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George's Rants & Raves: I Spirit, Italian Vodka | George Brozowski

Have you ever noticed how every word in the Italian language ends in a vowel? Pizza, spaghetti, cannoli, asiago, vino, pasta, Roma, via, Giovanni, Machiavelli, etc., etc. Many others end with two vowels: aria, formaggio, silenzio, etc. Also, the Italians tend to simply add a vowel to the end of any foreign language word to automatically make it Italian: problem / problema, machine / macchina, automobile / automobilia. And now, they seem to have latched onto Vodka.

Well, those wily Italians might be taking it too far when they try to claim vodka as their own. Wars have been started between Poland and Russia as to who and where vodka originated. However, these guys just might have invented, reinvented, discovered or rediscovered something quite interesting

The word "vodka" was recorded for the first time in 1405 in court documents from the Palatinate of Sandomierz in Poland. At that time, the word vodka (wÃ³dka), referred to chemical compounds, medicines, and cosmetics while the popular beverage was called gorzalka, from the Old Polish gorzec meaning to burn. The word vodka, written in the Cyrillic alphabet ,appeared first in 1533, in relation to a medicinal drink brought from Poland to Russia by merchants.

A number of Russian pharmaceutical lists contain the terms "vodka of grain wine" and "vodka in grain wine". Grain wine was a spirit distilled from alcohol made from grain (as opposed to grape wine) and hence "vodka of grain wine" would be a water dilution of a distilled grain spirit.

According to the Gin and Vodka Association (GVA), the first documented production of vodka was in Russia in the late 9th century. The first known vodka distillery was documented almost two hundred years later at Khylnovsk, Russia. Poland lays claim to having distilled vodka even earlier in the 8th century but as this was a distillation of wine, it would be more appropriate to consider it a crude brandy. The still allowing for distillation â€" the "burning of wine" â€" was invented in the 8th century

And so what in the hell does all this historical stuff have to do with those wily Italians today? According to the good folks at I Spirit â€" Italian Vodka, they trace their vodka roots back to 1195 in Venice to an alchemist known as Il Bianco (the White One) who discovered the "elixir of long life" which instantly made him as loved and famous as Lady Gaga, another famous Italian.

Well, as it turns out, these guys have brewed up a vodka using grain and white grapes. Yes, they are making vodka using some grapes. What kind of grapes and exactly what kind of grain seems to be a state secret committed to parchment paper and sealed in a bottle and dropped to the bottom of Lake Como.

This is actually a very nice and very interesting super-premium vodka. Similar to all the better vodkas in this category it is an odorless, tasteless, and very smooth spirit. However , it ups the ante with its secret ingredient of grapes. The grapes really donâ€™t change the taste or aroma profile but add a bit of body to the mouth feel that makes this vodka just that much more interesting and makes it stand apart from the others. At around $31.00 per bottle, itâ€™s certainly worth a try and is definitely a keeper.

By George Brozowski

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/wine-articles/george-s-rants-raves-i-spirit-italian-vodka.htm - Article Side

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Article Keywords:
I Spirit, Italian Vodka, I Spirit Italian Vodka review, I Spirit vodka review