

DiWINEtaste

Wine Culture and Information

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A Difficult Vintage

We knew 2017 would have not been a good vintage or, to say the least, one of those to be remembered. The positive side is that - at least this year - they refrained from spreading the enthusiastic and joyous news about the "vintage of the century". Indeed, some tried to do that, maybe they were simply used to do so as, in past recent years, every vintage has been declared as "vintage of the century", despite there are still eighty-three years before the end of this century. The negative side, more seriously, the quantity harvested in vineyards is one of the lowest of the past recent years and what they harvested is not exactly what we could call "quality grapes". It certainly is not comparable to the quality of recent vintages. We knew vintage 2017 would have been one of the most difficult ones of the past years, a vintage we would probably not remember because of the hard meteorological conditions. The only thing we can do is to save what can be saved and, in terms of quality, wines will tell us.

After all, also in vintages considered "bad", such as the well known 2002, with time - in particular red wines - have given very good surprises. The bizarre meteorological conditions of 2017, impossible to forget, have greeted the new and young vine sprouts with a severe frozen also causing damages in other cultures. In case some thought this was enough, drought made things even harder for vineyards and, without water, vine hopes for bearing quality fruits is severely compromised to say the least. To such condition, where allowed and possible, vintners have irrigated vineyards in order to give them a sort of relief and tried to quench the thirst of vines. It should be said the diminished availability of water is generally considered a quality factor as this *forces* vines to dig their roots in the deep of the soil in order to find underground water reserves, therefore becoming more resistant to the effects of drought.

This is what has actually happened in 2017, therefore only the vines of "a certain age" and with well developed roots could benefit from underground water reserves. Young vines, or relatively young, with short roots, certainly have suffered from the lack of water. This is a well known fact: inside grape berries is found juice, mostly made of water. In case water is not available, of course, the development of berries is strongly

compromised, they will therefore be smaller than the average and the quantity of must will be lower as well. This is what happened in many areas of Italy in vineyards which survived the effects of frosts. 2017 has also been characterized by very high temperatures which, including the effects of the lack of rains, have made even harder and complicated life of vines. Grapes have ripened in advance, therefore forcing a significant early harvesting. In other words, a vintage - 2017 - evidently complicated, complex and difficult. For the sake of completeness, we should also mention the unwelcome hail that, in certain areas of Italy, have caused serious damages.

The expectations of the past weeks have been unfortunately confirmed by the meteorological events and, now that many are done harvesting vineyards or are about to do it, we can talk about quite reliable results. Everyone agrees on the fact quantity produced in 2017 is evidently lower than the past, among the lowest in the last fifty years. In general terms, production in Italy is expected to be 26% lesser, in certain cases even 32% lesser, than 2016 such as in Central Italy. It makes me smile - let me say that - in this context, many have triumphantly said Italy will however be making more wine than France, relaunching the endless and quite useless competition with the French. Italy is still the country making the highest quantity of wine in the world: the honor is fortunately saved. They are talking about quantity. What about quality? Some have promptly said that, despite quantity is lower, quality is however good and we will have surprises as well as good wines.

In opposition to what some said, we should also mention what has been said by Riccardo Cotarella, chairman of *Assoenologi*, the Italian Association of Wine Makers. The famous Umbrian wine maker has in fact said 2017 will not be evidently remembered for the quality of its wines and the *unusual* conditions occurred in this year will be quite troublesome in wine making as well. For many aspects, summer 2017 seemed to be similar to 2003, another very hot vintage. Wines of that vintage - in particular reds - were characterized by a pretty high alcohol by volume with a harsh astringency, certainly not very elegant. That's why it will be fundamental to do a good job in making wine in order to avoid this condition,

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for any possible extent. As for the quantity of sugar - and therefore of alcohol - in theory there is not much to do, whereas for the agreeableness of tannins it is possible to do something. It is too evident miracles are not possible in wine making (more or less) in case the quality of grapes is low. In other words, only the best vintners and the most competent wine makers *will be safe*.

Shall we have disappointing or low quality wines? This is hard to tell. There will be - as usual - areas, varieties, wines and in particular producers who will be more interesting than others. 2017 certainly is a hard, complex and demanding test for everyone and in which - like to say - only the best will be successful. In this case, *best* means the ones who will have quality grapes - because of his or her talent or the benevolence of Nature - best viticultural and enological competence, therefore capable of proving to get the best from what he or she harvested in the vineyard. And the *best* - in this case - means *the least worst*. 2017 is a difficult vintage and we knew this since a long time. How difficult it is, wines will tell us about that. For the moment, it is quite obvious - also by considering what I have personally heard from vintners and wine makers - this is not an encouraging vintage. Let's however be optimistic and wait the moment in which we will pour 2017 wines in our glasses: after all even vintages like 2002 and 2003, certainly not brilliant ones, have given us good surprises. Quantity in 2017 is clearly low, quality is not exactly promising, however it is too early to talk about the wines to be. Dear vintners, wine makers and producers, I know you all are making the best you can in order to honor your land, your vineyards, your wines. Despite the fact this 2017 seemed to be really crazy.

Antonello Biancalana



WINE TASTING

Contrasts of Pelaverga and Petit Verdot

Piedmont in comparison with France, through the contrasts of Pelaverga, typical variety of Saluzzo area, and Petit Verdot, a red grape from Bordeaux

Italy, like we already said in the past, has a richness of wine grape varieties like no other country in the world. Every region has indigenous varieties identifying their respective territories, many of them are of great enological interest and they are found in many regions of Italy. A success that, in many cases, is not limited to the Italian territory only and many of them have been successful in catching the interest of producers in other countries as well. The richness of wine grape varieties of France certainly is more limited when compared to Italy, however many of these grapes have become famous and successful all over the world, Italy included. Many French varieties have undeniably contributed to the relaunching of Italian enology, progressively becoming more and more common in the vineyards of Italy to the detriment of indigenous grapes of the Italian regions.

They are, of course, two countries being at the absolute top of worldwide enology, both for the varieties of their respective grapes and wines. This month we are going to compare two varieties very different one from each other, belonging to these two countries - Italy and France - from which are produced different wines. Both varieties, it should be said, are not exactly *famous* grapes, however their wines are always characterized by the remarkable personality capable of making them unique in the wine scene. From Piedmont, in fact, we are going to taste Pelaverga, a red berried grape typical in the Saluzzo area and, in particular, famous for wines from Verduno, both in province of Cuneo. The grape from Piedmont will be compared to a French variety - from Bordeaux, to be precise - once quite popular and used for the famous wines of this territory, now clearly destined to a more marginal role.

Pelaverga

A variety of uncertain origins, Pelaverga is known to be found in Piedmont since a very long time and, in particular, in the territory of Saluzzo, in province of Cuneo. The enological journey of Pelaverga starts in relatively recent times as this variety was in the past usually used for the consumption as a fruit. Today Pelaverga is mainly used for the production of wines, which are getting a quite good success, in particular those produced in the territory of Verduno. Talking about Pelaverga we need to clarify the fact there actually are two grapes having this name. Pelaverga, typical in the area of Saluzzo, and Pelaverga Piccolo (Small Pelaverga) mainly cultivated in Verduno. These two varieties, although sharing the same name, actually are two distinct varieties and have nothing in common, despite they make wines with pretty similar organoleptic qualities.

It should be said, for a long time it was believed the

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Pelaverga varieties of Saluzzo and Verduno were the same, probably because of the similar characteristics of their wines. Recent researches done on both varieties have allowed finding out they are indeed distinct grapes and having no genetic connection. The result of this research has therefore forced the differentiation of the two grapes, by distinguishing the variety cultivated in Verduno with *Pelaverga Piccolo* name. In both cases, wines produced with these grapes have a pleasing and evident spicy note in which is perceived white pepper, in particular those made in Verduno. Pelaverga makes wines of moderate body and with an evident transparency, with an aromatic profile rich in red fruits and flowers, as well as a moderate crispness and astringency. Characteristics that, with the help of the enological techniques used with this grape, make of Pelaverga an immediate and pleasing wine which is usually best to drink it in its youth.

Petit Verdot

A grape originating from the territory of Bordeaux, Petit Verdot is now marginally used for the production of red wines of that area. The reasons of such a marginal notoriety in its homeland is mainly because of viticultural and enological issues. Petit Verdot, in its homeland, tends in fact to ripen late and, for this reason, it is less and less found in vineyards of Bordeaux, reaching full ripeness when the must of the other varieties is already fermenting in the winery. Despite the progressive loss of interest for Petit Verdot, the Médoc is the Bordeaux area in which this grape is more common than others. Some producers are in fact reluctant to replace Petit Verdot, while hoping the meteorological conditions of the year to be favorable for this variety in order to properly ripen and use it in their wines. The reason is quite obvious: when Petit Verdot reaches full ripeness, it is capable of giving wines a stronger personality and character, as well as a pleasing astringency, color and body.

If it is true in Bordeaux, in the least favorable vintages, Petit Verdot ripens late, therefore compromising its use, this is not what happens in warmer areas where this French variety has proven to be more reliable and giving remarkable results. It should in fact be said Petit Verdot is successfully cultivated and used for making interesting wines in Italy - Agro Pontino and Maremma areas in particular - Spain, Portugal, Australia and California. In these lands, in fact, as opposed to what happens in Bordeaux - that is blended to the famous reds of that territory - Petit Verdot is usually vinified alone with extremely interesting results. Wines produced with Petit Verdot are rich in personality, giving sensations of black berried fruits to which frequently follow spicy aromas and - in cool vintages - herbaceous aromas as well. Characterized by structure and body, Petit Verdot wines can also be appreciated for the pleasing astringency of tannins, well balanced by roundness and a pretty low acidity.

The Tasting

As usual, the wines of our tasting by contrast are produced with the respective varieties only. The first wine, the one produced with Pelaverga, will be a bottle belonging to the *Denominazione d'Origine Controllata* (Denomination of Controlled

Origin) Colline Saluzzesi. We should notice *monovarietal* wines of this area in which grape is stated in the label, according to the production disciplinary must be made from the stated variety only. We will therefore pick a Colline Saluzzesi Pelaverga of the most recent vintage and vinified in inert containers. As for Petit Verdot, our choice will be in favor of a bottle produced in the Agro Pontino area - therefore in Latium region - by choosing, also in this case, the most recent vintage and vinified in inert containers. Both wines - Pelaverga and Petit Verdot - will be served in tasting glasses at the temperature of 17 °C (63 °F).

The first phase - in which it is evaluated the appearance of wine - will emphasize substantial differences, just like in the following phases. After having poured the wines in their respective glasses, let's start our tasting by contrast from Colline Saluzzesi Pelaverga. Let's tilt the glass over a white surface and evaluate the color at the base of the glass. We will see a brilliant ruby red color with nuances - observed at the edge of the wine, where it becomes thinner - showing evident purple hues. Transparency is pretty moderate and the object put between the glass and white surface is clearly visible. Let's now pass to Petit Verdot: the color is evidently darker and more intense with a very deep ruby red hue. Nuances of Petit Verdot confirm the ruby red color, sometimes showing purple hints. Transparency of this wine is lower than Pelaverga: the object beyond the glass is hardly seen.

Difference between Pelaverga and Petit Verdot are also evident in their aromas. In Pelaverga are perceived aromas of red fruits, whereas in Petit Verdot are mainly perceived aromas of black fruits. Both varieties have a *spicy* character, a pleasing hint giving these grapes an elegant personality. To the nose Pelaverga gives aromas of cherry, strawberry, raspberry and plum, as well as flowery aromas of geranium and cyclamen. An identifying characteristic of Pelaverga is also a spicy hint of white pepper, sometimes nutmeg as well. To the nose, Petit Verdot has a more *robust* profile in which are perceived aromas of black cherry, plum, black currant and blueberry, as well as sensations of violet. Also in this case it is perceived a spicy aroma recalling white pepper. When it is not perfectly ripe, wines produced with Petit Verdot express a *herbaceous* profile in which can be perceived green bell pepper.

Let's now proceed with the evaluation of the olfactory pro-



The color of Petit Verdot

files of Pelaverga and Petit Verdot, starting from the wine produced in the Colline Saluzzesi area. By holding the glass in vertical position and, without swirling, do the first smell in order to appreciate opening aromas. From the glass are perceived aromas of cherry, raspberry and strawberry as well as a flowery aroma of geranium. After having swirled the glass - in order to favor the development of other aromas therefore completing the olfactory profile - let's do a second smell. We will perceive aromas of plum, blueberry and cyclamen as well as the characteristic spicy aroma recalling white pepper. Let's now pass to the evaluation of Petit Verdot starting from the opening aromas. From the glass are perceived aromas of black cherry, plum and black currant, as well as a pleasing aroma of violet. Let's now swirl the glass: the profile of Petit Verdot is completed by blueberry and blackberry, to which frequently follow the spicy hint of black pepper.

Differences between Pelaverga and Petit Verdot are still evident even in the gustatory phase. The first wine we will taste is Colline Saluzzesi Pelaverga. Let's take a sip of this wine and evaluate its attack, that is the initial sensations perceived in the mouth. The attack of Pelaverga is characterized by a moderate astringency balanced by the round sensation of alcohol, also in this case of moderate intensity. It is also perceived a pleasing crispness and a structure of medium body, as well as flavors of cherry, raspberry and strawberry. The attack of Petit Verdot is clearly different: astringency is evidently more intense with a well perceptible *warm* sensation of alcohol and a quite low crispness. Structure is evidently more robust than Pelaverga and in the mouth are perceived, clean and intense, flavors of black cherry, black currant and plum, sometimes blackberry as well. The tasting of Pelaverga and Petit Verdot makes differences between the two clearly evident: *thin* and immediate the former, more robust and fuller the latter.

The last phase of our tasting by contrast is about the evaluation of the final sensations the wines leave in the mouth after swallowing. The finish of Colline Saluzzesi Pelaverga is characterized by a good persistence in which are clearly perceived flavors of cherry, raspberry and strawberry. In the mouth is also perceived a pleasing sensation of acidity covering almost completely both astringency and alcohol, as well as a spicy hint of white pepper. The finish of Petit Verdot is persistent and in the mouth are perceived flavors of black cherry, black currant and plum, to which frequently follow blackberry and the characteristic hint of black pepper. The sensation of structure is evidently fuller than Pelaverga and in the mouth is mainly perceived the astringency balanced by a pleasing roundness. Let's now evaluate both wines by taking two sips, Pelaverga first and then Petit Verdot: differences in taste and finish are evident, in particular flavors and the sensation of structure.



Wines of the Month



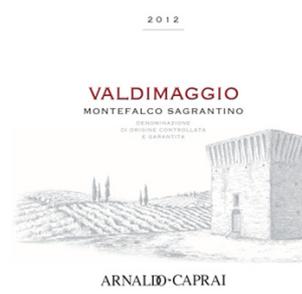
Farfalla Zero Dosage Ballabio (Lombardy, Italy)

 Pinot Nero

Price: € 20.00

Score ◆◆◆◆◆

-  Brilliant straw yellow and nuances of straw yellow, very transparent, fine and persistent perlage.
-  Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of apple, bread crust and hawthorn followed by aromas of tangerine, raspberry, grapefruit, hazelnut, honey, bergamot, yeast, pear and plum.
-  Crisp and effervescent attack, however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.
-  Very persistent finish with long flavors of apple, grapefruit and raspberry.
-  Refermented in bottle and aged on its lees for at least 72 months.
-  *Pasta with fish, Roasted white meat, Stewed fish with mushrooms*



Montefalco Sagrantino Valdimaggio 2012 Arnaldo Caprai (Umbria, Italy)

 Sagrantino

Price: € 32.00

Score ◆◆◆◆◆

-  Intense ruby red and nuances of garnet red, little transparency.
-  Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of blackberry, black cherry and plum followed by aromas of dried violet, blueberry, iris, chocolate, vanilla, leather, tobacco, pink pepper, mace, cinnamon, nail polish, graphite and menthol.

-  Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, agreeable.
-  Very long finish with long flavors of blackberry, black cherry and plum.
-  24 months in barrique, 8 months in bottle.
-  *Game, Stewed and braised meat, Roasted meat, Hard cheese*



Montefalco Sagrantino 25 Anni 2013
Arnaldo Caprai (Umbria, Italy)

 Sagrantino

Price: € 50.00

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 violet followed by aromas of plum, blueberry, pink pepper, vanilla, peony, tobacco, chocolate, leather, mace, licorice and menthol.
-  Tannic attack and however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.
-  Very persistent finish with long flavors of blackberry, plum and black cherry.
-  24 months in barrique, at least 8 months in bottle.
-  *Game, Roasted meat, Stewed and braised meat, Hard cheese*



Portofino Bianchetta Genovese Ü Pastine 2016
Bisson (Liguria, Italy)

 Bianchetta Genovese

Price: € 8.50

Score 

-  Intense straw yellow and nuances of straw yellow, very transparent.
-  Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of apple, plum and pear followed by aromas of hawthorn, citrus fruits, rosemary, broom, medlar and almond.
-  Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.
-  Persistent finish with flavors of apple, plum and medlar.
-  Aged in steel tanks.
-  *Pasta with fish, Mushroom soups, Sauteed white meat, Stewed fish, Dairy products*



Portofino Çimixà Villa Fieschi 2011
Bisson (Liguria, Italy)

 Scimiscia

Price: € 13.50

Score 

-  Intense straw yellow and nuances of straw yellow, very transparent.
-  Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of apple, peach and bergamot followed by aromas of pear, medlar, grapefruit, anise, broom, rosemary and mineral.
-  Crisp attack and however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.
-  Persistent finish with flavors of apple, peach and rosemary.

 8 months in steel tanks.

 *Stuffed pasta with mushrooms, Roasted white meat, Roasted fish, Vegetable soups*



Romagna Albana Secco I Croppi 2016
Celli (Emilia Romagna, Italy)

 Albana

Price: € 8.00

Score  

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

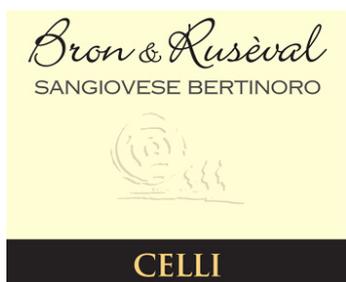
 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of apple, plum and medlar followed by aromas of apricot, almond, ripe pear, hawthorn, honey and citrus fruits.

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

 Persistent finish with flavors of apple, plum and medlar.

 Aged in steel tanks.

 *Stuffed pasta with mushrooms, Roasted white meat, Roasted fish, Vegetable soups*



Romagna Sangiovese Riserva Bertinoro Bron & Rusèval 2013
Celli (Emilia Romagna, Italy)

 Sangiovese

Price: € 14.00

Score 

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

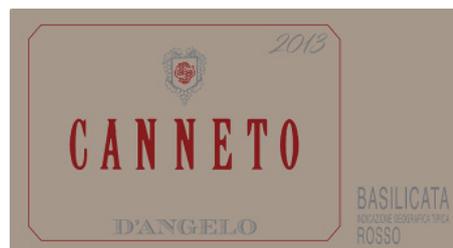
 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of plum, black cherry and dried violet followed by aromas of blueberry, blackberry, raspberry, chocolate, tobacco, dried rose and vanilla.

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

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

 12 months in barrique, 24 months in bottle.

 *Broiled meat and barbecue, Roasted meat, Stewed meat with mushrooms, Hard cheese*



Canneto 2013
D'Angelo (Basilicata, Italy)

 Aglianico

Price: € 22.00

Score 

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

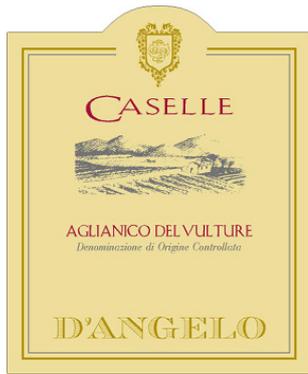
 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of black cherry, blackberry and plum followed by aromas of violet, vanilla, tobacco, cinnamon, chocolate, mace and menthol.

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

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

 8 months in barrique, 8 months in bottle.

 *Roasted meat, Broiled meat and barbecue, Stewed meat with mushrooms, Cheese*



**Aglianico del Vulture Riserva Vigna Caselle 2010
D'Angelo (Basilicata, Italy)**

 Aglianico

Price: € 27.00

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 dried violet, blueberry, tobacco, cocoa, leather, cinnamon, vanilla, licorice and menthol.

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

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

 24 months in cask.

 *Broiled meat and barbecue, Roasted meat, Stewed meat with mushrooms, Hard cheese*

NOT JUST WINE

Aquavitae

Review of Grappa, Distillates and Brandy



Grappa Balciana

Sartarelli (Marches)

(Distiller: Distillerie Bonollo)

 Pomace of Verdicchio

Price: € 38.00 - 50cl

Score 

 Limpid, colorless and crystalline.

 Intense, clean and pleasing with aromas of apple, pear, hazelnut, broom and apricot, with almost imperceptible alcohol pungency.

 Intense flavors with perceptible alcohol pungency which tends to dissolve rapidly, round and sweet.

 Persistent finish with flavors of apple, pear and apricot.

 Distilled with a steam batch distiller.

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

June 2017

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

Rank	Wine, Producer	Votes
1	Chianti Classico 2014, Querciabella	9339
2	Anthos Passito, Matteo Correggia	7916
3	Mongrana 2013, Querciabella	7864
4	Chianti Classico Riserva 2013, Querciabella	7732
5	Langhe Rosso Le Marne Grigie 2013, Matteo Correggia	7429
6	Lago di Caldaro Classico Superiore Puntay 2016, Erste+Neue	7194
7	San Pio 2013, Mastrojanni	7061
8	Monteregio di Massa Marittima Bianco Santa Chiara 2016, Moris Farms	6945
9	Batàr 2014, Querciabella	6570
10	Tenuta Ibidini Nero d'Avola 2016, Valle dell'Acate	6390
11	Vittoria Frappato 2016, Valle dell'Acate	6294
12	Zagra 2016, Valle dell'Acate	6168
13	Roero Riserva Roche d'Ampsej 2012, Matteo Correggia	5867
14	Alto Adige Pinot Bianco Puntay 2016, Erste+Neue	5835
15	Brunello di Montalcino 2012, Mastrojanni	5625