

DiWINEtaste

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Pinot Noir: Yes, Please!

Every time they ask me what is the grape or wine I like the most – I admit it – it is always very hard to give an answer. Of course, it is not for the fact I do not have a favorite grape or wine, indeed for the simple fact it is not just one. The preference, in fact, depends on many conditions and factors as, for this reason, I would not always choose the same grape or wine just because it is *my favorite one*. Each one of them can in fact become *the favorite one* depending on the occasion, a less favorite one in other occasions, clearly not a favorite one in other more. There are – of course – grapes and wines I consider to be *my favorite ones in absolute terms*, it is however hard, at least for me, to tell which one of them is in the top place of my personal list. I have a huge passion, for example, for Marsala, Jerez, Porto, Nebbiolo – in all of its expressions – Sagrantino, Verdicchio, Fiano and Pinot Noir. The list is however, unavoidably and on purpose, incomplete, clearly in a very short and essential form.

In any case, among these grapes – and therefore wines – Pinot Noir has a very special place in my preferences. Elegant, refined, versatile and majestic. But also difficult, complicated, demanding and selective. Very selective. Pinot Noir, in fact, is – so to speak – a grape and a wine which is not within the reach of everyone and everything. Difficult grape, very difficult, starting from territory and climate, Pinot Noir certainly does not have the capacity of adaptation which is typical in other varieties. Cultivating Pinot Noir in viticultural and climatic conditions not “perfectly suitable” to it, inevitably means making a mediocre and disappointing wine, something that – unfortunately – frequently happens in wines produced with this grape. Pinot Noir, in being so strictly demanding, is not satisfied only by a suitable environmental and climatic condition. It requires, last but not the least, a great interpreter capable of “revealing” all of its greatness. Even in this case, it is not a grape for everyone: Pinot Noir is rigorous, selective and demanding. Very demanding.

Finding a wine made with Pinot Noir – any style – capable of surprising and, so to speak, leaving an indelible mark, is certainly not simple. This is something notoriously difficult, but when you find one, everything else suddenly becomes insignif-

icant and disappears from your mind. The magic of Pinot Noir is clearly unique and is expressed in different ways according to how it is used in wine making, something that – evidently – is true for every grape. The red Burgundian grape is capable of expressing results of amazing and absolute level, especially in two styles of wines: red and sparkling classic method, that is refermented in bottle. The primary references, in both cases, are inevitably French – homeland of Pinot Noir – for both red and classic method sparkling wines. Burgundy and Champagne are in fact the reference territories for their respective styles, not so easy to get the same level in other areas.

It is not just a matter of taste or patriotism: some Pinot Noir wines produced in Burgundy and *Blanc de Noirs* from Champagne, hardly find worthy competitors of equal level. I am aware – for what I have just expressed – many will not agree, even accusing me of xenophilia. For me – in any case – the good is good anyway, it has neither a flag nor nationality. If it is good and has quality, this is enough for me for appreciating it. This applies – for me, of course – to wine as much as to people, cultures, food, art and any expression of intelligence and culture. After all, difference is a great wealth when you understand the opportunity to *listen to it*. Pinot Noir is – and has always been – among the grapes for which I have a huge interest and passion. Whether it is a red wine or classic method sparkling wine – possibly refined in bottle on its lees for a long time – the red Burgundian grape, in its best interpretations, is always capable of giving great pleasure and satisfaction.

Pinot Noir is in any case a bizarre variety and does not like certain extreme or *acrobatic* wine making techniques, in particular, the excessive use of cask and barrique. It in fact takes little to ruin the elegance of Pinot Noir by fermenting and aging it in barrels with an excessive impact. What is obtained is a “flat” wine and evidently too robust for the grace of the aromas and balance of Pinot Noir’s acidity. Provided, of course, you have properly cultivated it in vineyard, because all good wine – no matter the variety – originates from the vineyard and how man cultivates it. Pinot Noir is in fact a very demanding grape

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and if you force it to grow up in an unsuitable territory, it is so “touchy” that it makes fun of those who make it by giving a mediocre wine and lacking in elegance. Of course, I’m not saying Pinot Noir is not suitable for the aging in cask. The difference, of course, is how it is used and what impact it is given or imposed to the wine. The cask in Pinot Noir, when properly used, is certainly useful and increases its elegance, something they know very well in Burgundy.

Not to mention the bubbles produced with Pinot Noir, of course, those made with the classic method, possibly with a long aging in bottle before disgorging. Of course, I don’t want to deny the other grapes, in particular Chardonnay, but the touch of refinement and elegance Pinot Noir gives classic method sparkling wines is amazing. Not to mention structure: the presence of Pinot Noir is also very noticeable in this sensorial aspect. What a great grape is, Pinot Noir. Elegance and complexity of aromas, acidity opposed to the right astringency, class – a lot – an explosion of crispness, aromas and flavors, it is difficult to find a grape capable of similar magic. What a great grape is Pinot Noir. So demanding from vineyard to wine making, capable of giving all of its best only to a great interpreter capable of understanding and making it express the way it really is, without plagiarizing or overloading it with inappropriate wine making techniques. What a great grape and great wine is Pinot Noir, despite the difficulty of finding bottles capable of expressing its magnificence. But when you find one – ladies and gentlemen – enjoy the show of the senses, unique and unrepeatable. Pinot Noir: yes, please!

Antonello Biancalana

WINE TASTING

Contrasts of Albarossa and Tempranillo

Italy and Spain compared in the glasses of this month’s tasting by contrast. The Italian grape is mainly cultivated in Piedmont, the Spanish one is protagonist in Rioja and Ribera del Duero wines

This month in the glasses of our tasting by contrast we will be poured with wines produced in Italy and Spain. As usual, the two grapes – and therefore the wines – subject of our study have characteristics so different making them perfect for a comparison by contrast, therefore by highlighting the respective differences. Albarossa – which is experiencing a renewed interest from some producers in Piedmont – is a cross-breed created from the huge research activity by Prof. Giovanni Dalmaso. Tempranillo is undeniably one of the many wine glories of Spain, a variety being the protagonist of the important red wines of Rioja and Ribera del Duero. With a crisp and strong character and personality, Albarossa is perfectly opposed to the fuller structure and roundness of Tempranillo, a variety also characterized by a lower acidity.

The Spanish variety, which has been quite successful even outside its land of origin, is rarely vinified alone. It should be noted that also in the two main areas where it is cultivated – Rioja and Ribera del Duero – Tempranillo is traditionally blended to other varieties, both indigenous and *international*. Albarossa, which is also vinified blended to other variety, is often used alone, making wines of certain interest and personality. It should be noted, in both cases, the two grapes are very often vinified in wood containers, rarely in inert containers. If for Albarossa the use of cask contributes to the balance of the appreciable acidity, in Tempranillo – having a much lower acidity – the reason is also dictated by *traditional* reasons. In Spain, in fact, red wines are often allowed to age in cask for long periods of time, a *tradition* strongly consolidated and having a long history.

Albarossa

Professor Giovanni Dalmaso, undoubtedly, has been of the most important researchers of Italian viticulture of the last century. The Piedmontese agronomist – who was born in Castagnole delle Lanze, in province of Asti – graduated at the Enological School of Alba and then taught viticulture and enology at the Enological School of Conegliano. Thanks to its important research and studies, he obtained – in 1938 – Albarossa variety by crossing Chatus and Barbera grapes. In reality, Giovanni Dalmaso believed he had crossed Nebbiolo and Barbera, however, subsequent studies on the genetic characteristics done on Albarossa have revealed this variety actually is a cross between Chatus and Barbera. The misunderstanding was caused by the name with which Chatus grape is known in Piedmont, here known as *Nebbiolo di Dronero*. This variety – it should be noted – has no connection with Nebbiolo and makes wines having evidently different characteristics.

Giovanni Dalmaso’s idea was to create a variety having the

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quality of Nebbiolo and the productivity of Barbera, in particular capable of having a better resistance against mould, powdery mildew and downy mildew. From a viticultural point of view, Albarossa is much closer to Barbera than to Chatus, it is a late ripening variety and the skin of its berries is rather thick. This variety has an appreciable quantity of anthocyanins, the wines produced with Albarossa therefore show very intense colors, often dark and deep, with evident nuances of purple color. From Barbera it has evidently acquired the typical acidity, a characteristic undeniably contributing to the character and personality of wines made from Albarossa grape. For this reason, together with the high content of sugars capable of producing a good quantity of alcohol, Albarossa is frequently aged in wood in order to get a better balance.

Tempranillo

Undisputed glory of Spanish red grapes, Tempranillo is the variety protagonist in red wines from Rioja and Ribera del Duero. In these two famous wine-growing areas of Spain, Tempranillo is the variety giving both structure and alcohol to red wines as well as the intense and dark color. Tempranillo has a moderate acidity and this is why producers blend it to other varieties in order to obtain a wine with a better balance. Grape of undeniable wine making value, Tempranillo has also been successful outside the borders of Spain, its homeland. This variety is in fact cultivated in many wine-growing countries of the world, including Italy, United States of America, Argentina, Chile and Australia. Even outside Spain, Tempranillo is often blended to other varieties, in particular with the so-called *international* grapes, as well as with local varieties.

The name comes from the Spanish term *‘temprano’* – meaning “early” and of which Tempranillo is diminutive – due to the characteristic of this grape to ripen a few weeks earlier than the other varieties. There is no reliable information about the origin of Tempranillo, however it is certain it is a very ancient variety. Viticulture in the Iberian Peninsula has been conducted since remote times and it is believed this variety was introduced by Phoenicians more than 3000 years ago. The difficulty in defining with certainty the origins of Tempranillo is also due to the scarcity of written documents and the first important mentions date back to the beginning of 1800s. Among the names with which Tempranillo is known in the Iberian Peninsula are mentioned: Cencibel, Tinto Fino, Tinta del País, Tinta de Toro, Ull de llebre and Tinta Roriz. The latter is the name with which it is known in Portugal, where Tempranillo is also used for the production of the famous Port wine.

The Tasting

In this month’s tasting by contrast, because of the typical wine making techniques used with Albarossa and Tempranillo, the wines subject to our study are aged in wood and with a few years of aging in bottle. The choice mainly depends on Tempranillo, which – besides being usually aged in cask – is marketed some years after harvesting. As for Albarossa, our choice is in favor of a wine produced in Piedmont – region where Albarossa is present – of course vinified as a mono vari-

etal, and aged a few months in cask. The choice of Tempranillo is clearly more complex because its vinification as a mono varietal wine is not very common, so we need to pay attention in choosing the right bottle. Also in this case our choice is in favor of a wine aged for a few months in cask and released some years after harvesting. The two wines are tasted at a temperature of 18 °C (65 °F) and served in two tasting glasses.

Let’s pour Albarossa and Tempranillo into their respective glasses and start our tasting by contrast from the Piedmontese wine. The wines produced with these grapes are characterized by intense colors and low transparency, so it will be nuances and hues to make a difference. The color of Albarossa, observed at the base of the glass, held tilted over a white surface, reveals an intense and dark ruby red color, with a low transparency. Nuances, observed at the edge of the wine, towards the opening of the glass, show a ruby red color with evident and intense purple tones. Let’s now pass to the evaluation of Tempranillo, holding the glass tilted over the white surface. The color, observed at the base of the wine, shows an intense and brilliant ruby red color with low transparency. Nuances of Tempranillo, observed at the edge of the wine, is characterized by an evident garnet red hue.

The two grapes of our tasting by contrast have pretty different olfactory profiles, although in both cases the aromas recall red and black fruits, as well as flowers. In Albarossa will be the scents of red fruits to dominate the olfactory profile, in particular cherry, blueberry and raspberry. In this grape can also be perceived aromas of dark fruits, such as blackberry, black cherry and plum. Among the flowers which can be perceived in Albarossa, the most recurring ones are violet and cyclamen. The olfactory profile of Tempranillo is clearly oriented towards sensations of “riper fruits” dominated by black cherry, plum, blackberry, strawberry and blueberry. Among the olfactory sensations recalling flowers in Tempranillo we usually find violet. With the aging in wood, wines of both varieties are enriched with tertiary sensations – depending on time and type of cask – in particular tobacco, chocolate, licorice and leather.

Let’s now pass to the evaluation of the olfactory profiles of Albarossa and Tempranillo, starting from the wine produced in Piedmont. Hold the glass in vertical position and, without any swirling, do the first smell in order to evaluate the opening of Albarossa. From the glass can be perceived intense and



The color of Tempranillo

pleasing aromas of black cherry, blueberry and plum as well as a pleasing aroma of violet. After having swirled the glass, let's proceed with the second smell that will complete the olfactory profile of Albarossa. From the glass will be perceived aromas of blackberry, raspberry, cyclamen, pomegranate and, depending on the wine making procedures, tertiary sensations as well. Let's now pass to the evaluation of the opening of Tempranillo, doing the first smell while holding the glass in vertical position and without swirling it. The glass reveals intense and clean aromas of black cherry, plum and blackberry, often combined with strawberry, especially in relatively young Tempranillo wines. After having swirled the glass, the profile of the Spanish grape is completed with blueberry and violet, as well as tertiary sensations given by the aging in wood.

Let's proceed now to the evaluation of gustatory profiles, starting – just like the previous phases – from Albarossa. Let's take the first sip and evaluate the attack of the wine, that is the initial sensations produced in the mouth. You can perceive a pleasant crispness – typical in Albarossa and certainly *inherited* from Barbera – as well as a moderate astringency sensation produced by tannins. In the mouth are clearly perceived flavors of black cherry, blueberry and plum, confirming a good correspondence to the nose. The contribution of alcohol is evident, effective in balancing the acidity. Let's now pass to the evaluation of Tempranillo's attack, therefore take a sip of this wine. In the mouth can be perceived a very clear difference with Albarossa: the acidity is much lower, while roundness is more intense, also thanks to the contribution of alcohol, certainly not insignificant. Astringency is generally more intense than Albarossa and in the mouth can be perceived pleasing flavors of black cherry, blackberry, plum and strawberry.

The final phase of our tasting by contrast is about the evaluation of the sensations left in the mouth by the wines after swallowing them. The finish of Albarossa is persistent, leaving in the mouth the pleasing freshness of acidity and a sensation of medium structure, in addition to the flavors of black cherry, blueberry and plum. Astringency is also moderate and roundness is less perceptible. The finish of Tempranillo, also in this case of good persistence, has a fuller structure, leaving in the mouth a more evident round sensation than Albarossa, with intense flavors of black cherry, plum, blackberry and strawberry. Let's now evaluate in succession the finish of the two wines, taking a sip of Albarossa first and then of Tempranillo, evaluating – in both cases – the sensations perceived after swallowing. The differences, especially in terms of acidity, roundness and structure are evident and decidedly *contrasting*.



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



Montefalco Sagrantino Passito Colle Grimaldesco 2011

Tabarrini (Umbria, Italy)



Price: € 36.00 - 375ml

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, tamarind, tobacco, chocolate, pink pepper, vanilla, nail polish and menthol.
- 👄 Sweet and tannic attack, however balanced by alcohol, full body, intense flavors, pleasing roundness.
- 🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of blackberry, black cherry and plum.
- 📅 36 months in barrique, 18 months in bottle.
- 🍴 Confectionery, Hard cheese, Fruit tarts, Chocolate desserts



Adarmando 2015
Tabarrini (Umbria, Italy)

Trebbiano Spoletino

Price: € 20.00

Score

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

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of apple, medlar and lychee followed by aromas of peach, citrus fruits, pear, pineapple, hawthorn, plum, broom, melon, hazelnut and mineral.

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

Very persistent finish with long flavors of medlar, lychee and peach.

At least 12 months in steel tanks, 6 months in bottle.

Stuffed pasta, Pasta and risotto with mushrooms and crustaceans, Roasted white meat, Stewed fish, Roasted fish



Vernaccia di San Gimignano Riserva 2015
Gucciardini Strozzi (Tuscany, Italy)

Vernaccia di San Gimignano

Price: € 11.50

Score

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

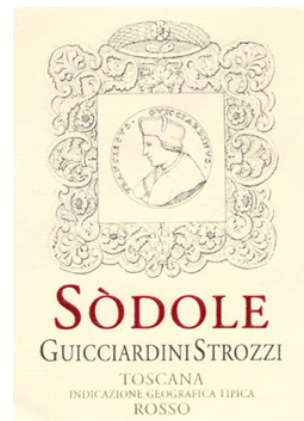
Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of apple, plum and citrus fruits followed by aromas of pear, peach, jasmine, hawthorn, pineapple, broom, almond and hints of vanilla.

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

Persistent finish with flavors of apple, plum and almond.

Some months in barrique, more than 12 months in bottle.

Stuffed pasta, Roasted fish, Roasted white meat, Mushroom soups



Sodole 2011
Gucciardini Strozzi (Tuscany, Italy)

Sangiovese

Price: € 15.00

Score

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

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

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

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

12 months in barrique, more than 12 months in bottle.

Carne alla griglia, Carne arrosto, Stufati e brasati di carne con funghi, Formaggi stagionati



Le Redini 2015
Tenuta degli Dei (Tuscany, Italy)

Merlot (90%), Alicante (10%)

Price: € 22.00

Score ◆◆◆◆

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

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

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.

10 months in barrique and cask, 6 months in bottle.

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



Cavalli 2013
Tenuta degli Dei (Tuscany, Italy)

Cabernet Sauvignon (50%), Cabernet Franc (35%), Petit Verdot (15%)

Price: € 45.00

Score ◆◆◆◆★

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

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of black currant, black cherry and plum followed by aro-

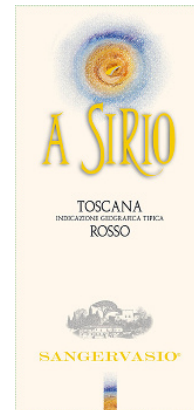
mas of violet, blueberry, peony, blackberry, bell pepper, cocoa, face powder, tobacco, pink pepper, vanilla and eucalyptus.

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

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

18 months in barrique and cask, 18 months in bottle.

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



A Sirio 2013
Sangervasio (Tuscany, Italy)

Sangiovese

Price: € 20.00

Score ◆◆◆◆★

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

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of black cherry, plum and dried violet followed by aromas of raspberry, blackberry, dried rose, tobacco, rhubarb, cocoa, vanilla, mace and menthol.

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

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

14 months in barrique, 24 months in bottle.

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



Colli dell'Etruria Centrale Vin Santo Recinaio 2005 Sangervasio (Tuscany, Italy)

Trebbiano Toscano (70%), San Colombano (15%), Sangiovese (15%)

Price: € 30.00 - 375ml

Score

Deep amber yellow and nuances of amber yellow, moderate transparency.

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of raisin, dried fig and caramel followed by aromas of honey, quince jam, walnut husk, coffee, tobacco, citrus fruit peel, almond, licorice, leather, vanilla and nail polish.

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

Persistent finish with long flavors of raisin, dried fig and honey.

At least 8 years in small barrels (caratelli), 12 months in bottle.

Jam and chocolate tarts, Hard and piquant cheese



Mazzaferrata 2012 Marchesi Gondi - Tenuta Bossi (Tuscany, Italy)

Cabernet Sauvignon

Price: € 40.00

Score

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

Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of black currant, black cherry and plum followed by aro-

mas of violet, blueberry, blackberry, bell pepper, vanilla, cocoa, tobacco, leather and eucalyptus.

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

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

12 months in cask, 12 months in barrique, 24 months in bottle.

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



Chianti Rufina Riserva Villa Bossi 2012 Marchesi Gondi - Tenuta Bossi (Tuscany, Italy)

Sangiovese (80%), Colorino (10%), Cabernet Sauvignon (10%)

Price: € 40.00

Score

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

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

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


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

12 months in barrique, 12 months in bottle.

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





Barolo Piantà 2010
Casavecchia (Piedmont, Italy)


 Nebbiolo


Price: € 26.20


Score 


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

 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of cherry, plum and dried violet followed by aromas of raspberry, dried rose, leather, anise, licorice, cocoa, tobacco, cinnamon, vanilla, mace and menthol.

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

 Persistent finish with flavors of cherry, plum and raspberry.

 2 years in cask, at least 18 months in bottle.

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




Barolo Riserva del Comune di Castiglione Falletto
2007


Casavecchia (Piedmont, Italy)


 Nebbiolo


Price: € 30.30


Score 


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

 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of cherry jam, plum jam and dried violet followed by aromas of strawberry jam, blueberry jam, cocoa, tobacco, dried rose, cinnamon, licorice, leather, rhubarb, vanilla and menthol.

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

 Persistent finish with flavors of plum jam, cherry jam and strawberry jam.

 2 years in cask, at least 18 months in bottle.

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

WINE PRODUCERS

Tabarrini's Piantagrero: the Hidden Side of Wine

Think about a red wine. Any wine. Think about your favorite red wine or the last one you have had. Now forget it completely. The wine and grape I am about to tell you, in fact, has such unique and particular characteristics, so unique it cannot be compared to anything else. It is, talking about the grape used for its making, a variety forgotten for almost a century, rediscovered and revalued thanks to new and modern viticultural and wine making practices in order to make it a wine of absolute personality. We are in Umbria, the grape is Grero, the winery is Tabarrini, the wine is Piantagrero. The name of the wine and the particular labels used for each vintage do not betray the character and personality of its producer: non-conformist, multifaceted, volcanic and *standing out from the crowd*, in short, Giampaolo Tabarrini. Those who have the pleasure and privilege of knowing him, and I am one of them, will certainly agree with me, aware of the exuberance and initiative – obstinate and stubborn in perfect *umbro-montefalchese* style – something typical of Giampaolo Tabarrini.

Ex *enfant prodige* of the Umbrian wine scene, Giampaolo Tabarrini is today a successful producer, one of those who has been capable of bringing Sagrantino, Montefalco, Umbria and Italian wine around the world. Tabarrini winery is not only committed to Sagrantino, of which makes four labels, but also to Trebbiano Spoletino – Adarmando, dedicated to the maternal grandfather – and, in recent years, Grero too. Autochthonous grape of Umbria, almost forgotten for about a century, Grero – which takes its name from the union of *Greco* and *Nero* (respectively, Italian for *Greek* and *Black*) – is certainly a variety of which we will hear about it again in the future. Recent studies and research, conducted by the University of Perugia and by Ciuffelli Agronomy School of Todi, have allowed the rediscovering of this variety, of which there is very little information, re-evaluated it through modern viticulture and wine making techniques. It is believed Grero is an indigenous grape of the territory of Todi – some, for this reason, call it *Grero di Todi* – and in the past it was quite common in the territory of Umbria.

Giampaolo Tabarrini's meeting with Grero took place – so to speak – by pure chance. Giampaolo Tabarrini himself tells us how it happened: «The story of our Grero began in 2007 when, without knowing what it was, we find a vine in the garden of the holiday home of a lady from Rome, not very far from our winery. As it had been three years since it was last pruned, we offered our help to do that. A small part of the pruning was

sent to the laboratory to identify its genetic characteristics, and in order to understand what it was, another part was sent to a nursery for propagation. From the results of the laboratory we found out it was Grero, an indigenous variety of our area, already known in the past ampelography of our territory». After having “discovered” Grero, they had to make a decision about what they could do with it. Giampaolo Tabarrini continues: «We decided how much to plant and, above all, tried to imagine what kind of wine could be obtained with Grero, also by considering the existing documentation about this grape mentioned only the characteristics of the vine, without giving any information about its wines. We knew it was a late ripening variety, with a small cluster and berries. We therefore decided to take a risks and in 2007 we planted half a hectare of Grero, and then, over time, the area has been increased to one hectare. The first harvesting was in 2013».

Experimentation and the first harvesting allowed them to finally understand the organoleptic and sensorial qualities of Grero wine. This is what Giampaolo Tabarrini says about this: «From the organoleptic point of view it is a wine not recalling any other one. There is no reference grape that can be compared to Grero. This variety, although being a late ripening grape, makes wines with a modest alcohol volume. Even in hot years the wine had no more than 13.2% of alcohol. It has a very high acidity – far from the regional standards – and a very low PH, figures that in Umbria are not found in red wines. It has a dark, impenetrable and deep color, deeper than Sagrantino or Colorino. It has no tannins, therefore Grero wines are much appreciated for their fruit sensations and crispness». Grero is a surprising grape and, even in terms of longevity, it seems to be different from other Umbrian grapes. Giampaolo Tabarrini, in this regard, comments «What is most impressive is its longevity: because of the small quantity of wine produced, we aged the first two vintages (2013 and 2014) in barrique, something usually accelerating the aging processes of wine. 2013 vintage, after three years and a half in barrique, seems not to have undergone a significant evolution: it practically remained the same as when we put it in barrique. This makes us think about a wine not being subject to oxidation and premature decay. Time will allow us to better understand the potentials of Grero, however we are confident it is capable of making wines with a great longevity potential».

Tasting Grero unfolds its remarkable personality and character, different from any other wine, with *uncommon* sensorial characteristics when compared to what you would expect from a red wine, especially Umbrian. We had the opportunity to taste, by using the “blind” method and something we always do in our tasting, the three available vintages of Tabarrini’s Piantagrero – 2013, 2014 and 2015 – and the result, as well as being very promising, was also decidedly exciting. First of all, acidity: pungent, vibrant and lively, clearly a dominant and pleasing quality of Grero. Do not think about a wine that is acidic only, as Piantagrero is clearly balanced, both 2013 and 2014 vintages – aged in barrique – and 2015, exclusively aged in steel tanks. Then astringency: modest and almost imperceptible, however with a good amount of alcohol – an average of 13% – is very effective in balancing the intense acidity. Moreover, appearance: red color, redder than any red you could think of, with a virtually non existing transparency, here light can barely pass through the glass. Then, nuances: purple

red – blue and purplish hues are clearly seen – even in 2013 vintage, aged for two years in barrique.

The wonders of the Grero are expressed also to the nose, revealing a particular and unique olfactory profile. On this regard, it should be noted 2015 vintage – aged in steel tanks – obviously gives a very different wine from 2013 and 2014 vintages, aged in barrique, however expressing qualities typical and frequent in Grero. The olfactory profile has a strong fruity and floral personality, as well as revealing aromatic herbs, mineral characteristics, pleasantly reminiscent of vegetables and spices, the latter sensations can be especially perceived in vintages aged in steel tanks. An olfactory perception you would not expect in a red wine is orange which in Grero is dominant and identifying, making it unique. Finally the structure: Grero makes wines with a rather modest body, despite the fact the aging in barrique contributes to increase it substantially.

It is hard, in any case, to tell whether Piantagrero aged in barrique is better than the one aged in steel tanks. They simply are two wines offering two distinct interpretations, both interesting for sure, despite the fact it is evident – and predictable – the aging in steel tanks gives a wine with a more vibrant acidity and a more lively olfactory freshness. On the other hand, aging in barrique contributes to the balance of the typical acidity of Grero with a rounder and warmer character, as well as more complex aromas, to the detriment of fruit and flower sensations, which are however well perceptible. A matter of taste, one could say, considering Piantagrero is a wine in evident experimental stage and still needs study and verification in order to better understand it. The premises, however, are very promising and of considerable interest.

My hope is Grero will become one of the varieties in which investing for the future of Umbrian wine making, as it has all the characteristics in order to make a unique wine to be identified to a territory. A final remark must be said for the labels, represented by nice cartoons and in which the protagonist is my friend Giampaolo Tabarrini. Each vintage has a different label: in 2014 we can see Federica, Giampaolo’s wife, in 2013 and 2016 he is depicted with wine maker Emiliano Falsini, in 2015 Giampaolo Tabarrini runs away with a bottle of Piantagrero. It must be said 2016 vintage does not exist – better to say, it was not produced – because of the very strict and severe weather conditions not allowing the vine to give any grape. For this reason, in fact, in the label of 2016 vintage we see Giampaolo Tabarrini and wine maker Emiliano Falsini regretting for not having been able to make their Grero wine. The bottle of Piantagrero 2016, including the label, does exist but it is *sadly empty*, in the perfect provocative and surprising style distinguishing my friend Giampaolo Tabarrini.

Antonello Biancalana



Piantagrero 2015
Tabarrini (Umbria, Italy)



Greco

Price: € 24.00

Score ♦♦♦♦

👁️ Deep ruby red and nuances of purple red, little transparency.

👃 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of blueberry, plum and black cherry followed by aromas of orange, flint, raspberry, blackberry, violet, carob, tobacco and pink pepper.

👄 Low tannic attack with appreciable crispness, however balanced, light body, intense flavors, agreeable.

🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of blueberry, plum and raspberry.

📅 18 months in steel tanks.

🍴 *Pasta with meat and mushrooms, Stewed meat, Roasted white meat, Legume and mushroom soups*



Piantagrero 2014
Tabarrini (Umbria, Italy)



Greco

Price: € 24.00

Score ♦♦♦♦

👁️ Deep ruby red and nuances of purple red, impenetrable to light.

👃 Intense, clean, pleasing and refined, starts with hints of blueberry, plum and raspberry followed by aromas of violet, orange, black cherry, blackberry, vanilla, chocolate and rosemary.

👄 Properly tannic attack with an appreciable crispness, however balanced by alcohol, good body, intense flavors, agreeable.

🍷 Persistent finish with flavors of blueberry, black cherry and raspberry.

📅 2 years in barrique.

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



Piantagrero 2013
Tabarrini (Umbria, Italy)



Greco

Price: € 24.00

Score ♦♦♦♦★

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

👃 Intense, clean, pleasing, refined and elegant, starts with hints of black cherry, plum and pomegranate followed by aromas of raspberry, blueberry, orange, blackberry, violet, tobacco, chocolate, vanilla, cumin, pink pepper, leather and menthol.

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

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

📅 24 months in barrique.

🍴 *Stuffed pasta with mushrooms, Roasted meat, Stewed meat, Mushroom soups*



The label of Piantagrero 2016: neverwine

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








Amaro Nepeta Nepeta (Sicily)

 Infusion of lesser calamint and lemon

Price: € 16.50 – 50cl

Score 

-  Pale amber yellow, limpid.
-  Clean, pleasing and refined with aromas of lesser calamint and lemon, imperceptible alcohol pungency.
-  Intense flavors with a slight alcohol pungency, sweet and round, with a pleasing bitter sensation.
-  Persistent finish with flavots of lesser calamint, lemon and a bitter touch.
-  Infusion of lesser calamint and lemon in alcohol.

Wine Guide Parade

January 2018

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

Rank	Wine, Producer	Votes
1	Alta Langa Brut Cuvée Aurora 2012, Castello Banfi	9475
2	Chianti Classico 2015, Bibbiano	6288
3	Barbera del Monferrato La Monella 2016, Braida	5861
4	Chianti Classico Gran Selezione Vigna del Capanino 2013, Bibbiano	5609
5	La Lus 2015, Castello Banfi	5091
6	Brunello di Montalcino 2012, Col d'Orcia	5077
7	Stilnovo 2016, Castello Banfi	4945
8	Cum Laude 2013, Castello Banfi	4943
9	Barbera d'Asti Bricco dell'Uccellone 2015, Braida	4566
10	Monferrato Rosso Il Bacialè 2015, Braida	4446
11	Spezieri 2016, Col d'Orcia	4431
12	Aglianico del Vulture Titolo 2015, Elena Fucci	4268
13	Brunello di Montalcino Poggio alle Mura 2012, Castello Banfi	4209
14	Chianti Classico Riserva 2014, Bibbiano	4142
15	Rosso di Montalcino 2015, Col d'Orcia	4102