

Rio Sol, a Brazilian Wine, Wins the Taste Test in 20 Countries

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An entirely Brazilian wine is now greatly appreciated by the guests at the Burj Al Arab, the most starred hotel in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. The wine in question is the Rio Sol, produced by ViniBrasil.

Rio Sol, which is being appreciated in dozens of countries, is made in the city of Petrolina, in the middle of the sertão (the drylands) of the Northeastern state of Pernambuco, irrigated by the waters of São Francisco River.

Two years ago, the Brazilian company shipped a load of 1,200 bottles to the hotel. Last year, they repeated the deed. "A former employee of mine, who is now in Italy, visited the hotel and in a conversation with the food and beverages manager discovered that the clients find Rio Sol exotic," tells Otávio Piva de Albuquerque, one of the owners of the vineyard.

ViniBrasil is a partnership between Expand, a wine importer commanded by Otávio, and Dão Sul, a Portuguese group that produces and exports wines. The studies to make viable the grape plantations - of clones of grapes from the most varied parts of the world - in the dry climate of the Petrolina region, are by specialists from the University of Lisbon. The partnership has been going on for four years already and the first vintage of the Brazilian wine was in 2003.

Even with such a short life history, Rio Sol is already being sold to more than 20 different countries, including the great wine exporters like France, Spain, Italy and the United States. As well as the competitive price - in Brazil it costs R\$ 24.80 (US\$ 11.55) and in Europe seven euros - the wine won its space because it has quality.

Proof of this are the 83 points obtained in the top 100 list by the famous American magazine Wine Spectator and the bronze medal at the Decanter World Wine Awards, of the English magazine Decanter.

ViniBrasil produces one million liters every year, of which 40% is exported. There are three different wine brands. Rio Sol, made for export but also found in hotels, restaurants and some wine stores in Brazil, the more popular Adega do Vale, found in supermarkets of the great cities, and Rendeiras, which has a more regional characteristic, in homage to the lace makers (rendeiras) in the region of the São Francisco.

According to Otávio, worldwide acceptance is good. Rejection towards Brazilian wine, according to him, is something that only happens amongst Brazilians themselves. "The fact that this is a wine produced here attracts a lot of attention, arouses sympathy, people love it," says the entrepreneur.

The returns proved the investment that the businessmen decided to make in the Vale do São Francisco were worth it. Sometime ago, nobody believed it was possible to plant wine grapes in that region, the 8th parallel south.

In homage to the deed, the wine Rio Sol has the number eight in its label. Rio Sol is made from Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah grapes. But ViniBrasil is already testing Roriz, Carmenere and the Portuguese Touriga Nacional.

For the wine to become widely known around the five continents, ViniBrasil has already elaborated two strategies. According to Otávio, one of them is to negotiate with great exporting companies to give out Rio Sol as an end of year gift to their foreign clients.

Another idea is to convince the Brazilian government to consume the national product at embassies. "When Roosevelt prohibited French wine in the American embassies, the world got to know the Californian wine," explains Otávio.

In São Paulo, the company already has a partnership with the luxury hotel Emiliano. The guest, upon arrival, is presented with a bottle of Rio Sol. Thus, when he returns, he takes with him the "exotic" Brazilian wine.

ViniBrasil
Website: www.vinibrasil.com.br

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