arrive in the countryside and, after a year of work, you realize that you only need to start again, without looking backwards but with the project of tomorrow clear in front of you.

With this last thought, waiting for us to be able to tell each other - finally "de visu" - how we are doing; I take the chance to thank you from the bottom of my heart, as if you were here in Sicily, under the bright blue sky of Menfi.

Thank you and "a presto"!