

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PARTICIPATION  
OF DRĂGĂȘANI WINE IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL  
EXHIBITIONS IN THE PERIOD 1866 – 1900

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**ABSTRACT**

*The natural conditions present in the Drăgășani Vineyard are among the most favorable for obtaining quality wines belonging to all types and categories. The Drăgășani winegrowers were the first and most active in participating with their wines since the 19th century in the organized exhibitions and competitions nationally and internationally. The results of these concerns have contributed to the universal knowledge of the wines from the vineyard, to the stimulation of the internal and external wine trade and to the outline of the assortment of varieties that must be cultivated in Drăgășani in order to obtain superior quality wines with controlled designation of origin. It should be noted that Podgoria Drăgășani is perhaps the only one in our country that, through winegrowers, has made the most persevering efforts to assert the quality of its wines abroad since the 19th century.*

**INTRODUCTION**

In the vicinity of strong settlements dominated by Rusidava, which later became the voivodeship region of Oltenia's money, the Drăgășani have enjoyed special attention and appreciation for their wines since ancient times. Its relief miraculously shaped by nature with an infinite range of slope-forms and exposures, and with a happily dosed scale of altitudes; the basic climatic features of the most favorable marked especially by the absence of any excesses or insufficiency; its location along the Olt valley which ensures a permanent easy movement of air; always having a good humidity even in July-August, the warmest months, all these are the natural conditions that decided that the most gifted and valuable Romanian and foreign varieties should find in Drăgășani the most favorable environment to fully express the extent of their skills quality that it has (Teodorescu St. 1986). In the presence of this work, we have proposed, based on documents, to highlight the participation of Drăgășani wine in the period 1866-1900 at national and international exhibitions and to capture the consequences of this activity.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Investigations were made at the Vâlcea State Archives, older and newer specialized literature was searched for records based on documents of personalities belonging to our viticulture.

It was really useful for us to consult many existing documents in the library of the Drăgășani Viticulture and Winemaking Resorts and the Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences library.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Drăgășani vineyard has established itself since its beginnings as the most important in Oltenia and one of the main wine-growing regions of the country. Throughout the voivodeship of the Wallachia, the Drăgășani vineyards enjoyed special care because lords and great boyars they owned here the most well-kept vineyards whose reputation they helped with their prestige. The largest vineyard area in the medieval era was that of Buzescu Ban (Teodorescu C.I. 1933). The first participation of wines from Drăgășani in an exhibition is recorded in documents in 1865. The government's call in 1865 for participation in the agricultural exhibitions in Bucharest and Iași on the occasion of the Grandfathers' Fair among other counties also responded to the county of Vâlcea which, in addition to the fabrics executed at the Mamu Hermitage and several other agricultural products specific to the hill area, also participates with a wine collection (Vâlcea State Archives).

On May 15, 1865, through an address sent to the county prefecture, I. Simulescu, the sub-prefect of Oltul county, announced his participation and that of his brother N. Simulescu from Drăgășani at the exhibition in Bucharest with Drăgășani wines from the Tămâioasă variety, vintage 1864 (two bottles) old white wine harvested from the "Teiul lui Băluță" vineyard from Drăgășanilor hill (Vâlcea State Archives).

The participation, although the first of its kind, was rewarded by the jury of the exhibition with an important cash prize.

The entire year 1866 was marked by Romania's participation for the first time as an independent state, at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867 (Vâlcea State Archives file 127/1866).

It is the merit of Alex Odobescu appointed commissioner of the Romanian commission for the exhibition that makes Vâlcea County participate with geological samples, mineral waters, national seams, wood samples, wine model, turbine wheeler, agricultural products and a rich collection of wines from Drăgășani (Vâlcea State Archives, 127/1866; 154/1868; 94/140/1880; 11/1880; 128/19/1881; 75/64/1882).

For a preliminary selection of the agricultural products that will be exhibited in Paris on May 26, 1866, an "Exhibition of flowers, fruits and vegetables" was opened in Bucharest in Cișmigiu garden, at the close of which the wines from Drăgășanilor Hill, along with other agricultural products of Vâlcea county, acquires the right to participate in the Universal Exhibition, so in October the participation of the samples from the wines sent by D. Simulescu and Paraschiv Nicolau from Drăgășani is confirmed.

Moreover, for the mentioned products, additional quantities are requested, in order to participate in the exhibition contest where they will demonstrate their qualities for one of the medals up for grabs, in front of a jury composed of 12 world-renowned tasters (Vâlcea State Archives. Fund. Prefecture of Vâlcea County - idem file 8).

According to the decision of the Romanian Commission, in addition to the 14 bottles of wine from the vineyards on Drăgășanilor hill, the two producers supplement the quantities with 4 bottles of red wine, 4 bottles of white wine and 2 bottles of aromatic wine (Tămâioasă) all from the year's harvest 1865.

The wines qualify among the first, by the international jury, D. Simulescu being rewarded with the bronze medal and the diploma of honor of the exhibition.

At the end of 1880, the "Concordia Română" society organizes a national agricultural and industrial exhibition in Bucharest with the stated purpose of "the beneficial influence that exhibitions of all kinds exert on the trade and industry of a country."

To this exhibition, the county of Vâlcea sends, the bottles of various wines provided in the general catalog in group VII, class 42 (Vâlcea State Archives - Idem 8).

The exhibition brings a new confirmation of the quality of wine from Drăgășani, confirmed by the large requests addressed by wine merchants. After 1880, the County Agricultural Commissions were established, granting them the right to organize exhibitions and agricultural competitions. The first exhibition of this kind is organized in Vâlcea county in the fall of 1881 (October 31-November 2) in the "Zăvoi" park, where a special pavilion for vineyards and wine is organized. Among the participants, "those who cultivated in - a more systematic way to preserve the wines on a more intensive scale (Vâlcea State Archives idem 8), Ștefan Ion Popescu from Ștefănești, who presents a bottle of wine from the 1879 harvest and Mihai Urșanu from Gușoieni who presents a bottle of wine, also from 1879.

These producers were participating for the first time in such an event. However, there were no shortage of prestigious participants such as D. Simulescu with 3 bottles of Rhine wine vintage 1876, 3 bottles of Tămăioasă vintage 1876, 4 bottles of old white wine (1877), 3 bottles of sweet Tămăioasă swet (1878) three bottles of Bordeaux wine (1879) and 2 bottles of Cognac (1875); Zisu Dumitrescu from Drăgășani with 2 bottles of natural white wine (1868), two bottles of red wine (1874); Ștefan Filipescu with smoky white and red wines from the 1874 and 1879 harvests (Vâlcea State Archives -Idem 8).

However, at the end of the century, Podgoria Drăgășani had recovered, its wines reentering the circuit of national and international competitions table 1.

Table 1.

The situation of the areas with vines and the productions made in the years 1841–1901 (According to Dr. A. Urbeanu, 1908)

Anul	Suprafața (ha)	Producția (hl)	Producția (hl/ha)
1841	2378,59	-	-
1861	4194,37	-	-
1862	-	81323,93	-
1863	-	47034,54	-
1864	-	23938,25	-
1865	4194,00	44051,00	10,50
1866	-	39016,99	-
1867	-	37304,85	-
1868	-	61350,96	-
1869	-	64411,84	-
1884	6519,23	-	-
1887	8505,87	342492,67	40,30
1892	8484,00	147028,00	17,33
1895	9310,00	127110,00	13,70
1896	9310,00	243600,00	25,20
1897	3635,00	2520,00	0,70
1898	8080,00	10600,00	1,30
1899	9129,00	156089,00	17,20
1900	2243,00	21000,00	8,00
1901	6461,00	14710,00	2,30

At the exhibition and wine competition in Bordeaux (1898), the French consul Wilhelm Arden exhibited a series of white wines from Drăgășani which obtained the diploma of honor alongside the red wines from Mehedinți which were awarded the gold medal. The first exhibition after the restoration of the Drăgășani vineyard after the phylloxera disaster was the regional exhibition in Craiova in 1898, at which the wines from Drăgășani were awarded three gold and one silver medals. The Craiova Exhibition (1898) was considered the prelude to Romania's participation in the Universal Exhibition in Paris that opened in July 1900, where the wines from Drăgășani are particularly impressive, especially those presented by D. Simulescu, I.C. Brătianu, M.C. Danaricu, Ștefan Filipescu, Gheorghe Filipescu Alexandru Măciuceanu, Mor Ocneanu, C. Herăscu, presenting: 8 bottles of Bordeaux red wine (Cabernet Sauvignon) vintage 1896; 8 bottles of indigenous white wine, vintage 1896; eight bottles of white wine harvested in 1897. Along with these producers, Ion Bratu, also from Drăgășani, participated, honoring her with three crates of different, bottled wines, the 1896 harvest (Vâlcea State Archives. Vâlcea County Prefecture Fund file 38 /48 /1899). The wines were well appreciated even if they came from grapes of new plantations, established after the phylloxera attack. The reputation of Drăgășani wine was also amplified after 1900 by presenting it at exhibition events, in 1908 and 1911 in Milan, in 1912 in Gant where they were widely appreciated. It is also worth noting the participation of the people of Drăgășani in the Romanian General Exhibition in Bucharest which took place in 1906, with the participation of Austria, Hungary, Bucovina and Bessarabia, in this way the opportunity was offered for the meeting of all Romanians, the "French Pavilion" was not missing. The credit for organizing this exhibition belonged to Dr. C.I. Istrate, general commissioner of the Romanian Exhibition, member of the Romanian Academy and former minister. At this important event the wines from Drăgășani, presented by Laura Simulescu, Elena Năsturel, I. Kalinderu, G.M. Cantacuzino, Dr. Ghe. Sabin, Dr. I. Suci, Matei Constantinescu, Circumscription R.M.S. from Drăgășani, Zăvideni, Călina, Șuțești, Mădulari and Zlatărei, they were offered the gold medal with a special diploma. (Toni Ciolacu, I. Vasile, 1968). On the national level, the reputation of Drăgășani wine was maintained by the great owners and merchants, especially by lordache N. Ionescu, who in his restaurant on Covaci Street (Bucharest) managed to conquer consumers from the world of artists, music writers. Lordache N. Ionescu's successor was Radu Andreescu, about whom it was said that, until around the 1950s, the most famous collection of Drăgășani wines appeared in Radu's cellars in Puțul cu Apă Rece street, later moved to Roma street. Starting from the 20th century and up to the present day, the wines of Drăgășani have not been absent from any national, international and world exhibition or competition, where they have been rewarded with the most sought-after medals.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. The Drăgășani vineyard is the only one in the country where you can get practically all types and categories of wines and products based on must and wine (dry white wines; semi-aromatic and demi-aromatic and sweet wines; red wines, wine distillates) and even grapes for fresh consumption and for raisins;
2. The winegrowers of Drăgășani were the first and most active in participating with their wines in all national and international exhibitions and competitions, where they always enjoyed real success, confirmations being also made in writing by great wine tasters of the times, appreciating them all the time with superlatives.

3. After learning about Drăgășani wines through the exhibitions and contests they participated in, the interest in this product widened, „On the occasion of the picking of the vines from the Drăgășani area, the locality famous for wine production presented itself to a company of foreign merchants with the mission of placing orders for the German States; Russia and England, however, as ridiculous as the local wine prices seemed to them, so exaggerated were the expenses for their expedition to the destination, so the said company is about to give up with all regret the decision it had taken" (From - a manuscript from Vâlcea Prefecture to the Ministry of Public Works - Vâlcea State Archives file 121/186; 154/1868; 94/140/1880; 11/1880 128/119/1821; 75/64/1882).

4. The remarkable results obtained by Drăgășani wines at national and international competitions strengthened the winegrowers' confidence in the ample oenological potential of the vineyard and convinced them that their success lies in the chance to obtain quality wines. The results obtained by Drăgășani wines at the competitions they participated in were one of the decisive factors in defining the assortment of varieties that must be cultivated in order to have quality wines and a viticulture with a high economic and financial degree.

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Vâlcea State Archives, file idem 8

Vâlcea State Archives, Vâlcea county prefecture file 38/48/1899