

HOW INDIA'S WINE INDUSTRY IS OVERCOMING HURDLES THROUGH RESOURCEFULNESS

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Representatives from three leading Indian wine producing companies - Sula Vineyards, Grover Zampa Vineyards and York Winery - outlined existing challenges for the domestic wine industry and trends for local wines in India.

Sula Vineyards, India's number one

In many respects, Sula Vineyards has pioneered wine growing in India. It planted international grape varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling; it organizes and hosts one of the largest music festivals in a winery, Sula Fest; and it has released India's first 100% grape brandy, Janus. Rajeev Samant, founder & CEO of India's leading wine company, delivered the opening presentation of the masterclass with a prediction that the Indian wine market should continue to see double-digit growth over the next few years. After China, it is already one of the fastest growing markets in Asia. The industry continues to focus on consistency in quality and improvements in winemaking technology year on year.

Boutique, family-owned York Winery

The story of York Winery, set in India's wine capital Nashik in Maharashtra, was recounted by director and winemaker Kailash Gurnani. This family-owned and operated boutique winery overlooking the Gangapur Dam planted its first vineyards in 2005. Boasting 6 acres under vine, the winery has a total capacity of up to 1,000,000 litres but currently produces half that amount. On returning from Australia in 2008, Kailash Gurnani worked on the first vintage but released his first Indian vintage in 2012. York maintains separate fermentation areas for red wine and

white wine. Its multilevel winery enables gravity-fed wine transfers and it has an underground cellar area for oak barrel ageing. Its sparkling wine is made using the traditional method. The estate's varietal range includes Chardonnay and Tempranillo but approximately 55 acres of vineyards are under contract for supplies of other regular grape varieties.

Trailblazing Grover Zampa

Sumedh Singh Mandla, COO of India's second-largest wine company Grover Zampa Vineyards, spoke about the tradition of wine making in the country. Grover Zampa, which is a merger between Bangalore-based Grover vineyards, one of the oldest wineries in India and Zampa wines from Nashik, enjoys the benefits of both locations. Some of its brands produced in the Bangalore-based winery have received a number of awards and accolades, including the most iconic Grover La Reserve wines. From its renowned consultant wine maker Michel Rolland to its special edition art collections and collaboration with tennis star Vijay Amritraj for whom special labels are created, Grover Zampa vineyards has always been at the forefront of innovation. This also explains why it has a strong foothold in export markets.

All three speakers highlighted the problems of interstate export duties as one of the major hindrances for the wine business in the country. Restrictions on liquor advertising and promotion also act as major roadblocks for industry growth. Although the Indian wine industry posts double-digit growth, they agreed that wine tourism would play the most important role in promoting wine culture in India.