

ORGANIC WINES AS A NEW CATEGORY IN THE INTERNATIONAL WINE CONTESTS BUCHAREST

Cătălin PĂDURARU,
Daniela PĂDURARU₁

Arina Oana ANTOCE

Professor, Ph.D.

*University of Agronomic Sciences and
Veterinary Medicine Bucharest*

aantoce@yahoo.com



Prof. Arina Oana ANTOCE - University of Agronomic
Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest

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The organic wines movement had a slower start

Modern organic winemaking has its origins in the 1970s (in the USA and Western Europe) but it had a more limited success compared to other organic foodstuffs, for several reasons:

- ✓ a certain perception regarding intrinsic quality
- ✓ the conception that alcohol associates with an unhealthy life style

Organic wines popularity grew slowly, especially among intellectuals and those preoccupied with environment issues. But even today, 50 years later, the world market for organic wines is still small.



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The OENOBIO logo consists of the word 'OENOBIO' in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by a graphic of a bunch of grapes.

Organic wine quality

- ❖ **Organic wines are rarely recognized as having better sensory qualities.**

At the beginning of organic winemaking, its products were not much appreciated by consumers, because the prices were high and the wines were not perceived as premium wines.

This negative initial reputation of organic wines proved difficult to overcome and still persists on some markets, in spite of obvious progress.



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Quality of organic wine

- ❖ **The quality of organic wines has improved and was demonstrated in blind winetasting sessions.**

More and more organic wines participate in international wine contests and are awarded medals while competing with any other kinds of wines.



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Quality of organic wine - contests

	CMB 2019 samples	CMB 2018 samples/medals	BWT 2017 samples	BWT 2018 samples	BWT 2019 samples
Italy	182	184/57	85	91	109
Spain	151	110/40	100	91	
France	121	138/35	15	23	36
China	53	101/27			
Germany	2	3/0	52	41	72
Greece	9	37/10	25	46	25
Moldova	6	24/8			
Portugal	22	11/4	2	3	
Romania	3	8/2			
Other countries	63	44/20	17	6	29
Number of countries	24	24	12	10	17
Total org. wines	636	660	296	301	369
Total medals organic wines	-	199	93 (72 gold; 21 silver)	82 (65 gold; 17 silver)	90 (79 gold; 11 silver)
Total samples in the contest			6067	6381	7253



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Quality of organic wine - contests

As expected, the majority of organic wine samples come from countries with developed organic viticulture: Italy, Spain, France and Germany.

Recognizing this market tendency, CMB introduced a new category dedicated to organic and biodynamic wines, the biodynamic, the **Organic Wine Trophy**, which was awarded for the first time in 2017.

Only at BWT the medals are awarded considering the whole contest, without separating the organic wines.



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Quality of organic wines – scientific studies

Scientific studies have also been carried out.

An **UCLA** study of 2016 showed that eco-certified wines (wines obtained from grapes from organic and biodynamic farms) obtained higher scores in professional winetastings compared with ordinary wines.

On a standardized scale of 100 points the eco-certified wines obtained, on average, 4.1 points more.

The study is considered incomplete though as it only included eco-certified wines (made from organic/biodynamic grapes), meaning wines which are not necessarily entirely organic.



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Quality of organic wines

- ❖ In our country too the consumers became more receptive towards wines with different features compared to traditional wines.



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Organic wines at IWCB contest

IWCB VINARIUM – an established contest in Romania – is held under the patronage of:

- OIV (International Organization of Vine and Wine - www.oiv.int) and
- VINO FED (World Federation of Major International Wine and Spirits competitions - www.vinofed.com)

The 16th edition of the International Wine Contest Bucharest – VINARIUM took place in Bucharest between 23 and 26 May 2019.

www.iwcb.ro



Organic wines at IWCB contest

For the 2019 edition of IWCB VINARIUM

- **177 operators** (producers, distributors, traders)
- of **22 countries**
- registered **974 samples** into the contest.

There were 29 samples of organic wines

- ❖ 7 operators, of which 3 from Italy and 1 from the Czech Republic
- ❖ only 3 operators from Romania
(Senator Wine, Crama Delta Dunarii, Cramele Odobesti)
- ❖ 4 wines from Italy, 3 Czech wines, **22 from Romania**

Organic wines at IWCB contest

Judging and medal awarding was done in strict alignment to the OIV regulations:

- Great Gold Medal: 92 points or more
- Gold Medal: 85 - 91.9 points
- Silver Medal: 82-84.9 points

Experimented evaluators from 15 countries were invited to Bucharest for judging the participating samples.



Organic wines at IWCB contest

A number of 301 medals were granted (30,9% of all participating samples):

- 2 great gold medals
- **230 gold medals**
- 69 silver medals

Organic wines obtained 12 medals (41.38%)

- **9 gold,**
- **3 silver** (84.67 was the cut-off score for silver);
- The other 17 samples did not obtain a medal **although**
 - 14 did have enough points for a silver medal (over 82) and
 - only 3 did not obtain a score worthy of a silver medal, according to the judging standards established by OIV.

Over the whole contest, the OIV rule of 30% samples being awarded with medals was respected. It must be noted that **the samples of organic wines, while participating in the competition along with all the traditional wines, managed to be awarded medals in a higher proportion: 41.38% of the participating organic wines obtained medals.**

Organic wines at IWCB contest

❖ Observations regarding organic wines:

- Although allotted to different commissions, in all cases of organic wines effectively awarded medals (first 12 scored) the lowest mark was granted by a foreign taster (not the same person for all instances).
- As for wines that did not get medals, especially those ranked towards the lower side of the ladder, the decisions were mixed, but the differences between extreme grades were relatively small.
- 4 companies of the 7 that took part had at least one wine among those awarded medals, which shows that they have the capacity to produce organic wines of excellent quality.

Due to the high level of quality of the participating samples, the lowest average grade for a silver medal was 84.67.

Organic wines at IWCB contest

❖ A very tough competition

In 2019, a total of 798 samples, representing **82.2% of the total amount of samples, obtained marks above 82 points, but only 301 could be awarded medals (30.9%).**

Therefore, apart from the medal-awarded wines, another 497 samples (51.1% of total samples) obtained a mark compatible with a silver medal (meaning above 82 points), but fell below the line drawn at ~30% of the total number of samples which received medals.

The full list of winners can be consulted on the official site of the contest:
https://www.iwcb.ro/registration/results.php?active_language=ro

Organic wines at IWCB contest

❖ Other observations regarding organic wines:

- Although organic wines are considered perishable and it is recommended to consume them quickly, **there have also been samples that won gold medals and which came from the 2012-2013 harvests**, especially red wines but also as an exception a white wine of 2013. The highest grade was obtained by a Chardonnay of 2014.
- **With the exception of a white wine from Italy**, demi-dry (6.5 g/l sugar), **all the wines that took medals were dry**, both red and white wines (less than 4.0 g/l sugar) confirming the fact that a wine with a lower content of sugars is easier to stabilize.

Organic wines at IWCB contest

❖ Other observations regarding organic wines:

- In general the prices of the participating wines oscillated between under 5 EUR and 20 EUR, **and no correlation was seen between price and the mark obtained in the contest.** There was, though, a certain tendency for wines priced under 5 EUR to end in the lower part of the hierarchy established through the contest.
 - The small number of samples does not allow the formulation of some conclusions relevant from a scientific viewpoint, but the evolution in the general performance of organic wines, particularly Romanian wines, will continue to be followed closely.

CONCLUSION

- ✓ Consumers are more and more open towards organic wines,
- ✓ and specialists confirm that many organic wines are of similar quality or even better than conventional wines.



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