

Gentleman

DISTILLATES OF GOOD HUMOR

FROM THE VINEYARD TO THE STILL, FROM THE STILL TO THE BOTTLE, FROM THE BOTTLE TO THE GOBLET: ALL THE SECRETS OF GRAPPA GATHERED IN A COLLECTION BOOK

BY ILARIA DANIELI

Originally a poor product, obtained from the recycle of the leftovers of wine making, grappa is, maybe more than wine, a symbol of Italian spirit. Since the Eighties it has become an elite distillate so transversal that makes all generations agree (even if Millennials prefer it as an ingredient of mixology than drinking it straight), but it still pays pledge for its rural origins. Now an interesting and pleasant *Great Book of Grappa*, recently published by Hoepli (39,90 Euro), dismantles its commonplaces and gives it the honor it deserves. It is written, in fact, by the sommelier Giuseppe Vaccarini, with the expert and very pleasant pen of Cesare Pillon, who started together with Luigi Veronelli, and still today a great interpreter of Italian wine and food journalism. In comparison with other similar noble distillates, like cognac, gin and whisky, grappa is the only one which is born with its own typical perfume and taste, whereas the others acquire it only later from the casks or from flavoring, an extraordinary patrimony: "It is necessary to start a phase of maturity", says Pillon, "to give value to its potentialities. The more because in Italy we are the only ones who distil the pomace directly, without before melting its content in water as it happens in France". The great experience acquired on the field by Pillon, besides a deep knowledge of the matter, allow him to enrich the historical part with tasty anecdotes and unpublished details, whereas Vaccarini's technical competence completes the interesting part dedicated to distillation processes. So we understand how from the early rudimentary and home productions it has been possible to pass to more specialized and organized workings: between a curiosity and another, we pass from the saga of the Grapàt, home distillers who went from family to family with their copper still on a horse drawn cart, to the first large scale distilleries and to the consequences of Fascist autarchy on the quality of the product. Until the so called Nonino revolution, the Friulian company that has promoted grappa from a poor and rural product to a luxury product, launching the quality from single variety Picolit and starting marketing activities as original as brilliant, like the creation of a literary prize that, in the years, has drawn the attention of the international media and anticipated several Nobel Laureates. And a rarity that is discovered thanks to Pillon concerns precisely the Nonino family, "the family that has invented the single varietal grappa and has turned itself into a patron, was born as a descent of Grapàt producers".

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A book that was missing, a charming trip in a corner of Italian excellence that deserves being better known.