

Godt drikke 2021: Article 1

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There is a rich history of kings, noblemen and women enjoying wines in India. It has been speculated that these wines used to be produced using indigenous grapes & Afghanistan varieties which was once part of the Indian culture 2000 years back. Wine in India was used traditionally to bring back health. It is famously known as “Draksharishtha” the oldest Indian wines made with grapes and herbs. Even now these wines are consumed along with meals as medicines in some part of India as well as it is available in pharmacy. This tradition of ancient winemaking has been going since 4000 BC. Wine has been dated back to our ancient scriptures like the “Rigveda” famously known as Soma, Sura & Madya and also in other ancient scriptures where wines were used as an offering to several gods.

When it comes to other traditional liquors, India has its very own indigenous alcohol drinks like Toddy (Palm wine), Feni (Distilled liquor from fermented cashew apple juice), Lugdi (Fermented rice/barley) its popularly known as “mountain drink”. There is also Chuak (fermented jackfruit & pineapple), Apo (made from fermented rice), Chhang (Sort of beer made from finger millets) famously known as “beer of the Himalayas” & lastly the Mahua wine (wine made from mahua flowers), its botanical name is *Madhuca longifolia*. There are strict government regulations on these traditional drinks. They have been quite famous for a long time, especially with locals, backpackers, nature travelers, hikers and so on, as most of these drinks are exclusively made by tribal communities of India from many generations. They usually live far off from the society. Hence, they are rare to find!

Grapes have been growing in India since a long time. The table grape cultivation has a majority of shares compared to the wine grapes. In the past couple of years farmers have moved towards growing wine grapes due to new contract policies with different wineries. This conversion has reduced their input cost of the vineyards. Hence, such contract vineyard farming is one of the factors that contribute towards increasing the total vineyard area in India for winemaking.

Quick fact, In Europe, the vines undergo a dormancy phase after the harvest during the winter season, whereas in some part of India the climate can accommodate two harvest per year. The vine doesn't have a dormancy phase in its cycle and therefore has an ability to go through a second harvest. This system of two harvest still exists in southern States of India. However, most of the

wineries obtain only a single harvest to avoid the exhaustion of nutrients and reserves from the vine (stored for the next vintage)

Various types of wines are produced in India on different kinds of soil, terrains & altitudes in numerous regions across the country. There are many different varieties like, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Grenache, Zinfandel, Sangiovese, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Viognier, Riesling & Pinot Noir. There are many producers who do great justice to these varieties and make splendid wines. Many of the producers have won international awards worldwide. India being a diverse country with different climatic variations the production of wines arrays from dry to dessert wines & also sparkling wines.

Interestingly, I was always curious whether India still has its very own indigenous varieties that can represent our terroir to the world and as it turns out it has! These varieties have been dormant since many decades. They are mainly of *Vitis.Vinifera* species & therefore it has a tremendous potential to exhibit the essence of terroir of the land in its true sense in a glass of wine!

In the last 10 years the curiosity of wine has been growing amongst the Millennial and Gen Z whereas, with the previous generation wine is still highly appreciated commonly seen as a sophisticated drink. The palate of the consumer has evolved in the past decade as per the change in trends observed. Consumers are preferring wine over hard liquors like whisky, rum and vodka.

Over the past few years, wine trend had gradually begun to sink into people's lives, where the concept of enjoying wine along with different cuisines slowly started to grow amongst the population. And not only during special occasions but in everyday lives. So, a high-end consumer is always looking for different local & international wine selections to pair with their food. There is a growing interest in trying out new varietal wines amongst the youngsters.

I have also come to observe the change in the consumer palate, for instance, it was always a notion that Indians prefer off-dry to sweet wines. However, in past few years I have noticed an inclination towards dry wines. This has been really a positive trend as Indian wines have a tremendous potential to produce excellent crisp dry wines.

Due to globalization, wine exposure has increased with rise in the number of sommeliers, connoisseur, amateur explorers and educators. Therefore, the perspective of wine has evolved over the past few years. We can see a spike of excitement with upsurge in wine clubs, tasting sessions, wine tourism & wine routes. And now consumers have a positive attitude towards wine which in the long term will flourish even more!

International groups like LVMH & Pernod Ricard have made their presence in India more prominent than even, as they recognized the potential India holds in the near future to be the upcoming new wine market. There are also international investors that have shown interest in investing in making wine in India. Lastly in spite of strict import duties, international producers have shown great resilience in sustaining in the Indian market and is well received by the consumers.

There are many factors involved when it comes to the nitty gritty of the Indian wine industry, such as,

- In India the wine law is different in every State. As of now India has 29 States and 8 Union Territories. Out of which, four States and one Union Territory have prohibited alcohol. In few Southern States, the State government controls the whole alcohol distribution channels like wholesale and retail sales (Government monopoly). Under the Constitution of India, Alcohol is a State subject under the jurisdiction of State government, hence they can constitute their own alcohol & excise laws.
- In other countries wine is taxed at a lower rate depending on the percentage of alcohol however, in India that's not the case. With new tax reforms, the wine taxation is at the receiving end of the back lash. Tax depends on individual States.

Lastly, with recent world events, health has been important more than ever! Consumers are moving towards natural, organic and more healthier options in terms of food and drink options. Majority of the consumers have switched from drinking sweet wines to dry wines due to health complications. While other consumers have replaced hard liquors with wine and other lower alcohol drinks. Wine being the obvious healthy option, people have started to understand its importance and there is a shift in the preference from hard liquor to wine amongst men & women of the country.

Philosophy of wine

Wine is an experience that takes you on a journey from soil to different aspects that contribute towards its making. For me the meaning of wine has always been evolving yet there is one thing that stuck with me is the concept of terroir. Terroir is such a strong pillar on which the nature of wine depends on. In the future due to climate change we might be in surprise as to which regions makes which varietal & type of wines (which is unheard of). Never the less, the concept of terroir will remain the same. Therefore, for me the most important part while making wine is to keep the terroir intact in a glass of wine! I wish to deliver that experience to the consumer who can relate with the soil & nature the vines grew up with. Also adhering to its true soul and heritage that represents a particular region & country at its best!