

DiWINEtaste

Wine Culture and Information

International Edition

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Praise of the Fortified Wine

Those who know me know very well my passion and interest in fortified wines, I have often talked about this in the pages of DiWineTaste. Sumptuous wines – but certainly not all of them – capable of warming emotions like few other wines in the world. Fortified wines, also known in Italy as *vini liquorosi*, from a strictly technical point of view, are wines to which is added, in specific phases of production, some wine spirit. The most noticeable result is the increasing in alcohol by volume, a characteristic which, although it has obvious influences on the organoleptic profile, plays a decidedly secondary role in quality. It should however be noted the addition of alcohol plays a role in quality and closely depends on its characteristics. A low quality spirit produces in fact evidently negative results in organoleptic and sensorial terms, therefore compromising the finesse of the wine. This explains one of the reasons why many fortified wines are often very disappointing and *graceless*.

Marsala, Port, Jerez – or Sherry, as the English call it – Madeira, Banyuls and Malaga, are among the best known and most important fortified wines, certainly among those which deserve to be tasted at least once in a lifetime. They are not the only ones, of course, but certainly are among the most representative and celebrated ones. It must be said not every fortified wine is worthy or deserves appreciation: disappointing bottles are often found also in wines belonging to these denominations. There is however a rich and large number of representatives of considerable, immense and celestial quality, certainly capable of making us forget – and forever – the roughness of the wines of lower value. Because, this is for sure, when you have in the glass an amazing Marsala, a refined Jerez or a sumptuous Port, it is a pure symphony of senses, emotions and elegance. Above all, it is an endless explosion of scents and aromas, a sensorial and organoleptic experience unmatched in other wines for its majesty and complexity.

Fortified wines have written memorable pages in the history of wine as well as of trade. It is no secret, in fact, the holds of commercial ships of the past were often loaded with *pipes* – the typical cask used for transporting wines – filled with Marsala, Jerez, Port and Madeira. The passion of the English for fortified wines has filled pages of history, including

the exploits of Admiral Horatio Nelson who, it is said, used to celebrate his victories with Marsala. *Victory wine* – he called it – and considered *a wine worthy of any gentleman's table*. What about Jerez? It was so popular in the overseas territories that it changed its name to *Sherry* in order to make it easier to pronounce it in the local language. A richness of styles like no other fortified wine, Jerez offers an extraordinary variety of emotions, styles and symphonies of senses, starting from *Fino* up to *Pedro Ximénez*, the great Spanish wine certainly deserves a sumptuous and noble monument.

Robust and with a higher alcohol by volume than *regular wines*, some might find it unusual to talk about fortified wines during the hot summer season. Think of a magnificent Jerez Fino or a Marsala Vergine served at a *cool* temperature – say, about 12 Celsius degrees – and you will understand these wines certainly do not disdain the summer. To tell the truth, there also are those who like them served at much lower temperatures: I personally find they lose a good part of their fascinating scents but – as the old saying has it – *de gustibus non disputandum est*. How could you possibly think about the joyful parade of Spanish *tapas* without a good glass of Jerez Fino? Impossible, I would say. With crustaceans, but also with olives and dried fruits, this wine is capable of fabulous pairing. Talking about this great Spanish wine, it would then be a gross mistake to think about Fino or Pedro Ximénez only. Manzanilla, Amontillado, Oloroso, Palo Cortado, Dulce and Cream – as to mention the main styles – Jerez wines give endless and magnificent interpretations.

Not to mention Port, the immense glory of Portuguese enology: a special fortified wine, one could better define it as fortified semi-fermented wine, as the spirit is also added with the aim of interrupting fermentation while leaving substantial residual sugar. This makes Port a magnificent dessert wine, however not disdaining other and more complex pairing, such as chocolate and cheese, in particular English *Blue Stilton*, for example, with which it has always made an amazing couple. Also in this case, the availability of styles is remarkable: an extraordinary variety depending on barrels, time and magic. Having a *Colheita* or *Late Bottled Vintage* Port in your glass

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– possibly aged for a few dozen years – is a great tasting experience. Time, therefore patience, oxidation – not a rough and rude one, of course – are the precious allies of these great wines.

What about Marsala? The great Sicilian wine, when it is great for real, it obviously has nothing less than its illustrious colleagues from Spain and Portugal. The same can be said for the glorious Madeira which, despite being produced in a smaller number of styles, is proud of a magnificent story, including the historical and singular production method known as *estufagem*. They all are great wines giving strong emotions and having an intense sensorial character, amazing for complexity, infinite for magnificence, just like the glass of Marsala Vergine here at my side and that kept me company while I was writing this editorial. A thirty-year-old Marsala Vergine, a masterpiece of elegance and complexity. What a great wine is Marsala Vergine, when it is capable of honoring this prestige. Fortified wines are sumptuous. Great history, noble class, majestic elegance. Stunning meditation wines, wonderful companions of the refined table. Last but not the least, when they are properly served, they also are excellent companions of the summer. They definitely and without a doubt will be the companion of my summer.

Antonello Biancalana



WINE TASTING

Contrasts of Passerina and Torbato

A contrast made of elegant finesse, the grapes of this month's tasting by contrast surprise for their personality

The panorama of white wines is vast and very rich, especially in Italy, a country boasting a huge number of grapes for making wine like no other place in the world. This allows Italy to have a richness in styles that can be poured into the glasses, from *light* and *thin* ones, up to *powerful* and *robust* wines. This is also true for white wines: each region can boast at least one indigenous white variety and each of them capable of creating different wines, often very different. Some varieties are mainly appreciated for the elegance of aromas and style, others for their power which, in some cases, can be compared to certain red wines. These qualities, of course, can vary according to different factors that may affect the production cycle of wine, from vineyard to bottle. A grape which, for example, typically makes light-bodied wines, can be transformed by man – in practical terms and in any case within certain extents – into a decidedly more robust wine.

The result, of course, is not always interesting both from a wine making and organoleptic point of view. Indeed, in most of the cases, the distortion is such that the variety used for the production can be barely recognized. They are certainly useful as a tasting exercise, a little less when you simply want to have the pleasure of a good glass of wine. The tasting by contrast of this month compares two white berried varieties which are not known to make robust and powerful wines: Passerina and Torbato. Grapes making of finesse and elegance the primary characteristic in their wines and typical of distant territories. Marches and Abruzzo for Passerina, Sardinia for Torbato. Two varieties cultivated in rather limited areas, in particular Torbato, today mainly present in the area of Alghero only, but certainly deserving more attention from consumers.

Passerina

Passerina – which probably owes its name to the fact sparrows (*passeri* in Italian) particularly like its berries – is a variety which is experiencing a new and good success thanks to the renewed interest of producers. Typical of the territory of Piceno – in the Marche region – and in particular in Offida, where its wines are ranked as DOCG (*Denominazione d'Origine Controllata e Garantita*), Passerina is a versatile grape capable of making wines of good personality and elegance. It is also found in Abruzzo, in particular in the territory of Controguerra, in Latium, in the area of Frosinone, as well as in other regions of central Italy, although marginally. Today the territory in which Passerina gets the highest interest, with interesting and significant results, is Offida, in the province of Ascoli Piceno, where this variety has been rediscovered and properly revalued, giving birth to different styles wines, from sparkling to sweet wines made from dried grapes.

The origin of Passerina is uncertain, however it is believed

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it originates from the territory in the border between Marche and Abruzzo, places where it is still today found and cultivated. For a long time confused with Trebbiano Giallo grape, research carried out on the genetic profile of Passerina have finally found out no connection existing between the two varieties. In the past it gained the favor of farmers thanks to its good resistance to major diseases, because of its thick skin and good vigor, ensured copious harvests and therefore a better profit. Passerina, because of this characteristic, was then known by many names, including *Pagadebiti*, *Cacciadebiti* and *Scacciadebiti*, all having the same Italian meaning, literally *debt-payer*. The high yields did not clearly allow to get the best quality out of Passerina, something achieved in recent times thanks to the adoption of modern quality viticultural and wine making methods. Wines produced with Passerina are characterized by a good olfactory profile mainly recalling flowers and, to the taste, having a good crispness and a body of medium structure.

Torbato

The origin of Torbato is uncertain and, despite of the many theories about its origin, none of them is today considered as certain. The most recurrent one believes Torbato was introduced into Sardinia from Spain, in particular Catalonia, presumably between 1300 and 1400. Another hypothesis wants this grape native to Asia Minor and introduced by the Phoenicians who imported it from the Aegean area. The hypothesis of Spanish origin is also supported by the names used in the past to identify this grape, including *vitis Iberica* and, more often and particularly in Sardinia, *uva Catalana* and *turbat*. However, everyone agrees to classify Torbato in the family of *malvasie* grapes, notoriously originating from the Aegean Sea area, therefore strengthening the theory Phoenicians introduced this variety to Sardinia. It should also be noted this variety is also found in the southern part of France and here known as *Malvoisie de Roussillon*, *Tourbat* or *Malvoisie des Pyrénées Orientales*.

In Italy, Torbato is practically cultivated only in the territory of Alghero – in province of Sassari – where it has found its ideal environment. In France, it can be used for the production of wines belonging to *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* Côtes du Roussillon AOC, despite the fact it is today not much cultivated and common as it was in the past. It should also be noted Alghero DOC denomination is the only one in Italy to include Torbato, used both for the production of dry wines and sparkling wines. Having a straw yellow color with evident greenish nuances, wines from Torbato grapes are characterized by a fineness of aromas recalling fruits with white pulp, of good acidity and moderate body, to the taste they are appreciated for the characteristic bitterish finish. The cultivation of Torbato is not easy. Sensitive to the typical diseases affecting the vine, also because of the thickness of the skin of its berries, Torbato is a late ripening variety, characterized by an inconsistent production. Because of this, Torbato is now considered a niche wine.

The Tasting

Passerina and Torbato make – as already mentioned – wines

with a light and elegant character, reason that forces us, particularly this time, to choose wines strictly produced in inert containers. As for Passerina, our choice is in favor of a wine belonging to *Denominazione d'Origine Controllata e Garantita* Offida, the only DOCG in which this variety is allowed. The choice of Torbato is made in favor of a wine produced in *Denominazione d'Origine Controllata* Alghero, also in this case vinified in inert containers. In both cases we need to carefully consider production, as the disciplinary for the two wines provide for a minimum of 85% of the variety declared on the label, therefore we will make sure the wines are made of 100% Passerina and Torbato. Wines belong to the latest vintage – therefore very young – and served in tasting glasses at a temperature of 10 °C (50 °F).

Let's pour the two wines into their respective glasses and start our tasting by contrast of Passerina and Torbato by evaluating their appearance. The first wine we will examine is Offida Passerina. Tilt the glass over of a white surface and observe the wine at the base: we can see an intense greenish yellow color and high transparency; the object put on contrast behind the glass is perfectly visible. Let's now assess nuances by observing the wine towards the opening of the glass, where the thickness becomes thin: the wine confirms a greenish yellow color. Let's now pass to the evaluation of the appearance of Alghero Torbato, by tilting – also in this one case – the glass over the white surface. At the base of the glass can be observed an intense straw yellow color and high transparency, a darker hue when compared to Passerina. The nuances of Torbato are generally greenish yellow, confirming, in our case, its young age.

Passerina and Torbato have different olfactory profiles, however both having in common aromas of good elegance although of moderate intensity. The profiles of wines produced with these varieties are in fact expressed in terms of finesse rather than power, with different characters. In wines produced with Passerina, we can mainly perceive aromas reminiscent of flowers, while in those produced with Torbato it can be perceived both flowery and fruit aromas. The aromas that can be associated to fruits are of course found also in wines produced with Passerina, however in its wines it will be those of flowers to mainly play the role of protagonist. These olfactory characteristics suggest the consumption of wines produced with



The color of Offida Passerina

Passerina and Torbato during their youth, therefore ensuring a better appreciation of their typical finesse.

Let's now proceed with the evaluation of the olfactory profiles of the wines of our tasting, starting from Offida Passerina. By keeping the glass in vertical position and without swirling it, proceed with the first smell in order to evaluate the opening of the wine. From the glass can be appreciated the characteristic aromas recalling flowers, in particular hawthorn and broom. Moreover, still in the opening of wine, can be perceived aromas of apple and plum. After having swirled the glass, the profile of Offida Passerina is completed with pear and chamomile, peach, wisteria and sometimes a hint of exotic fruit in which can be recognized pineapple. Let's now move on to the evaluation of the opening aromas of Alghero Torbato, keeping the glass in a vertical position and without swirling it. To the nose we can perceive aromas of apple, peach and plum. After having swirled the glass, the olfactory profile of Alghero Torbato is completed with pear, almond, citrus fruits – in particular cedar – as well as a hint of exotic fruit and reminiscent of mango.

After having evaluated the aromas, let's move on to the gustatory profiles of the wines of our tasting by contrast. Let's start with the Offida Passerina: let's take the first sip and evaluate the attack, that is the initial sensations the wine produces in the mouth. It is perceived a pleasant crispness – given by acidity – an average structure and the alcohol strength is moderate, however enough to make the wine balanced. In the mouth we perceive flavors of apple, pear and plum, therefore confirming the good correspondence to the nose. Let's now pass to the glass of Alghero Torbato and take the first sip in order to evaluate its attack. In this wine we will perceive in the mouth an appreciable crispness, the body is of medium structure and, as for the previous wine, the contribution of alcohol is moderate however enough to reach a proper balance. It can be perceived flavors of apple, peach and plum, confirming – also in this case – a good correspondence to the nose.

The last phase of our tasting by contrast is about the evaluation of the final sensations left in the mouth by the wines after having swallowed them. The finish of Offida Passerina is persistent and leaves in the mouth a pleasing sensation of acidity and the perception of a moderate structure. In the mouth can also be perceived flavors of apple, pear and plum as well as a good agreeableness and refined elegance. The finish of Alghero Torbato is equally persistent, in the mouth is perceived a pleasing crispness and the sensation of structure is moderate, however fuller than Passerina. In the mouth can be perceived flavors of apple, peach and plum as well as the characteristic slightly bitter taste reminiscent of almond. In both wines can be perceived a pleasing elegance, of good finesse, far from the concept of power sometimes found in certain wines, including white wines. A characteristic being decidedly agreeable especially in their youth, delighting the tasting with refined sensations recalling flowers and fruits.

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



Orvieto Classico Superiore Vendemmia Tardiva 2016 Tenuta di Salviano (Umbria, Italy)

- 🍷 Grechetto (45%), Sauvignon Blanc (30%), Procanico (15%), Sémillon (10%)

Price: € 15.00 - 375ml

Score ◇◇◇◇

👁 Brilliant amber yellow and nuances of amber yellow, transparent.

👃 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of raisin, walnut and honey followed by aromas of apricot jam, resin, quince jam, candied fruits, pear jam, citrus fruit peel and almond.

👄 Sweet and round attack, however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing crispness.

🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of raisin, apricot jam and honey.

📅 6 months in steel tanks.

🍴 Confectionery, Dried fruit tarts, Hard cheese



Lago di Corbara Rosso Solideo 2014
Tenuta di Salviano (Umbria, Italy)

Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot

Price: € 12.00

Score

- Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.
- Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of plum, black currant and black cherry followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, peony, chocolate, tobacco, vanilla, mace and menthol.
- Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.
- Persistent finish with flavors of plum, black currant and black cherry.
- Aged in barrique.
- Broiled meat and barbecue, Roasted meat, Stewed meat, Cheese*



Colli del Trasimeno Rosso Riserva Sant'Anna 2014
Pucciarella (Umbria, Italy)

Sngiovese (40%), Cabernet Sauvignon (30%), Merlot (20%), Petit Verdot (10%)

Price: € 6.00

Score

- Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.
- Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of plum, black cherry and black currant followed by aromas of dried violet, blueberry, chocolate, tobacco, vanilla and menthol.

- Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.
- Persistent finish with flavors of plum, black cherry and black currant.
- 12 months in barrique, 6 months in bottle.
- Broiled meat and barbecue, Roasted meat, Stewed meat with mushrooms, Cheese*



Empireo 2014
Pucciarella (Umbria, Italy)

Cabernet Sauvignon (60%), Merlot (40%)

Price: € 8.50

Score

- Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.
- Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black currant, black cherry and plum followed by aromas of violet, blueberry, vanilla, tobacco, face powder, chocolate and eucalyptus.
- Properly tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.
- Persistent finish with flavors of black currant, black cherry and plum.
- 12 months in barrique, 6 months in bottle.
- Roasted meat, Broiled meat and barbecue, Stewed meat with mushrooms, Hard cheese*



Monteviggiano
L'Arcera (Basilicata, Italy)

Montepulciano

Price: € 15.00

Score

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

Intense, clean and pleasing, starts with hints of plum, black cherry and blueberry followed by aromas of violet, blackberry, raspberry and geranium.

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

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

Aged in steel tanks.

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



Terre dell'Alta Val d'Agri Lucanico 2012
L'Arcera (Basilicata, Italy)

Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Aglianico

Price: € 15.00

Score

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

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black currant, blackberry and plum followed by aromas of dried violet, black cherry, blueberry, carob and pink pepper.

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

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

Aged in steel tanks.

Stuffed pasta, Broiled meat and barbecue, Stewed meat, Hard cheese



Montefalco Sagrantino Etnico 2013
Di Filippo (Umbria, Italy)

Sagrantino

Price: € 16.00

Score

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

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

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

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

12 months in cask.

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



Montefalco Sagrantino 2013
Di Filippo (Umbria, Italy)

Sagrantino

Price: € 23.00

Score

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

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of blackberry, black cherry and plum followed by aromas of dried violet, carob, chocolate, tobacco, cinnamon, mace, vanilla and menthol.

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

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

24 months in cask and barrique.

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



Montefalco Rosso 2015
Montioni (Umbria, Italy)

Sangiovese (65%), Merlot (20%), Sagrantino (15%)

Price: € 14.00

Score

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

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of plum, blackberry and black cherry followed by aromas of violet, black currant, carob and vanilla.

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

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

12 months in barrique, 4 months in bottle.

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



Montefalco Sagrantino 2014
Montioni (Umbria, Italy)

Sagrantino

Price: € 31.00

Score

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

Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of blackberry, plum and dried violet followed by aromas of black cherry, blueberry, carob, tobacco, cocoa, cinnamon, vanilla and menthol.

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

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

24 months in barrique, 12 months in bottle.

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



Trebbiano Spoletino 2017
Bocale (Umbria, Italy)

Trebbiano Spoletino

Price: € 14.00

Score

- Brilliant golden yellow and nuances of straw yellow, very transparent.
- Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of medlar, apple and citrus fruits followed by aromas of peach, pineapple, melon, hawthorn and broom.
- Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.
- Persistent finish with flavors of medlar, apple and peach.
- 6 months in steel tanks.
- Stuffed pasta, Broiled crustaceans, Roasted white meat, Roasted fish, Mushroom soups*



Montefalco Sagrantino 2013
Bocale (Umbria, Italy)

Sagrantino

Price: € 29.00

Score

- Deep ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.
- Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of blackberry, black cherry and dried violet followed by

aromas of plum, blueberry, tobacco, cocoa, pink pepper, mace, vanilla, leather and menthol.

- Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.
- Persistent finish with flavors of blackberry, black cherry and plum.
- 24 months in cask, 12 months in bottle.
- Game, Braised and stewed meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese*

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.

NOT JUST WINE

Aquavitae

Review of Grappa, Distillates and Brandy



Grappa Marchesi Gondi
Marchesi Gondi - Tenuta Bossi (Tuscany)
(Distiller: Distillerie Bonollo)


Pomace of Sangiovese, Colorino and Cabernet Sauvignon

Price: € 20.00 - 50cl

Score

- Colorless, limpid and crystalline.
- Intense, clean and pleasing with aromas of violet, plum, black cherry and hazelnut, with perceptible alcohol pungency.
- Intense flavors with perceptible alcohol pungency which tends to dissolve rapidly, pleasing roundness, perceptible sweetness.

 Persistent finish with flavors of plum and black cherry.

 Distilled in a steam batch distiller.



Wine Guide Parade

April 2018

The best 15 wines reviewed in our Guide and voted by DiWineTaste readers

Rank	Wine, Producer	Votes
1	Langhe Nebbiolo Il Crutin 2015, Manzone Giovanni	9451
2	Montefalco Rosso 2012, Romanelli	8937
3	Montefalco Sagrantino 2011, Romanelli	8714
4	Montefalco Sagrantino 2010, Romanelli	8522
5	Dolcetto d'Alba Le Ciliegie 2016, Manzone Giovanni	8232
6	Montefalco Sagrantino 2013, Romanelli	8163
7	Montefalco Sagrantino 2012, Romanelli	7435
8	Montefalco Rosso 2015, Romanelli	7274
9	Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Castelveverde 2017, Conte Leopardi Dittajuti	6329
10	Montefalco Sagrantino 2012, Scacciadiavoli	6093
11	Montefalco Sagrantino Medeo 2012, Romanelli	6093
12	Montefalco Rosso 2011, Romanelli	5744
13	Barbera d'Alba Superiore La Marchesa 2015, Manzone Giovanni	5613
14	Ballo Angelico 2016, Tenuta L'Impostino	5307
15	Montefalco Sagrantino 2009, Romanelli	5227