

tidings

A NEW VISION OF BEAUJOLAIS | DECIPHERING CHAI

WHITE HEAT

WILL THE PINOTS
SAVE THE WINEDOM

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“MODERN”

BY GILLES BOIS

IF YOU LOVE WINE, YOU'RE BOUND TO LOVE DISCOVERING NEW THINGS. WITH

SO MUCH DIVERSITY FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, AND A NEW CROP EVERY YEAR, NO TWO VINTAGES ARE EVER EXACTLY THE SAME, PLUS THE RESULTS OF CONSTANT INNOVATION. BUT WE NEVER GET QUITE ENOUGH. “I CAN'T GET NO SATISFACTION” IS OUR MOTTO.

A few decades ago, we discovered the wines from the New World. Affordable Chile, quality California, and Australia each saw their market share increase dramatically. But those wines were made using the same grapes as the traditional French wines: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah (called Shiraz Down under), Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Later on came Pinot Noir, Riesling and a few others. These cépages are now rightly labelled “international.” Although the style is different in the New World — less acid, sweeter and more fruity — we have witnessed a standardization of smell and taste. “Modern” wines, no

matter where they come from, appeal to the most common denominator of consumers’ preferences. But the serious wine aficionados want something truly original. So again we find ourselves looking for something different.

A new trend is presently taking on momentum. Neglected or abandoned grapes are making a comeback. Although many interesting ones disappeared when they were uprooted to make room for the international varieties, there are still pockets in many vineyards that were kept around, if only for tradition’s sake. As of today, there are an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 unique grape varieties be-

ing grown around the globe, bearing over 20,000 different names. Not all would make a complete wine by themselves, but most can add a beneficial dimension when blended with other complementary grapes, resulting in a very satisfying wine. There is a lot of room for experimentation and discovery. Already some nice surprises have surfaced. If the trend lasts, maybe we’ll get some “satisfaction,” at least for a while!

So where should we start? The most prolific country is Italy, especially the southern part, where a handful of producers have been actively promoting local varieties for some time. Of the

many thousands of grapes that still exist today, more than 2,000 are of Italian origin.

This exploration is not about Italian grapes whose fame is surpassed by the blends they produce: Nebbiolo (which is behind Barolo and Barbaresco), Sangiovese (Chianti), or Corvina (Valpolicella), just to name a few. Nor is it about Primitivo, the brother of Zinfandel — itself a descendent of Plavac Mali from Croatia.

Now, back to the subject at hand: neglected Italian varieties now on the rise. Of these, Aglianico is a must try. The name betrays its Greek origin (it is a variation of ellenico), but it is not

clear what its original name was, assuming it still exists across the Adriatic. Generous and chewy, these wines have weight and can be age-worthy, often exhibiting notes of plum, chocolate and smoke. Folks that grow and believe in it have nicknamed it the “Nebbiolo of the South,” a fact revealed during a tasting held by the firm Rivera, whose large range is filled with wines made from indigenous grapes.

***½ TORMARESCA BOCCA DI LUPO 2006

CASTEL DEL MONTE, PUGLIA (\$33)
100% Aglianico. Deep, rich nose of berries and smoke with a touch of anise that adds freshness. Thick

on the palate, mildly rough tannic structure, firm finish and a minimum of 5 to 7 years’ aging potential. Quite impressive.

From the same region of Apulia, Uva di Troia (also called Nero di Troia) is still neglected by many growers because of its low yield, but for those who prioritize quality over quantity, it can bring power and aging potential to a blend.

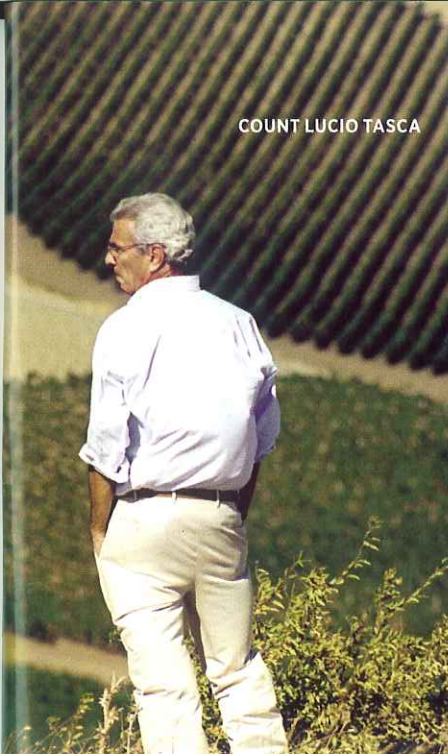
***½ RIVERA IL FALCONE RISERVA 2005

CASTEL DEL MONTE, PUGLIA (\$22)

The Nero di Troia is assembled with 30% Montepulciano (another Italian native grape, better known for its expression in the Abruzzi region, under the Montepulciano d’Abruzzo DOC). Very dark colour, intense, ripe and rich nose of red and black berries, almost jammy, plus complex oak notes. Full and juicy, sappy, the fine tannins lead to a dry finish. Will take up to 10 years of cellaring. A great wine and a great buy.



COUNT LUCIO TASCA



... kling wine in large quantities at low cost. That story was related during a recent seminar on Prosecco held in Montréal by Giuseppe Martelli, president of the Italian National Wine Committee.

***** BORTOLOMIOL**
PROSECCO DI VALDOBBIADENE DOCG 2009

(\$20)

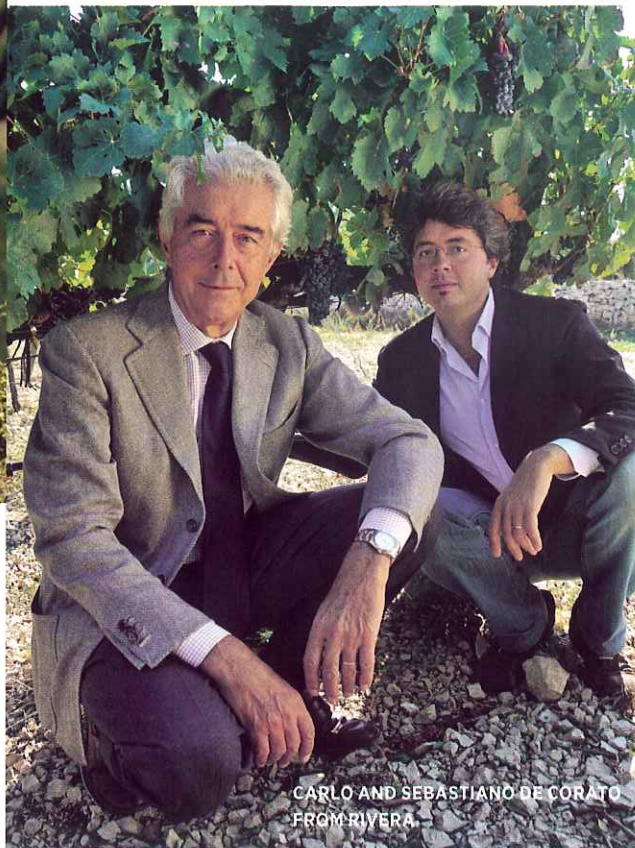
Bright yellow colour, green reflections. Light fruity nose lifted by a fresh bread crust note. The vivid acidity is tamed by a touch of sweetness, resulting in a feeling of roundness. Overall light, fresh and clean taste.

Teroldego is grown primarily in the northeastern Trentino area and comes in two styles. High yielding vines give a pleasant, somewhat earthy red that is best drunk young. With more attention and a reduced yield, it can become very interesting, with layers of complexity and depth.

***** FORADORI**
TEROLDEGO 2007.

TEROLDEGO ROTALIANO DOC, TRENTINO (\$28)

Deep purple. Intense nose of red and black fruits, an earthy note and moderate oak. Nice and vel-



CARLO AND SEBASTIANO DE CORATO
FROM RIVERA

vety with good acidity, chewy fruit, full body and mild tannins. Dry finish. Ready to drink or keep up to 3 years, it will be perfect with pasta in tomato sauce or veal parmigiana.

Further east in the Friuli region grows Refosco, a late-ripening red grape that may come as a surprise in this rather cool area close to Austria. Although its tannins can be harsh and the acidity high, the fruit is delicious enough to compensate.

****½ DORIGO**
REFOSCO 2006
COLLI ORIENTALI DEL FRIULI DOC (\$22)

Deep purple colour, attractive nose of cherry and other red fruits, a hint of vegetal greenness. Acidity is mild, a sign of maturity of the grapes, but the tannins have grip behind the dense core of fruit ex-

tract. This is better with food; red meat comes to mind, especially if it's cooked rare.

Arneis is a white grape originating from the Piemonte. Traditionally blended with Nebbiolo to soften it up, Arneis has become a wine on its own, thanks to better viticultural practices that overcame the difficulties of successfully growing it in substantial quantities. Its wine is perfumed and sometimes exotic, featuring notes of peach and almonds.

*****½ BRUNO**
GIACOSA ARNEIS 2007
ROERO DOC (\$29)

Golden yellow with a nose of peach/apricot, honey and clover, slightly nutty and mineral, a hint of smoke. Fleshy and somewhat fatty, it coats the palate, and the finish is clean and lively. Ready to drink. ▣