



ARMAGEDDON

RECENTLY, WE ARE JUMPING FROM ONE APOCALYPSE TO ANOTHER. THE CRISES THAT ARE OCCURRING IN BIG FIGURE CIRCLES, AND WHICH ARE REFLECTED IN SMALL ECONOMIES, ARE THE OBJECT OF ENDLESS HYPERBOLE, TO THE POINT THAT TERRIBLE TERMS, SUCH AS APOCALYPSE, ARE OVERUSED AND LOSING SOME OF THEIR INTENSITY. THE MALIGNANT COVID 19 HAS ARRIVED AS SOMETHING LIKE THE MOTHER OF ALL BATTLES, THE BEGINNING OF ARMAGEDDON, AND IN VIEW OF THE COLLECTIVE HYSTERIA AROUND THE WORLD, I'M NOT SURE THERE'S GOING TO BE A TOMORROW.

» The infamous coronavirus, or Covid 19, are words that have been branded into biographies the world over, and there have been some unimaginable consequences, particularly if we take into consideration its real size, compared with the deaths caused each year by flu, smoking, cancer, drinking or the sum of rare and minority diseases which hardly deserve the attention of science or the powerful pharmaceutical industry. That same powerful industry which, in spite of how sweet the future looks for those who discover the remedy or vaccine, seems to have had the good sense to comply with the terms indicated by scientists.

Surely, when these lines see the light of day, and we do not know when that will be, whatever is written here, will have been surpassed by an unknown reality. For the moment, the isolation measures have given us a series of familiar images, but familiar in fiction, disaster movies or zombie series. For the moment, the public is generally behaving well, although there are some worrying aspects, such as the spread of armed agents controlling the streets; because we all know, if you give a simple man a uniform and the slightest opportunity to exercise control, the next moment he thinks he is an admiral on the open sea.

Nevertheless, it must be said that this Armageddon has brought some positive things too, such as well-behaving citizens or the recognition, endorsed by the government, of groups who are usually worthy of praise, like the healthcare workers or security and emergency forces, and also others who are not normally in the limelight, like food shop assistants, newsagents (a soon-to-be-extinguished species) and even hairdressers. The virus, however, has also confirmed the miserable side of human nature, as seen in the attitude of some politicians, over the speculation in hard-to-come-by elements, such as masks, or the initiative of some restaurants who have immediately fired all their staff, or certain xenophobia aimed at owners of second homes in holiday areas, who are annoying except when they pay their taxes and spend their money in the local businesses.

This Armageddon is arriving in parts. First, it was an exotic piece of news in a far-away province in China. Then, it was seen with a certain amount of concern, and then as an alarming reality, cancelling all agendas. Like a tsunami, the appointments that normally fill the calendar pages of professionals in March,

have all disappeared. In the wine sector, everything has been disrupted. Barcelona Wine Week got away by the skin of its teeth, taking place close to Bacchus, the annual wine tasting course run by the Spanish Tasters Union, a world event with some tasters dropping out at the last minute. Not many can say the same.

The German event, Prowein, is one of the world's big wine events, perhaps the most important, together with the French Vinexpo or the British, London Wine. Prowein should have opened from 15 to 17 March, but it was cancelled a few days before; the new date will be 21 to 23 March 2021.

This was a drastic decision, followed to a certain extent in Italy, where the Vinitaly fair, planned for April, has been postponed until June (from 14 to 17). The Spanish Alimentaria fair is set back further, to the end of the summer; its new dates are from 14 to 17 September.

Some have been more optimistic. The Club de Gourmets Salon, which should be held from 30 March until 2 April, will be moved to June, which seems a little soon; specifically, from 15 to 18, according to the notification issued by Grupo Gourmets less than a month before the envisaged dates. Vinoble, the exhibition in Jerez for the *vinos generosos*, maintains its dates of 24 to 26 May, but they are planning to meet at the end of March to study the situation further. The same applies to Organic Food Iberia, in Madrid, which plans to bring together 600 organic food companies, and is maintaining its dates of 3 and 4 June.

The more modest events, like presentations, group exhibitions and even the Mass Vino Awards, have been brushed aside by the Covid 19 tsunami, just like the catering trade as a whole and so many other aspects. This crisis seems to be provisional, but we have yet to see how long its effects will last. The country is facing a crucial test, as is the future of the European Union. First impressions show that the public has risen to the challenge, at least during the heat of the moment and before actually suffering the consequences. We have yet to see public representatives, both public and private institutions, responding in the same measure or, perhaps, as happened in the last crisis, they are going to use this situation to take us down into the depths of disequilibrium. We just have to keep our fingers crossed! ■

