

WINE News

Italy is the world's most diverse winegrowing region, from racy whites in the north to luscious reds in the south. In this issue, our Italian team invites you to embrace life like an Italian and try something new.



JULY 1, 2013 FEATURES

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Italy: Open Your Heart to New Experiences

By Greg St. Clair

I'm thrilled with our new 4-page newsletter format. The focused nature of this style allows us to better grab your attention as well as to offer more in-depth coverage, especially for a region as diverse and abundant as Italy. No other country has so much to offer! This cornucopia of grapes, styles and often difficult to pronounce names forms a world overflowing with uniqueness—which often poses a challenge for many Americans in our Franco-centric wine world to understand.

Enter the *K&L Squadra Italiana*. In this newsletter, Mike Parres (San Francisco), Chris Miller (Hollywood), and I (Redwood City) share our insights into this complex and exciting country. All we ask is that you drop your pre-conceived notions, open your mind to some thrilling gustatory experiences, and, dare I say, trust us!

Beyond the borders of Chianti, Pinot Grigio, Brunello, Barolo, and few

of the other more popular Italian categories, there are more wines of stunning quality, style, and character than you can possibly imagine. Yes, the names are sometimes a bit tricky, but that's part of the fun! Italians are wonderfully accepting of people butchering their language. They get the gist, and certainly don't want you to fixate on technicalities of pronunciation. Italians are all about enjoying life, be it in the company of friends, family, food, wine, music, or art. They just want to share the experience with you.

So take this newsletter as an opportunity to share a new experience, just as if you were visiting the house of a new friend for dinner. The wines are different (they're not supposed to be like wines from anywhere else), along with the conversation, and the food. Go ahead. Open your heart, embrace life like an Italian, and read on:

Sicily on the Rise

By Greg St. Clair

Sicily is going through a rebirth when it comes to wine, and all over Sicily innovative producers are using indigenous varieties to coax Sicilian flavors out of their soil. The wines of Sicilian brothers Gunther and Klaus Di Giovanni are a perfect example. These are wines with character, balance, weight and a unique expression of their varieties rarely seen. Their great-grandfather first planted here in

1860 and their father Aurelio reorganized the estate in 1985. The vineyards cover 1,150 feet to over 2,700 feet in elevation. All of the Di Giovanni wines are organically certified.

2011 Di Giovanni Grillo (\$16.99) One of the finest Grillo I have ever tasted! Here this variety, often destined for Marsala, sees a remarkable transformation into a vibrant white wine.

2010 Di Giovanni Nerello Mascalese (\$16.99) The Di Giovannas procured cuttings of Nerello Mascalese over one hundred years ago, and they use the same clone today. It

is a superb example of Nerello Mascalese: full of wild cherry, smoke and pepper with a long and elegant feel on the palate. Just like Nebbiolo, Nerello Mascalese like this warrants a Burgundy glass.

2012 Di Giovanni "Gerbino" Rosato di Nerello Mascalese (\$14.99) Delicate rose-like aromatics waft gently from the glass. Once on the palate, this wine's structure shows you it is no simple rosé. The wine has exceptional balance and length while layered with spice and minerality. Truly a superb wine.

Opposite Ends of the Boot: Cantina Terlano & Gulfi

By Chris Miller

I concur 100% with Signor St. Clair in that one of the beautiful things about being an ardent Italiophile is the sheer breadth and variety of the wines. One can find everything from the lightest, freshest, crispest of whites to reds so rich, thick, and extracted a spoon could stand up in the glass. And what better way to juxtapose the bounty that is Italy than by talking about one of the greatest producers of the Alto Adige alongside the ongoing quality revolution on the island of Sicily?

I recently had the pleasure of dining here in Los Angeles with Klaus Gasser, who has been the sales and marketing manager at **Cantina Terlano** for over two decades. To be among the best of the Alto Adige producers is no small feat in a region where the wines in general start at very good and only get better from there.



The entry-level **2011 Cantina Terlano “Classico” Terlaner** (\$17.99) is a blend of 60% Pinot Blanc, 30% Chardonnay, and 10% Sauvignon, and a stunning bargain. Melon and white flower from the PB come together with pear and yellow apple from the Chardonnay and zesty citrus from the Sauvignon for an incredibly complex and excellently structured, synergetic white wine. **90 AG**

The **2010 Cantina Terlano “Vorberg” Pinot Bianco Riserva** (\$23.99) might be one of the greatest PBs I’ve ever tasted. Despite its northerly position high in the Alps, the valley of Alto Adige heats up during the day in summer months, but temperatures drop at night, giving this Pinot Bianco layers of rich, opulent fruit, but also incredible acid structure and piercing minerality. It’s beautiful to drink now, but it ages exceptionally well. **94 AG**

Finally, the **2010 Cantina Terlan “Quarz” Sauvignon** (\$52.99) is off the charts.

Intensely aromatic, but not aggressive, it has incredible power but also exceptional balance. Any lover of the best wines of Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé will now have a new producer to rank among the “best of the best.” **94+ AG, 92 WE**

Readers of my “Under the Radar” column will recall that I am a big fan of the wines of Sicily. Producers such as **Azienda Agricola Gulfi** are showing that Nero d’Avola is a grape that can express terroir as well as those other black ones up in the Côte d’Or or northern Rhône. The **2008 Gulfi “NeroJbleo” Sicilia IGT** (\$19.99) is wonderfully fresh, with sweet cherry fruit and hints of sweet tobacco, tar and Brunello-like spice, making it a beguilingly complex wine for just twenty of your hard earned dollars.

The **2006 Gulfi “NeroBaronj” Sicilia IGT** (\$32.99) takes things to the next level. Richer and denser than the NeroJbleo, the wine still retains a supreme elegance for such a “big” wine. Layers of cherry liquor, black raspberry, clove and exotic spice still leave room for textural minerality to poke through the rich yet balanced palate. **93 RP**

The crowning achievement is the **2007 Gulfi “NeroBufaleffj” Sicilia IGT** (\$39.99), a wine of such extraordinary depth and complexity it is impossible to describe—it must be experienced. I recently met with Matteo Catania, the son of Vito Catania who started Gulfi in collaboration with the legendary Salvo Foti. His passion and commitment to quality is inspirational. Just an incredible estate. Please check them out.



GULFI
organic wines

Guido’s Top Picks for Summer Entertaining

By Mike “Guido” Parres

A gazillion years ago, I met Greg St. Clair at a trade show and introduced myself because I wanted to take an Italian wine class he was teaching. He told me he was not working for that institution anymore, but was starting a wine tour in Italy (three to four wineries a day for two weeks). I immediately signed up and came back from that tour with a quest to taste every Italian varietal there was. I have not as of yet, but I am working on it.

While Greg, Chris & I, as well as many of our colleagues at K&L, can help demystify the many different regions and numerous grape varieties in Italy, we will always have a current favorite. As I like to say—they are all my favorite children, I just love them differently on different days...

2011 Ferrero Rosso di Montalcino* (\$15.99) A user-friendly rosso, bright fruit hits you first—black cherries, cassis and ripe strawberries—and then Tuscany starts to roll across your palate as the terroir takes on the rest of this wine. The finish is long and lingers. This needs an hour or so of air, then serve with pizza or a pasta course!

2012 Rocca di Montegrossi Rosato* (\$14.99) This year’s Rosato is AMAZING! The best “rosé” I have tasted! The first word in my notebook is WOW! Complex aromas of strawberry and raspberry fruit and also on the palate, this wine and is the perfect accompaniment to any summer evening! I am giving this Three Stars. ***

Ca de Medici “Terra Calda” Vino Frizzante Rosso (\$14.99) Chilled Lambrusco is truly one of my favorite wines for summer. This one is very dry, with some cherry cola and lots of spice. Excellent on its own or with food.

Fantinel Rosé Spumante (\$11.99) Yes, \$11.99. Don’t let ‘Spumante’ fool you! This is dry, fun bubbles from the Veneto, made from 90% Pinot Nero and 10% Chardonnay, and a must for all your summer parties. A light hue of salmon, on the nose you will find generous fruit, releasing hints of strawberries, peaches and wisteria blossoms. The mousse is creamy with a delicate, long-lasting bead. The palate is velvety, crisp, and fruity, admirable fullness and length, closely mirroring the nose. This is a wine of great balance and elegance and an excellent aperitif for all social occasions.

Adventures in the Northwest

By Greg St. Clair

Barolo and Barbaresco have been the most famous wines from Piedmont for years (and rightly so), but other parts of Northwest Italy are now seeing a greater following. The Roero, located across the Tanaro River from Barolo and Barbaresco, and the area in the northeast region nestled in the Alpine foothills represent two utterly diverse areas that are producing some prodigious wines.

VALLANA SPANNA AND THE WINES OF ANTONIO VALLANA

When I first got into this business (farther back than I want to think about), I was exposed to some “old” wines from the 1950s and 1960s with the appellation of *Spanna*. The rustic labels foretold the character of the wine. These wines had soul, and the flavors that poured out of them were pure, powerful, and made me feel at home.

Antonio Vallana created the “Camino” label, pictured to the right, in homage to his father Bernardo, who loved to sit by the fireplace (“camino” means fireplace in Italian) with his friends and drink wine. The camaraderie, warmth and friendship of this idea truly warms my heart. Antonio’s great-grandson, Francis Fogarty (yes, he’s Italian!) carries on the family business now. Vallana Spanna wines from the 1950s and 1960s are still drinking well today!

One proviso: to really get the most from their Nebbiolo-based wines, use a Burgundy glass. I also recommend decanting, while you’re getting the fire going. If you are in San Francisco, there’s no better month to have a roaring fire on a cold, cold night than the month of July! If you’re from warmer climes, a campfire will do the trick. I hope you try these wines and let them warm your heart as they do mine

The **2010 Vallana Spanna “Cuvee Bernardo Vallana” (\$24.99)** is 100% Nebbiolo. 2010 was a superb vintage for this area and you can almost feel the sun’s rays fleshing out this wine’s rich, full body. Though drinkable now, this wine has a pedigree for long aging. Decant for an hour or two and enjoy by the fire!

2010 Vallana Spanna (\$18.99) 85% Nebbiolo and 15% Vespolina.

2004 Vallana Gattinara (\$29.99) 100% Nebbiolo.

DOLCETTO AT ITS BEST: ANNA MARIA ABBONA

Dogliani is a town about eight miles south of Barolo but light years away in recognition. Here, Dolcetto is produced from the all the best vineyard sites, compared to lesser sites in the neighboring regions. The top wines are made from Dolcetto but will be labeled simply as “Dogliani” (pronounced “dol-yani”). After that, “Dolcetto di Dogliani” are the next in the tier, not necessarily aged in wood. But, as I like to tell most folks asking about Italy’s extraordinarily complex DOC regulations: better to forget them and concentrate on the wine and



producers! Anna Maria’s family has been growing grapes in this region for several generations. Her grandfather planted the Maioli vineyard in 1936. This vineyard produces less than 600 cases of wine a year and it is Dolcetto at its best.

2011 Anna Maria Abbona “Sorì dij But” Dolcetto di Dogliani (\$16.99) Anna Maria’s expressive stainless steel aged version of Dolcetto is fresh, vibrant and eminently drinkable. For me, grilled sausage, polenta and a bottle of this Dolcetto is the ultimate comfort food.

2010 Anna Maria Abbona “Maioli” Dogliani (\$20.99) With its wonderful blueberry aromatics couched in a full, yet supple body, this 100% Dolcetto is your ticket to understanding Dolcetto. Ethereal and rustic all at the same time, the concentration of flavors comes from the age of this vineyard, but not at the cost of delicacy. It is an expression of the pure flavors of the soil bursting forth through the grapes. I can’t recommend this wine enough—so exciting and so easy to drink! **93 JS**

MATTEO CORREGGIA: PIONEER IN THE ROERO

Matteo Correggia was a pioneer in helping the Roero gain international recognition when there wasn’t much in the way of quality wine being produced. Today, the reputation of the Roero is rooted in much of the early work of Matteo and a few other daring pioneers. Matteo’s tragic death in a tractor accident in 2001 rallied many of the region’s leading winemakers to help his wife Ornella carry on. After a five year transitional period, Ornella took the helm and has been guiding and expanding the direction of the winery ever since. Correggia produces some stunningly good, powerful reds, but I have a soft spot for their dry Brachetto and Arneis, two wines that are totally distinctive and not to be missed.

2011 Correggia “Anthos” Dry Brachetto (\$16.99) Brachetto is an aromatic red varietal that is often made into fizzy, semi-sweet wine, but “Anthos” is dry, with a haunting nose, and deep-sweeping flavors of fruit and spice on the palate. It is supple and flowing and simply a pleasure to drink. I love it as an aperitivo, but it really sings with chicken tagine or Vietnamese shaking beef. Serve at cellar temperature just like you would Cru Beaujolais.

2012 Correggia Roero Arneis (\$17.99) Sealed with a screw cap, this vintage is sizzling, with superb aromatics and great palate presence. I just love the depth of flavors along with the supple texture.

2010 Correggia “Marun” Barbera d’Alba (\$32.99)

2010 Correggia “Val dei Preti” Nebbiolo (\$32.99)

Hot Spots in Central Italy

By Greg St. Clair

MARCHE MADNESS: MATELICA

There are few growing regions in Italy that have caught my fancy more than Matelica in the Marche. The Marche is due east of Tuscany on the Adriatic Sea. Matelica is a valley that runs north-south in the Apennine Mountains, about an hour west of Marche's capital city, Ancona. Matelica is a tiny appellation by comparison to other Verdicchio DOC, with maybe 15 producers total. However, its unique geographical situation (the only north-south valley in this mountain chain) and superb growing conditions, with hot days and very cool nights, allow producers here to harvest completely ripe grapes. This physiological ripeness allows for better balance and more complete fruit flavors, along with a pleasing palate richness.

2012 Collestefano Verdicchio di Matelica (\$16.99) No oak aging for this clean, crisp white! Fabio Marchionni's gentle touch lets Matelica do the talking, not the winemaking. This is a sure bet to liven up your favorite seafood, or pasta primavera, but I love to drink it as an aperitivo. Tanzer recently praised this as "...probably Italy's single greatest white wine buy." **94 ST**

2012 Collestefano Rosato "Rosa di Elena" (\$15.99) Although Fabio makes no red wine, he couldn't pass up the opportunity to rent this tiny parcel of 80% Sangiovese and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon on a very steep slope. Brief skin contact gives just a kiss of color to this, fresh, balanced and lively rosé.

2011 Belisario "Vignetti del Cerro" Verdicchio di Matelica* (\$14.99) Belisario is a cooperative winery—and often when I read the word "cooperative," it's followed by a qualifier like "yes, but this is a good one..." My experience has been the opposite. Some of Italy's best wines come from cooperatives, and while Belisario doesn't get reviewed by most American critics, it is one of high quality that you must experience. This Verdicchio is fermented in stainless steel and shows fresh acidity, weight and an incredibly vibrant finish.

2009 Belisario "Cambrugiano" Verdicchio di Matelica Riserva* (\$21.99) This is my go-to crossover wine for converting California Chardonnay lovers to Italian whites. It has the palate richness of Chardonnay due to its partial aging in barrel, but with the classic acidity, balance and freshness of Matelica Verdicchio. An ideal cocktail wine or partner to salmon, swordfish or halibut.



Fabio Tassi in Montalcino.

FABIO TASSI: THE BEST IN MONTALCINO?

I dream to be Fabio Tassi. He's the proprietor of Montalcino's famous Enoteca la Fortezza, surrounded by an ocean of Brunello, and he produces Brunello as well. Tuscany is by far the most famous growing region in Italy. And to be great in Tuscany you really have to be great. I know my limitations (farmer/winemaker I am not), but Fabio happens to be extraordinarily talented at both.

A native of Montalcino, Brunello has been in Fabio's blood since birth. He is arguably one of the most delicate hands in winemaking in Montalcino. His wines breathe the soul of Sangiovese; they speak of the sun-soaked, southern slope of Montalcino under the Castello di Velona. Yet Fabio's years of experience tasting and selling others' wines have given him a particular acumen that further distinguishes him from other producers in the area. "Franci" is his mother's family name and the name of his premier label (OK, so labeling is one skill he's working on...in the next vintage labels will be less confusing). Labelling aside, I can't recommend these wines highly enough—these are must-trys for any fan of Brunello.

2007 Tassi Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) 90 RP: ...fleshes out beautifully on the palate with layers of super-expressive red fruits, crushed flowers and spices. **90 JS**

2006 Tassi Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99) 93 RP, 91 JS

2007 Tassi "Franci" Brunello di Montalcino (\$59.99) 93 JS: Aromas of dried mushrooms and berries, with hints of flowers. Full body, with chocolate and berry flavors and a long intense finish. **92 RP**

2006 Tassi "Franci" Brunello di Montalcino Selezione (\$69.99) 95 JS, 93 RP

2006 Tassi "Franci" Brunello di Montalcino Riserva (\$99.99) 95 RP: Mint, licorice and floral notes add complexity to the expressive fruit in this fabulous, classy Brunello. **94 JS, 92 WE**

Key: * Direct Buy **RP** Robert Parker's Wine Advocate **WS** Wine Spectator **ST** Stephen Tanzer's Int. Wine Cellar **AG** Antonio Galloni **JS** James Suckling **WE** Wine Enthusiast

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