

DiWINEtaste

Wine Culture and Information

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In Praise to Fiano

Sometimes they ask me about my favorite wine or grape. It is a question they ask me in many occasions, sometimes because of a simple curiosity, sometimes to get a confirmation to their preferences or, maybe, to get advice about the next bottle to be uncorked. I of course have no intention to stand in a pulpit with the hypocrite and pitiful superficial conviction of believing people can't wait to listen to my words and to know about my thoughts, however the answer is not simple. There are in fact too many factors determining the choice of a wine, a number of factors that in a specific moment represent a favorite bottle, certainly perfect. In case I do not have to consider other conditions or factors, among my favorite wines a special place is reserved to Marsala, Jerez (Sherry) and Port, fortified wines and generally aged for a very long time. Magnificent wines, they represent an extraordinary sensorial complexity, always new, exciting and amazing.

I however find hard to tell what wine is my favorite one, I certainly have my own preferences and taste which are not necessarily limited to one choice. Moreover, by considering the endless number of existing grapes and wines - and not only in Italy - the choice becomes very difficult and complex as every grape and wine can express qualities to be certainly considered as unique. I also admit that, in some periods, my attention is completely caught by particular grapes which, from time to time and for many reasons, I find myself pouring them again in my glass. In these periods I give them my attention in an almost exclusive way, without forgetting - as much as I can - the rest of the world of Bacchus. I have, like to say, some "cyclic" interests to which I pay attention from time to time, grapes and wines totally catching my time and study, giving joy to my glass for a long time. Sometimes it is like meeting an old friend you did not see since a long time: sometimes you recognize him, some other times you realize he changed and become a different person. And the change is not always positive.

Among the many grapes which are catching my attention from time to time there is Fiano, a giant of Italian wine making, one of the varieties I follow with interest. I have always had a particular interest for Fiano, a "love at first sight" hap-

pened many years ago when I tasted, for the first time, a Fiano di Avellino, at those time so far away from being recognized as DOCG. I admit that bottle was not exactly what it could be considered a *worthy representative*, however enough to understand it was a grape having great potentials. At those times the bottles of Fiano which could be found outside the borders of Campania were all belonging to the Irpinia area, a land that, at those times, was mainly known for Greco di Tufo. It was the beginning of a continuous discovery, in particular when I started tasting wines made of Fiano and produced in other areas or regions.

In the past recent years - more or less ten - I noticed an extraordinary general improvement in wines produced with Fiano, something happened not only in Irpinia and Campania. It should in fact be said Fiano is not only found in Campania and interesting results have been achieved in Basilica, Apulia and Molise as well. Fiano is also found, although marginally, in other Italian regions, however the one who made this variety great is Campania, its homeland. Fiano, in this region, is not only Irpinia of course, although, indisputably, this is the territory which made this grape famous worldwide. It should in fact also be considered the two other great lands of Campania in which Fiano has been capable of giving magnificent wines: Cilento and Sannio. In these lands, to which are of course added those outside Campania, Fiano is capable of making wines with different characters, however being always elegant and valuable.

This great grape, one of the greatest white berried grapes of Italy for sure, also proves to have an extraordinary wine making versatility. Not just white wines, but also sparkling and sweet wines made from dried grapes. Producers, in the course of the past recent years, seem to have understood Fiano better and with a more conscious approach, maybe this is also because of the many technical researches done during this time. Producers, in fact, have been successful in giving Fiano so many interpretations and complexity, from immediate and direct wines, to examples of power and complexity, capable of gracefully age with time and even become better. It should also be said that, when it is produced with this ex-

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PLICIT purpose, Fiano gives wines capable of aging and improving for many years, while developing amazing and complex organoleptic qualities. It is not by chance, in fact, to taste Fiano wines aged in bottle for more than ten years and to have in the glass an amazing and wonderfully alive wine, sometimes even *young*.

The magic of Fiano is always capable of surprising our senses, also thanks to its capacity of amazingly interpreting the territory. We should in fact think about the influence of the volcanic soil of Irpinia compared to the wines produced in Cilento and its renowned *flysch*. Different territories giving distant interpretations of the same grape. A magic which can also be seen in the many bubbles made from Fiano and that, in particular in recent times, are getting more and more popular, both made in closed tank and with the classic method. A success achieved not by chance and not just because of Fiano. It is also about a better awareness of producers who, finally, understood the huge potentials of their lands and, among the other things, is also generous in red grapes, in particular Aglianico. Fiano, ladies and gentlemen, is a grape capable of always giving emotions, a well known talent since remote times as it is documented by the many chroniclers of the past who praised its wines. A magic renewing at every vintage and deserving more than a praise. A monument, I would say.

Antonello Biancalana



WINE TASTING

Contrasts of Picolit and Malvasia delle Lipari

Two extreme points of Italy however magnificent wine lands, famous for white and red wines, as well as for amazing sweet wines from dried grapes

An important page of the Italian wine scene is certainly written by sweet wines, in particular, those made from dried grapes. Very successful wines of the past when they were receiving the favor of the tables of wealth people and noble classes, they were considered as genuine *divine nectars*. Very common and virtually produced in every wine making country of Europe, sweet wines made from dried grapes represent the descendants of the enology of those remote times. Documents of the past frequently mentioned, and with high praises, the quality and prestige of sweet wines, a quality that was - very likely - common to most of the wines made in ancient Greece. Times have changed, and with them taste as well, and, despite sweet wines are still capable of evoking a certain charm, they however have a different character than those made in the past. With their "ancestors" they still have a strong bond, in particular prestige and elegance.

What they do not have in common anymore with the wines made in the past is the favor of consumers, as sweet wines made from dried grapes are among the least sold ones of the market. Consumers seem in fact to be more interested in dry wines, as opposed to what can be seen, for example, in food, as sweet food is clearly very successful. Italy is one of the main wine countries in which the production of sweet wines is among the most important ones. Enology and culture of every region, in fact, can offer many traditional sweet wines and it can be said that, in Italy, there is no region in which it is not produced at least one sweet wine. From Alps to Sicily, in the *Bel Paese* flows a river of sweet wines, always reserved for the important occasions. Our tasting by contrast will have as protagonists two great representatives of this style: Colli Orientali del Friuli Picolit and Malvasia delle Lipari, the wine glory of Aeolian Islands, in Sicily.

Picolit

Picolit is a grape originating from Friuli Venezia Giulia, rare and difficult to cultivate, in past times it has severely run the risk of extinction because of producers having less and less interest in this grape. This grape is commonly known to give very low yeasts, producers of the past preferred cultivating high yielding varieties, something quite common in the past recent times. If we add to this the low interest sweet wines are catching from the market, the few producers who stubbornly continued to commit and make Picolit wines certainly did not have florid times. Thanks to the renewed interest arose in the last twenty years, in particular the attention for quality wines and local products, Picolit lived a new success and also received international acclaim. Luckily, today many producers, including those who are historically committed to Picolit, have

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The amber coppery color of Malvasia delle Lipari

developed an interest for this magnificent grape, therefore giving the world an incredible sweet nectar.

A grape of very ancient origins, it is believed to be very appreciated at the times of ancient Romans. Characterized by small and loosely packed bunches, Picolit makes very few berries per bunch, however, thanks to the high content in sugar, it is well suited for the production of sweet wines. Picolit, because of its very low yield, has always lived moments of alternated glory and, in modern times, its revaluation has been done thanks to Perusini family of Rocca Bernarda winery. This allowed Picolit to become quite common in the province of Udine, therefore added to the appellation Colli Orientali del Friuli. Picolit produced in this area is today recognized as a DOCG wine and it also includes the Ciolla sub-area. Thanks to this ranking, Picolit is getting the interest of both producers and consumers, however remaining a rare and precious wine, certainly ones of the most valuable and looked for sweet wines of Italy.

Malvasia delle Lipari

As for value and prestigious, the sweet wine produced since a very long time in the Aeolian Islands is nothing less. Malvasia delle Lipari is in fact one of the magnificent and prestigious sweet wines produced in Italy. Grapes used for its production have a higher yield than Picolit, however it is a rare and precious wine because of the limited area in which it is produced in. Malvasia delle Lipari is produced with the grape having the same name to which it is added a very small part of Corinto Nero grape. Production of this rare and noble wine is allowed in the whole territory of the Aeolian Islands, however most of the producers are found in the island of Salina. Malvasia delle Lipari has always been a wine catching the interest of men, wine of very ancient roots, it represents an absolute pearl of Italian enology. Because of the particular morphology of the territory - small islands with a land not always easy to cultivate - the production of this wine can be considered a sort of magic and of absolute magnificence, something well proven by its indisputable quality.

Malvasia delle Lipari grape, one of the many varieties be-

longing to the vast family of Malvasie, is found in this island since remote times and it is believed to be introduced here by Greek colonizers around 580 BC. The magic of this wine consists, according to the production disciplinary, of about 95% Malvasia delle Lipari and the remaining part of Corinto Nero, this too a grape introduced by Greeks in the Aeolian Islands. Malvasia delle Lipari wine has always caught the interest of wine lovers and many chroniclers of the past have praised its quality in their writings. A charm still alive and capable of giving the senses of tasters unique complexity and personality. An undeniable magic reflecting the charm of these islands where remote history and amazing views joins the beauty of the sea, which influence is clearly perceptible in sensorial characteristics of Malvasia delle Lipari.

Tasting

Our tasting by contrast, despite the two wines could be considered similar because of their sweet taste, will spot substantial sensorial differences. As for Picolit, we will choose a bottle belonging to Colli Orientali del Friuli which, it should be noticed, in this specific case is recognized as DOCG. It should also be noticed the production disciplinary provides for a minimum quantity of Picolit equals to 85% and the remaining part can be any grape allowed in Friuli Venezia Giulia with the exception of Gewürztraminer. For this reason we will pay attention about the composition of wine, by making sure it is made of 100% Picolit. Choosing Malvasia delle Lipari is clearly easier as the production disciplinary provides for the use of Malvasia delle Lipari and Corinto Nero grapes, the latter for a maximum of 8%. Wines must not be older than three years and produced in inert containers. Serving temperature will be 14 °C (58 °F) and wines poured in tasting glasses.

Let's start our tasting by contrast from the evaluation of the appearance in both wines. Let's pour them in their respective glasses and proceed with the evaluation of color and transparency of Colli Orientali del Friuli Picolit. We will hold the glass on a white surface and tilt it in order to observe color and transparency at the base and nuances at the opening of the glass. The color of Picolit generally shows an intense and brilliant golden yellow and nuances confirming the same color. Transparency is very high and it can be perfectly spotted the object put behind the glass. Let's now pass to the evaluation of Malvasia delle Lipari's appearance. Differences with Picolit are quite remarkable as the Aeolian wine shows an intense amber yellow color with evident coppery hues which can be seen in nuances as well. Transparency of Malvasia delle Lipari, despite it is quite high, is however lower than Picolit.

The olfactory evaluation of sweet wines is most of the times amazing and, sometimes, complex and demanding. Thanks to the use of dried grapes, concentration of must and time, these wines reach very high levels of complexity and only a superficial evaluation could define them as *simple and sweet*. Sweet wines made from dried grapes are not the kingdom of aromas recalling dried fruits and raisin only, something which could be thought by a simple and superficial evaluation. Even in their youth, these wines express a certain level of complexity and, depending on the method used for production, develop aromas which can be hardly found in other wines. Time is also capable of giving these wines an incredible and extraordinary

evolution that, thanks to the high content in sugar, alcohol and acidity, can also develop for tens of years.

Let's now start the evaluation of aromas of our wines from Colli Orientali del Friuli Picolit. By keeping the glass in vertical position and without swirling, let's do a first smell in order to appreciate the opening. From the glass are perceived intense and pleasing aromas of raisin, dried apricot and honey. After having swirled the glass, the aromatic profile of Picolit is completed by a very elegant sequence of citrus fruit peels, candied fruits, lavender, chamomile, date, peach jam and, sometimes, a pleasing sensation of nail polish and hazelnut. Let's now proceed with the evaluation of Malvasia delle Lipari: hold the glass in vertical position and without swirling in order to perceive the opening. In this wine can be appreciated aromas of raisin, dried fig, dried apricot and, in particular, honey. After having swirled the glass, Malvasia delle Lipari completes its olfactory profile with candied fruits, citrus fruits, peach jam, lavender, almond, orange marmalade and quince. It should be noticed, as opposed to Picolit, the perception of aromas recalling aromatic herbs such as rosemary, sage and caper.

The wines of our tasting by contrast will certainly continue to please our senses in the gustatory phase as well. Let's take a sip of Colli Orientali del Friuli Picolit and evaluate its attack, that is the initial perception of the wine in the mouth. We can perceive an intense sensation of sweetness, well balanced by a pleasing and essential sensation of acidity, as well as an appreciable roundness. In the mouth are also perceived flavors of raisin, dried apricot and honey, therefore confirming a very good correspondence to the nose. Let's now pass to the evaluation of Malvasia delle Lipari. In the mouth is perceived a sensation of sweetness - an obvious characteristic - and, also in this case, the perfect balance the wine gets thanks to the contribution of acidity. In this wine is perceived a stronger sensation of roundness than Picolit. In the mouth can be perceived flavors of raisin, dried fig, dried apricot and almond, as well as rosemary and sage.

Two great wines like Picolit and Malvasia delle Lipari do not disappoint in the final phase of the tasting, while keeping their respective differences and personality. It is quite hard, in fact, wines produced with these grapes can disappoint the taster in the final phase thanks to their very long persistence. The finish of Colli Orientali del Friuli Picolit is very good, sometimes expressed with very long times, leaving in the mouth intense and pleasing flavors of raisin, dried apricot and acacia honey. Moreover, in the mouth is clearly perceptible the sensation of crispness given by acidity. The finish of Malvasia delle Lipari is nothing less and, also in this case, the persistence is very long. In the mouth we can continue perceiving clean and intense flavors of raisin, dried fig, dried apricot and the typical sensations of aromatic herbs, in particular rosemary. Two magnificent interpreters of the Italian enology and of the noble category of sweet wines, Picolit and Malvasia delle Lipari make incredible nectar wines capable of giving emotions to the taster thanks to their class, finesse, elegance and prestige.



Wines of the Month

Score legend

- ◆ Fair – ◆◆ Pretty Good – ◆◆◆ Good
- ◆◆◆◆ Very Good – ◆◆◆◆◆ Excellent
- ★ Wine that excels in its category
- 🍷 Good value wine

Prices are to be considered as indicative. Prices may vary according to the country or the shop where wines are bought



Aglianico del Vulture Titolo 2013 Elena Fucci (Basilicata, Italy)

🍷 Aglianico

Price: € 32.00

Score ◆◆◆◆◆

- 👁 Intense ruby red and nuances of ruby red, little transparency.
- 👃 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of blackberry, plum and black cherry followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, black currant, rosemary, vanilla, tobacco, cocoa, cinnamon, mace, pink pepper and menthol.
- 👄 Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.
- 🍷 Very persistent finish with long flavors of plum, blackberry and black currant.
- 📅 12 months in barrique, 12 months in bottle.
- 🍴 *Game, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese*



Avvoltore 2012
Moris Farms (Tuscany, Italy)

Sangiovese (75%), Cabernet Sauvignon (20%), Syrah (5%)

Price: € 32.00

Score

Intense ruby red and nuances of ruby red, little transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of black currant, black cherry and plum followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, peony, vanilla, tobacco, chocolate, face powder, mace, cinnamon, pink pepper and eucalyptus.

Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, agreeable.

Very persistent finish with long flavors of black currant, black cherry and plum.

12 months in barrique, 6 months in bottle.

Game, Roasted meat, Braised and stewed meat, Hard cheese



Morellino di Scansano Riserva 2012
Moris Farms (Tuscany, Italy)

Sangiovese (90%), Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot (10%)

Price: € 18.60

Score

Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black cherry, plum and violet followed by aromas of blueberry, black currant, vanilla, cocoa, tobacco and mace.

Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.

Persistent finish with flavors of black cherry, plum and black currant.

12 months in barrique, 6 months in bottle.

Broiled meat and barbecue, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese



Taurasi Riserva La Loggia del Cavaliere 2009
Tenuta Cavalier Pepe (Campania, Italy)

Aglianico

Price: € 37.00

Score

Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

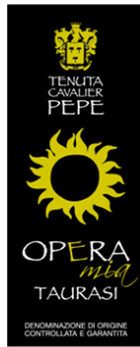
Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of blackberry, prune and black cherry followed by aromas of blueberry, dried violet, cocoa, vanilla, mace, tobacco, licorice, leather and menthol.

Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, agreeable.

Persistent finish with flavors of blackberry, black cherry and prune.

18 months in barrique, 12 months in bottle.

Game, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese



Taurasi Opera Mia 2010
Tenuta Cavalier Pepe (Campania, Italy)

Aglianico

Price: € 20.00

Score ★

Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of plum, black cherry and blackberry followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, vanilla, tobacco, chocolate, mace, licorice, leather and menthol.

Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, agreeable.

Persistent finish with flavors of plum, black cherry and blackberry.

12 months in barrique, 12 months in bottle.

Game, Braised and stewed meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese



Langhe Chardonnay Asso di Fiori 2013
Braida (Piedmont, Italy)

Chardonnay

Price: € 18.00

Score ◆◆◆◆

Brilliant golden yellow and nuances of golden yellow, very transparent.

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of banana, apple and acacia followed by aromas of grapefruit, praline, pear, hawthorn, vanilla, plum, butter and mineral.

Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.

Persistent finish with flavors of banana, apple and grapefruit.

8 months in barrique, 8 months in bottle.

Pasta with fish, Roasted fish, Broiled fish, Roasted white meat



Barbera d'Asti Monteburra 2014
Braida (Piedmont, Italy)

Barbera

Price: € 12.60

Score ◆◆◆◆

Intense ruby red and nuances of ruby red, little transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of cherry, plum and blueberry followed by aromas of pomegranate, violet, blackberry, blueberry, vanilla, cyclamen, chocolate and menthol.

Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.

Persistent finish with flavors of cherry, plum and pomegranate.

12 months in cask.

Broiled meat and barbecue, Stuffed pasta, Stewed meat with mushrooms, Cheese




Etna Rosso Calmarossa 2014
Santa Maria La Nave (Sicily, Italy)


Nerello Mascalese, Nerello Cappuccio


Price: € 45.00


Score ◆◆◆◆


Brilliant ruby red and nuances of ruby red, moderate transparency.

 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of cherry, plum and raspberry followed by aromas of cyclamen, strawberry, vanilla, blueberry, chocolate, cinnamon, black pepper and menthol.

 Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.

 Persistent finish with flavors of cherry, plum and blueberry.

 12 months in barrique, 6 months in bottle.

 *Broiled meat and barbecue, Stewed meat with mushrooms, Roasted meat, Stuffed pasta*





Sicilia Bianco Millesulmare 2014
Santa Maria La Nave (Sicily, Italy)


 Grecanico


Price: € 45.00


Score 


 Intense straw yellow and nuances of straw yellow, very transparent.

 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of apple, plum and citrus fruits followed by aromas of pear, hawthorn, peach, broom, pineapple, elder flower and almond.

 Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.

 Persistent finish with flavors of apple, plum and peach.

 Aged in steel tanks.

 *Fried fish, Pasta with fish and vegetable, Broiled fish, Sauteed white meat*


NOT JUST WINE

Aquavitae

Review of Grappa, Distillates and Brandy




Grappa Oro
Bindella (Tuscany, Italy)
(Distiller: Distillerie Berta)


 Pomace of Vino Nobile di Montepulciano

Price: € 28,00 - 50cl


Score 

 Brilliant amber yellow, limpid and crystalline.

 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined with aromas of vanilla, tobacco, dried fig, dried violet, chocolate, black tea leaf and honey with perceptible alcohol pungency.

 Intense flavors with perceptible alcohol pungency which tends to dissolve rapidly, perceptible sweetness, pleasing roundness.

 Persistent finish with flavors of dried fig, chocolate and honey.

 Distilled in a steam batch distiller. Aged for 12 months in barrique.



EVENTS

News

In this column are published news and information about events concerning the world of wine and food. Whoever is interested in publishing this kind of information can send us a mail to the address Events@DiWineTaste.com.



Wine Guide Parade

March 2016

The best 15 wines reviewed in our Guide and voted by Di-WineTaste readers

Rank	Wine, Producer	Votes
1	Fiano di Avellino Brancato 2013, Tenuta Cavalier Pepe	7562
2	Montefalco Sagrantino Passito 2009, Arnaldo Caprai	7109
3	Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Dry Desiderio 2014, Bortolin Angelo	6721
4	Irpinia Aglianico Terra del Varo 2011, Tenuta Cavalier Pepe	5615
5	Chianti 2013, Fattoria Uccelliera	5357
6	Fiano di Avellino Refiano 2014, Tenuta Cavalier Pepe	5190
7	Ginepraia 2014, Fattoria Uccelliera	5165
8	Irpinia Campi Taurasini Santo Stefano 2010, Tenuta Cavalier Pepe	5140
9	Greco di Tufo Nestor 2014, Tenuta Cavalier Pepe	4961
10	Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Brut 2014, Bortolin Angelo	4920
11	Cuvée Secrète 2014, Arnaldo Caprai	4700
12	Irpinia Rosso Sanserino 2012, Tenuta Cavalier Pepe	4628
13	Ficaia 2014, Fattoria Uccelliera	4562
14	Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Rive di Guia Brut Sommaval 2014, Bortolin Angelo	4509
15	Irpinia Coda di Volpe Bianco di Bellona 2014, Tenuta Cavalier Pepe	4505