

Dear Soave,

March 1st, 2000

I've loved you for many years. I tried to get you to mature, I've given you style, a reputation, international standing in the world's top white wine scenario. For years I worked and struggled within the viticulture of my terroir, in my winery, in the market, I struggled to make you better and better, more and more "Suave".

It was all useless. In fact, you are not "suave" as your name implies, you are uncontrollable, untameable, unfaithful.

So that's it, I'm going, I've had enough. I'm leaving you, and this letter tells you why... Once and for all!

Viticulture in Soave is quantity-oriented, not quality-oriented....

The production of Soave grapes is 95% controlled by a group of cooperatives determining a true monopoly in vineyard management and wine-making philosophy every step of the way, from harvest to distribution....

The bottom line is, since cooperatives now bottle most of production, and since the pricing - both retail and wholesale - is solely established by the cooperatives themselves, there is no healthy Keynesian competition, mainspring of all productive improvement....

For years, I told myself: my vineyards are on high-altitude hillside soil, my vines are very densely planted (5,000-6,000 per hectare), my training system is not pergola but Guyot (small crops, fruit grown close to old wood), my harvest is severely selective, my winery is hi-tech, every detail is fine-tuned from grape bunch to bottle.

The market considers my wine good to very good, my price points are reasonable, I target the high-quality restaurant, the best wine shops, and my consumers know me and appreciate me.

This is all true, but it's not enough.

I can't go on defending Soave on my own, by my sole physical and economical efforts. I've played Don Quixote for too long, and bumped against too many windmills. The latest and definitive windmill, the one that knocked me off my horse, is a DOCG from "marquee"-trained vines.

I want out, I'm walking out of Soave, this Soave, and leaving it to its fate. Let it wear out its vital cycle, good luck to it, I want my freedom.

Freedom to improve, to make a great wine without inhibitions, to fly onto outstanding varieties, with better training systems, to relate to world viticulture with no boundaries, rules, bureaucracy, to create an honest market for a great white wine from my terroir, from a terroir after my own heart, where passion and imagination will no longer be obstructed.

Roberto Anselmi