

Critique. Bibliography

ENJOY NORTHERN GRAPES

Northern Winework. Growing Grapes and Making Wine in Cold Climates. By Tom Plocher and Bob Parke. Northern Winework, Inc., Hugo, USA, 2001, 178 pp.

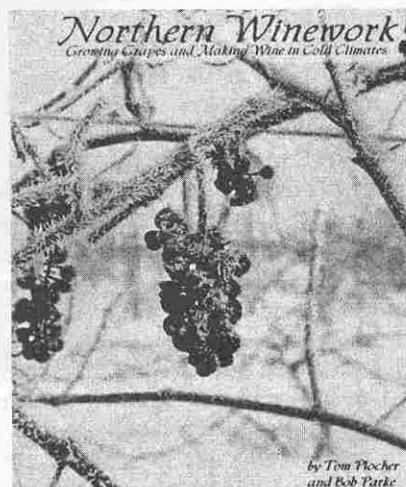
If you live in the north (for grapes, Latvia is a north) and like grapes very much (but not those from a supermarket), you are on the way to becoming another one of the army of enthusiasts who grow and enjoy their own grapes. History has shown that everybody who starts to grow grapes will continue to do this all his remaining life. Another truth is that all who grow grapes at the same time begin to make wine.

This book is a gift to grape-growing enthusiasts, both amateurs and commercial growers, who live in northern countries. Many facts show that Northern viticulture has already become a reality. Reading this book you will be surprised about the rich experience in grape cultivation that has been accumulated during about a half of a century in North America, Germany, Scandinavia, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, and Russia. The rapid growth of the popularity of northern grape growing was possible only due to achievements in grape breeding and the appearance of interspecific hybrid varieties of grapes.

Each of the northern countries—also Latvia—has its own grape-growing history and experience. For a long time, Latvians were proud of the Wine Hill in Sabile as the most northern site where grapes are grown. Now the situation has changed dramatically and all of our northern neighbours are growing grapes. It is interesting that the best Latvian grape varieties that were developed by Pauls Sukatnieks (1913–1989) are known today in Scandinavia, Belarus, Russia, and even in the USA. The main reason for this is the early ripening time of Latvian grapes and their overall good behaviour in our unstable climate. Latvians are happy to see that Latvian grape-growing experience and achievements in grape breeding are also described in the book and that they are becoming known to Western readers.

In 1998, the authors of the book have travelled around Northern Europe and the Baltic States to study the grape-growing situation in this region. The trip was supported by the USA Ministry of Agriculture. This gave a chance for Latvian grape-growers to meet Western experts in grape-growing and winemaking and to help them with language problems in their visit to Belarus. The experience gained during the visit is described in the book, and readers are given the impression that Latvia is a serious grape-growing country with significant achievements in grape-breeding. Bob Parke and Tom Plocher give kindly respect to the Latvian grape breeder Pauls Sukatnieks. Their visit also stimulated co-operation in grape-breeding between our countries. Now, the contacts made allow asking authors for advice concerning winemaking technology.

The book is dedicated to Elmer Swenson, a pioneer of hybrid



cold-resistant grapes for North America. Due to activities of this “kind and generous man whose influence will be felt for many decades to come,” a commercial wine industry, based on hybrid grapes, is possible now in Minnesota. It is very interesting to find parallels in the lives of Pauls Sukatnieks and Elmer Swenson: both worked during the same years and used interspecific hybridisation to select varieties that are better adapted to the local climate compared to classic vinifera grapes. Both of them stimulated grape-growing and grape-breeding activities in their countries: in Minnesota, a state-funded grape research programme has been in operation already for 16 years. Recently, the importance of grape-breeding was recognised also in Latvia through governmental support to Andraš Fazekašs, an amateur grape-breeder who has successfully continued Sukatnieks’ work.

Tom Plocher is a dedicated grape-grower and a writer: for years, he improved his writing skills as an editor and author of numerous articles in *Notes from the North*, a newsletter of the Minnesota Grape Growers Association. For seven years, he has been making grape crosses, and recently he has even made some crosses for his Baltic friends. In this initiative we can see that a historical link between the work of Pauls Sukatnieks and Elmer Swenson has been established.

Latvians join with Tom Plocher in thanks to his friend Bob Parke for agreeing to write the winemaking portion of this book. You can find many books about winemaking, but this book stands out by its style. “Style is everything,” Bob Parker says about wine. Here we see that a perfect sense of style has produced an excellent guidebook where everything is balanced as in good wine: practical instructions along with recommendations, and the philosophy of wine. While read-

ing the chapters, you understand that you are under the wise direction of a Teacher who knows the mistakes that you will make in one or another step of your winemaking.

The book is written for those who already have some experience in grape growing, and for those who are just starting. Considering that "serious amateur and small commercial grape growers and winemakers need information now," and that we cannot wait for twenty years only because the northern grape growing is "still in a pioneering stage of development," the aim of the authors was to summarise the experience available at the present. This information came from friends in many countries, a literature review, and personal experience in their vineyards and wineries. The authors thank their Baltic friends in Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Belarus for "making aware that viticulture existed in these parts of the world." Special thanks are given to Tom Plocher's "oldest Baltic friend Lennarth Jonsson from Sweden" who helped to establish some connections in the former Soviet Union and in fact "opened the information-exchange process with this part of world."

The book concentrates on the most important topics for growers on the northern fringes of viticulture: physiology of cold hardiness, site and variety selection, experience in vine winter protection, and different training systems. The focus is on fruit quality, a crucial issue also for the quality of wine. Although it is still too early to speak about commercial winemaking in Latvia where locally grown grapes are used,

we should still bear in mind that there is a continuously growing demand for local exotic products, and grape wine could be such a product. Therefore, the present level of knowledge and experience regarding hybrid grape wines presented in the book makes it valuable for everybody who likes experiments and has a good site for growing grapes. It is worthwhile to look back at the 16th century, the time of Jacob, Duke of Courland, as he made grape wine in the Sabile region, and his wine was appreciated by his German friends. Presently in Sabile, some of the local residents are attempting to renew this old winemaking tradition.

There are many problems associated with making wine from hybrid grapes. In the book you will find answers to many questions concerning technology of these wines. Minnesota, where both authors live and work, is one of the best places for gaining experience about wine making using hybrid grapes.

The book is organised to avoid overloading the reader with information. It is a practical book and very simple for a reader. There are many photos from Latvia, including colour photos of our grape varieties. Admirably, on one of the photos we see Pauls Sukatnieks in a discussion with Andrašs Fazekašs.

Tom Plocher and Bob Parke have done a commendable job to encourage people in northern countries to grow grapes, and this book can help them with their work. We are sure that we will soon see also a revised edition of the book.

Andris Dišlers

BAUDIET ZIEMEĻU VĪNOGAS Grāmata par ziemeļu vīnkopību

Northern Winework. Growing Grapes and Making Wine in Cold Climate [Ziemeļu vīnkopība — kā audzēt vīnogas un gatavot vīnu aukstā klimata zonā]. By Tom Plocher and Bob Parke. Northern Winework, Inc., Hugo, USA, 2001, 178 pp.

Grāmata ir mēģinājums sākt apkopot pieredzi vīnogu audzēšanā ziemeļu zemēs, kur ar vīnkopību nodarbojas entuziasti. Pēdējā laikā šo entuziastu skaits strauji aug — gan tāpēc, ka cilvēki grib audzēt garšīgās un veselīgās ogas paši, gan arī tāpēc, ka iespējas pieaug līdz ar panākumiem ziemeļu rajoniem piemērotu šķirņu selekcijā. Vērts atzīmēt, ka Latvijā vietējās vīnogas nav nekāds jaunums — tās audzētas jau hercoga Jēkaba laikā. Varam patiesi lepoties ar vietējām šķirnēm, kuras sešdesmitajos un septiņdesmitajos gados izveidoja Pauls Sukatnieks un kuras tagad kļūst pazīstamas daudzās mūsu kaimiņu zemēs. Tās nokļuvušas pat Ziemeļamerikā un tagad ir pazīstamas arī grāmatas autoriem. Grāmatā uzsvēta Baltijas zemju loma izturīgu vietējo šķirņu atlasē un pārbaudē, to pieredze grāmatā ir plaši atspoguļota. Īpaši atzīmēts ir Paula Sukatnieka nopelns vīnogu šķirņu selekcijā, minēts, ka Latvijā Sukatnieka darbu turpina Andrašs Fazekašs. Grāmata veltīta Elmeram Svensonam — Ziemeļamerikas apstākļiem izturīgu vīnogu šķirņu izveidotājam. Autori uzsvē: pateicoties Svensona fanātiskajam darbam, šodien iespējams runāt par Ziemeļamerikas vietējo vīnrūpniecību. Gan Sukatnieks, gan Svensons izturīgas ziemeļu vīnogas veidoja, izmantojot starpsugu hibridizāciju. Ziemeļu rajoniem piemērotu šķirņu veidošana noris arī Vācijā, Krievijā un citās zemēs, tāpēc varam sagaidīt ziemeļu vīnkopības uzplaukumu visai tuvā nākotnē. Grāmatai ir divas daļas: pirmajā daļā Toms Plokers izklāsta svarīgākos jautājumus, kas saistīti ar vīnogu audzēšanas īpatnībām ziemeļu zemēs; otrajā daļā Bobs Pārks dalās savā un citu pieredzē vīnu gatavošanā no starpsugu hibridajām vīnogām. Jāuzsver, ka visa grāmatā sniegtā informācija lielā mērā ir unikāla un pirmoreiz pieejama lasītājiem, kuri interesējas par ziemeļu vīnkopību. Materiāli grāmatai vākti ilgstošā abu autoru pieredzē kā vīnogu audzēšanā un vīna gatavošanā, tā arī daudzajos Toma Plokera izpētes braucienos pa ASV un citām valstīm. 1998. gadā abi autori apceļoja arī Baltijas reģiona valstis un Latvijas vīnkopjiem bija iespēja ar viņiem iepazīties personīgi. Nodibinājās ilgstoša sadarbība, kas izpaužas apmaiņā ar vīnogu selekcijas materiālu, kopīgu selekcijas ideju apspriešanā un diskusijās par vīnogu, kā arī augļu un ogu vīnu gatavošanu. Grāmata adresēta gan amatieriem, gan arī visiem tiem, kuri apsver iespējas audzēt vīnogas tirgum vai vīna ražošanai. Darbā uzskatāmi parādīts, ko var panākt ar entuziasmu un uzņēmību, un arī pati grāmata ir tīra entuziasma auglis un dāvana visiem, kas grib nodarboties ar veselīgo saules ogu audzēšanu.