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HEVA Project Highlights Uniqueness of European Volcanic Wines in 2024

Santorini, Soave, and Lessini Durello, A Tale of Three Harvests

Thursday, October 3, 2024



Soave harvest

The European project HEVA (Heroes of Europe Volcanic Agriculture) has brought together several European wine appellations to highlight the uniqueness of agricultural products grown on volcanic soils. In 2024, the regions participating in the project faced

variable climatic conditions that significantly influenced the harvest in each area. Among the key players this year are the Santorini PDO in Greece, and the Soave and Lessini Durello appellations in Italy, all with unique characteristics in wine production.

On the Greek island of Santorini, the harvest was marked by a reduced yield, the lowest recorded in recent history, due to adverse weather events that affected production. According to Nikos Varvarigos, winemaker at Santo Wines, the winter of 2024 was unusually dry and mild, which impacted the vineyards' ability to retain water and, consequently, the flowering of the vines. During the spring, strong southern winds and a hailstorm in May damaged the island's best vineyards, and a hot summer accelerated the ripening of the grapes, causing the harvest to start two weeks earlier than usual. The harvest began on July 30 and ended on August 22.

Despite these challenges, the grapes harvested in Santorini maintained their quality, with the aromatic concentration and minerality that characterize the wines of the appellation. The main variety, Assyrtiko, covers 75% of the island's vineyards and is known for its ability to withstand extreme weather conditions, including drought and various diseases. This variety forms the base of the dry wines of the Santorini PDO, which must contain a minimum of 75% Assyrtiko, complemented by local varieties such as Aidani and Athiri. The traditional Vinsanto, a naturally sweet wine with at least 51% Assyrtiko, is also produced, blended with other native grapes.

Meanwhile, in the Italian regions of Soave and Lessini Durello, the harvest is still ongoing. The Consortium for the Protection of Soave and Recioto di Soave Wines reported that the 2024 weather conditions have been favorable for the Garganega variety, the main grape used in Soave production. Cristian Ridolfi, president of the Consortium, noted that the buds showed good fertility and the grapes reached an adequate size, thanks to the availability of water during the growing season, which has led to balanced technological ripeness, with good sugar and acidity levels, ideal for wine production.

In the Lessini Durello area, the vineyards faced a summer with significant temperature fluctuations between day and night, which favored the ripening of the Durella grapes, ideal for sparkling wine production. Diletta Tonello, president of the Lessini Durello

Consortium, highlighted that despite the weather variability, the vines showed healthy vegetative growth and achieved perfect technological ripeness for the production of sparkling wines, which indicates good quality for this year's production.



Santorini harvest

These three appellations participate alongside the Monte Veronese Cheese Consortium in the HEVA project, which aims to highlight the quality and distinctive character of products originating from volcanic soils. Monte Veronese has already had a notable presence at the Salone del Gusto, held in Turin from September 26 to 30, 2024, and will continue its representation at the Espò Berlin enogastronomic fair, taking place on November 2 and 3 in the German capital.

The events in which HEVA participates focus on showcasing the uniqueness of these volcanic-origin products, whose organoleptic characteristics set them apart in the international market. In addition to their aromatic intensity, volcanic wines and products tend to show longevity and a sensory profile combining fruity and mineral notes, thanks to the properties of volcanic soils. These qualities have been crucial for the recognition and commercial success of these regions in global markets.

HEVA not only aims to promote these wines and products but also to raise awareness of the influence of climatic conditions and soil on European viticulture. Volcanic soils, rich in minerals and with a unique structure, provide distinctive characteristics to the grapes grown in them, contributing to the complexity and balance of the resulting wines. With the support of programs like this, the appellations involved continue to explore best practices to maintain the quality and sustainability of their vineyards, ensuring the preservation of the authenticity of their products in the future.

For more details about the activities and products of the regions participating in the HEVA project, the official project website www.volcanicagricultureofeurope.com offers detailed information on events and the characteristics of each appellation.