

# **IBA Conference 2020: Let's explore Ukraine!**

**Very recently, Ukraine has joined the International Blackcurrant Association. Their involvement starts with a huge project: the promise to host the next IBA conference 2020 - in Lviv!**

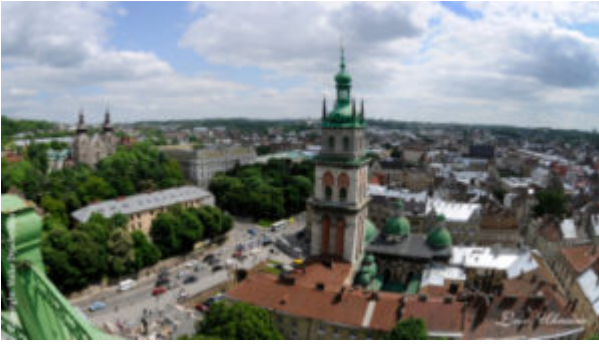
## **Where are we going?**

You may think that we are desperately trying to challenge your linguistic skills when we choose the locations for our international conferences. After Goes, Nyborg, Waldenburg, Bialowieza and Angers (others were easier to pronounce...), we are now off for LVIV (in phonetical writing: [l'viu]). This time, we give you another challenge. You will also have to adapt to a new alphabeth for reading: Cyrillic! But luckily, you may find other spellings and pronounciations for the city, more suitable for your tongue, like Lwow or Lemberg. It is the same place, and it is in Western Ukraine, not far from the Polish border. This is where we will hold the IBA conference 2020, and explore blackcurrants in Ukraine.

## **Blackcurrants in Ukraine**

Western Ukraine is a huge berry growing area. Even though Ukraine also grows blackcurrants around Kiev and further east in the country, the recently created Ukrainian Berries association has chosen Lviv for our conference. The city, with less than a million inhabitants, is the largest in Western Ukraine. It has nice facilities for hosting conferences. And it has a beautiful historical center, which is on the UNESCO world heritage list.





## **Some bit of history**

As you may know, Ukraine has not always been independent. After several hundred years of foreign domination (Kingdom of Poland before the 17th, Habsburg Empire in the 19th, and Soviet Union in the 20th century, mainly), we will visit a young independent country. Ukraine has become a part of the free trade area with the European Union in 2016. Blackcurrant growing is expanding in Ukraine. Most probably, their production will soon largely influence the world's blackcurrant industry.

## **How to come to the IBA conference 2020 in Lviv**

It may be too early yet to make your travel arrangements. But as usual, we will give you all the information you need in one of our website sections. We will update you with useful hints for travelling, for the venue and many more. In the meantime, you may already check out general information on Lviv, on the Ukrainian blackcurrant industry, flights leading to Lviv and administrative information for visas (if requested).

We are looking forward to meeting you in Lviv for the IBA conference 2020!

*“Situated just like Rome on seven hills, among the woods, in the valley of the Poltva River, Lviv was always noted for both an advantageous strategic position and an exceptionally beautiful landscape.”* is what the tourist office of Lviv says.

Doesn't it sound really exciting?

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# **STEF Dijon - specialists for freezing blackcurrants**

**A huge majority of the blackcurrant liqueurs of the world come from Burgundy (France). Not amazingly, you can also find special equipments, infrastructures and companies for the same purpose. STEF Dijon is part of the chain, with solutions for freezing blackcurrants.**

## **Special infrastructure for a special production**

In 2014, STEF has adopted an important strategy for the whole cassis production chain. They decided to build a warehouse specially for the needs of the cassis industry in Burgundy. A huge cold storage room of 14.000 m<sup>3</sup> is only a part of the whole investment. In total, 2.000 m<sup>2</sup> are dedicated to blackcurrant storage close to Dijon. *Read more in the global press* STEF Dijon has an annual turnover of 28 million Euro and employs 159 people. Of course, not all of it thanks to blackcurrants only. But the existence of this unique site in France is closely linked to the blackcurrants - for the needs of the liqueur manufacturers. Walking through the warehouses, you can also find peaches, apricots, other berries and cherries. And also all kind of other deep frozen foodstuff.

**For the needs of “Crème de cassis”**



Every year, when the blackcurrant harvest starts in France, not only the growers are most busy. While the farmers get onto their harvesters in t-shirts and shorts, several seasonal workers put on heavy warm clothes and gloves. During the hottest time of the year, they will work in such dresses in the warehouses of STEF, a company specializing in refrigerated logistics. Because out of the 6000 tonnes of blackcurrants harvested in France, half will go into the production of “crème de cassis” (blackcurrant liqueur).



And of course, not all of these blackcurrant can be used immediately. Therefore, STEF Dijon has specialized in freezing blackcurrants.



## **The process - explanations from Sylvain Tatreux, branch manager**

“We receive blackcurrants over a duration of three weeks here. They come from the producers in Burgundy or from other production places in France. The best solution for our clients was to freeze the blackcurrants as close as possible to the place of their processing (in and around Dijon). We can handle up to 220 tonnes of blackcurrants per day. They arrive in crates of 17kg. In peak periods, there are 320 trucks coming and going per day on this site. We therefore give appointments to the producers.”<sup>✖</sup> “Given the huge amount of blackcurrants to deal with in a short period of time, we cannot freeze them individually. This process takes too much time, and has to undergo temperatures of -35 to -50°C. In our warehouse, we store between -18 and -30°C.”<sup>✖</sup>

## **Freezing blackcurrants at STEF Dijon, step by step**



Vehicles arrive fully loaded on a weighbridge. The staff present at the reception assigns a batch number for each blackcurrant variety. They put aside a sample of each for analyses. STEF's clients will come and take them to their respective laboratories in order to check the sugar content and residue levels. The staff members bring the crates into the cold room for 48 hours. They can handle 800 tonnes of



blackcurrants per week.

## **Reconditioning**



Once the blackcurrants are frozen, the staff starts to recondition them. This process will last for more than two months. Staff members empty the crates on a selection desk and remove remaining leaves or boughs from the blackcurrants. From the conveyor belt, the blackcurrants fall into big bags, with a weight according to the clients' needs. 76% of STEF's clients are small and medium sized enterprises. ❌❌❌❌

❌ From the reconditioning room back into the cold room, the big bags can now stay at the warehouse for a maximum duration of 2 years. Whenever the companies now need blackcurrants, they can fetch them from the STEF warehouse and process them.

## **STEF Dijon - a unique project for blackcurrants**

“Storing under such conditions is much more expensive than storing under room temperature.” explains Sylvain Tartreaux. “For a warehouse of the same size than ours, this represents an additional cost of 2 million Euro. We therefore have signed a contract with our partners over 9 years, which allowed us to build up this special equipment for their needs.” Today, STEF is the European leader in freezing logistics.

STEF is present also in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. But the warehouse in Burgundy with its infrastructure and working methods adapted to the blackcurrant industry, under standards of ISO 9001 and 50 001, is unique.

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# Nectars de Bourgogne reveals the blackcurrant

**Florent and Emmanuelle Baillard share their passion of blackcurrants in two different ways: Florent produces the fruits, Emmanuelle processes them under the name “Nectars de Bourgogne”.**

**A success story from Burgundy (France).**

## Back to the roots



Before it comes to Nectars de Bourgogne, it is a long way to go. At first, like many other blackcurrant growers, Florent continued a family tradition. His father originally had a farm based on both polyculture (vines, cereal crop and pasture) and cattle farming over 40 hectares. In the 1970ies, he started growing blackcurrants on 3 hectares. The blackcurrants were harvested by hand, and traders sold them. In those days, there were 17 blackcurrant growers in the same area - today they are 7!



## **Huge changes and Socofruits**

From the beginning, Florent's father had a contract with one of the blackcurrant liqueur manufacturers, Vèdrenne. This is how it came that other growers wanted him to manage a loose syndication of several blackcurrant farmers, called Socofruits. They finally established a cooperative in 1983. Then, in 1986, they changed into a producers' association. Ten years later, they became a producer organization, with a sort of family management. At most, they were 200 members in the beginning of the 1990ies. Together, they produced 12 tonnes of blackcurrant buds and 800 tonnes of blackcurrants per year. This moment was also a turning point for the whole blackcurrant industry. The harvest got mecanised. Florent's father stopped cattle farming, cereal production, removed the vines, and increased the surface for blackcurrants. In total, he grew blackcurrants over 10 hectares. Socofruits today has 60 members, produces 20 tonnes of blackcurrant buds and 1500 tonnes of fruits.

## **Florent Baillard's success story**



At the same moment, Florent Baillard was finishing his studies in agriculture and agribusiness, specializing in oenology. He started his career as a salesman with Laurent Perrier. His sales area covered central France, and the range of products went from wines over champagnes to whiskeys. "Too much tastings, too much alcohol and parties with clients, and too much driving", is what disturbed Florent after a few years. In 1997, he took over the family's blackcurrant farm (with still some vines), together with the presidency of Socofruits.



Florent Baillard on his farm

Today, he is head of a family business which employs 5 agricultural workers. They grow vines over 10 hectares, blackcurrants for bud production over 20 hectares, and 70 hectares for fruits. Half of their activity is also covered by service delivery: weeding, equipment rental and the like. As head of Socofruits, Florent Baillard extended the geographical coverage over 5 départements (almost 35,000 km<sup>2</sup>). “This geographical increase helps to share different conditions related to climate and soil”, explains Florent.



Florent Baillard's farm



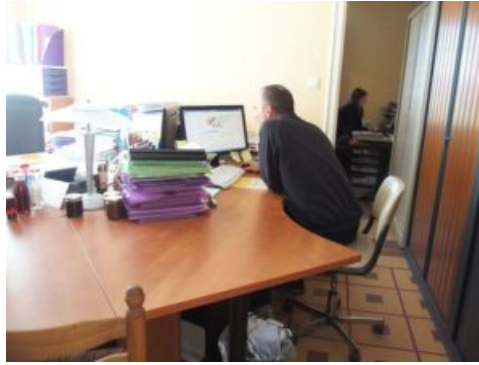
Florent in front of one of his BC fields



Machines on Florent's farm



## The market



Office work

Until the early 2000s, Socofruits delivered all their blackcurrants to the French liqueur manufacturers. Since then, cassis consumption declined, and farmers of other regions of France entered the blackcurrant market. Florent Baillard therefore started to explore new solutions. Unfortunately, there were not much market opportunities for other blackcurrant based products.

## The birth of Nectars de Bourgogne

Out of a critical situation came a genius idea. Florent's wife Emmanuelle, also trained in agrobusiness, started Nectars de Bourgogne in 2004. "We were convinced that there was a market, at least a local one, for blackcurrant and other juices and for jams", explains Florent. "Very rapidly, the business started to grow, and we needed to invest. At that moment, Socofruits joined in. This is how today, one third of the fruits produced within Socofruits go into the production of something else than liqueurs."



production site



Open day

## **Emmanuelle Baillard and her team**



Emmanuelle Baillard

Today, Nectars de Bourgogne employs 10 people. They make juices and jams with the local blackcurrants, but also with other fruits which Emmanuelle selects from the best in the world. She has a watchful eye on market trends (some of her products are organic) and innovation. Together with local chefs and companies, she works on the creation of new products.



innovative products

Finally, Nectars de Bourgogne has not stopped its expansion. Emmanuelle carefully invests little by little in more and more sophisticated material. The products go into a niche market of fine food. Emmanuelle is not afraid of showing Burgundy expertise all over the world. She participates and is successful in trade fairs in Japan or in the Middle East. But of course, France is the first focus. You can find Nectars de Bourgogne products in local hotels and in the fine food area of supermarkets - not to forget the internet.



sparkling  
blackcurrant or  
lemon juice



blackcurrant  
juice, vinegar  
and pepper



Emmanuelle with visitors  
at Nectars de  
Bourgogne's open day



blackcurrant  
caramel



shelf of stickers

## **Perspectives for the future**



blackcurrant field with  
scales

Although both businesses turn quite well, Florent Baillard does not feel totally secured. "Our fear is mainly related to scales. Last year, we have lost 35% of our yield and plants because of the scales. One third of my farm has been affected by

these insects. They destroy a whole field within three years. Therefore, we try a lot, from chemical products to ladybugs, to limit the effects.”



scale damages

To wrap it up, Florent and Emmanuelle Baillard will continue to innovate - in growing methods, market opportunities and products. “Even florists use a small part of our blackcurrants. They cut and buy branches on 2 hectares on my farm. They use them to make floral arrangements!” concludes Florent.