

A MORE SPIRITED WINE INDUSTRY

At no time in history have women assumed more of the industry's most prestigious roles than in the past decade, a report by the American Wine Council revealed. Currently, women who attained the Master of Wine degree stand at a 1/3 ratio compared to their male counterparts. What follows are the views of highly-accomplished female wine experts who have fought with passion to break stereotypes and, in so doing, introduced a more refined way to enjoy a spirit dating back millennia

AMERICA'S CHALLENGING WINE INDUSTRY



Christy Canterbury, Master of Wine, journalist and public speaker, makes some fascinating revelations on the American wine industry and highlights the dominant challenges new consumer trends are posing.

How is the American wine industry faring and what are some of the obstacles faced?

Wine continues to enjoy a favorable spotlight in the US. The International Wines and Spirits Record (IWSR), just reported that US wine consumption was up 1.7 percent in 2017. Additionally, premium wines now account for 22 percent of sales, as opposed to just 2 percent in 1990, which constitutes an 11-fold increase. This, in part, may be due to how people are buying wine, especially in large cities. Previously, the only way to

do so was to head down to the bricks and mortar store. Today, with the proliferation of online alcohol, restaurants and grocery delivery services, the vehicles have fundamentally grown, as have the varieties on offer. As a result, and due to stiff competition, both convenience and price have become of paramount importance. This matter is further compounded when large warehouse-style discount stores are factored into the equation. Add to that the option of employing a meal-kit delivery service that pairs wines with the meal of your choice and the entire wine-buying proposition takes on an entirely new life. This new way of consumption has introduced many changes, advantages and challenges to both retailers and manufacturers in every category, not just wine, largely thanks to the Amazon model. On the one hand, many large retailers are suffering when they cannot adapt their websites quickly enough or when they develop and introduce an app that does not effectively display their offerings. Furthermore, while it seems that the small, local wine stores do alright selling wine without discounts, the larger ones feel obligated to mark wines down to generate larger revenue streams due to the fact that consumers today have been conditioned to wait for a sale to buy anything.

THE LEBANESE WINE INDUSTRY DECANTED



HN talks to Wine Consultant **Sandra Gedeon**, a WSET 3 awardee and former group head sommelier for several luxurious outlets in Beirut, about women entering the trade, what wine means to her and what suggestions she has to further strengthen local and international trade.

How has being a woman influenced your career in the wine industry?

The world of wine has, for a long time, been male dominated. Fortunately, female sommeliers have been breaking stereotypes all around the world. However, the rise of sommeliers in the Middle East is still very slow and very few women are involved, despite the fact that it has been

scientifically proven that women have a stronger sense of taste than men.

One example that always brings a smile to my face is when diners are surprised to learn that the restaurant's resident sommelier is a woman rather than an old mustached-man with stained teeth and red cheeks. On the other hand, when they see a young lady coming, they start asking lots of questions and sometimes they forget about the wine altogether! That's the perfect ice breaker, especially since luring them in is not always easy. But once you gain their trust and decant the tensions, you have them forever!

Why are some Lebanese wines costlier than international ones of similar quality?

The local wine industry does not adhere to any preset government rules and regulations. As a result, the existing winemakers import everything, from bottles and corks to machinery, which adds extra costs to the end products. I therefore believe that if we build facilities that manufacture what is currently being imported, wineries will be able to create more authentic wines that have a lower price point and, in turn, are more competitive, especially abroad.

