

SnarkyWine

Wine people, wine places, wine books and....wine!



Grandi Marchi – the Estates and the Tasting Notes

September 30, 2017 KevinItaly, Wine Fair or Tasting Event, Wine Review

+1

share

tweet

share

Grandi Marchi – The Estates and the Tasting Notes



Yes, these are the movers and the shakers, as it were.

Eighteen wines – one from each of the estates represented at the seminar – were poured. Here they are in the order in which they were presented. This seminar was the kind of opportunity that one should try to plan around. I wasn’t sure until the day it happened that I was going to be able to show up – but I am very pleased that it worked out, even though I had to leave before it was finished. Read about the seminar [here](#).

Carpenè Malvolti

This estate was, apparently, the first to introduce *Prosecco* to the world, way back in 1868 when it was founded by Antonio Carpenè, who was a renowned enologist.

Who Came: Domenico Scimone, Global Sales and Marketing Director

Wine: “PVXINVM” – *Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG (Extra Dry)*

This is a non-vintage wine made, of course, with 100% *Glera* (until recently still called *Prosecco*) grapes. It is made using the Charmat method

Tasting Note: there was lots of sweet fruit, moderate acidity and good length, driven by ripe, candied lemon and some sweet almond. A decent amount of salinity complements what is, overall, a very fine and fruity profile. The mousse is good and the wine shows none of the bitterness in the finish that so many Proseccos exhibit. A lovely sparkler.

Ca'del Bosco

Truly one of the great estates of Lombardy, let alone *Franciacorta*. Maurizio Zanella, founder of the estate, said a couple of very interesting things about the wines, but the best of them was this: "*Franciacorta is a wine, not a sparkling wine.*" It is a sentiment that I agree with, when the wines are compelling, and I would apply it to all the world's great sparkling wines, from *Champagne* to *Franciacorta* to the (still) humble Germanic *Winzersekt*. I spoke with a couple of Swiss sommeliers a couple days after the tasting, and they were unclear as to the message behind this statement – in fact, one of them felt that Mr Zanella was denigrating the sparkling wines of the denomination. Nothing could be further from the truth. This simple message communicates the fact that precise, well-made sparkling wines (from *Franciacorta*) are the equal of any still wine, and should not be taken as a frivolous drink. I couldn't agree more.

Who Came: Maurizio Zanella, founder of the estate

Wine: Cuvée Annamaria Clementi 2007 – *Franciacorta Riserva DOCG*, 12.5% abv

The wine is made from 55% Chardonnay (for the finesse, says Mr Zanella), 25% Pinot Bianco (for the elegance) and 20% Pinot Nero (for the maturation potential). It spent six months on the lees and over eight years in bottle before release. Like all *Franciacorta*, it is made in the "classic" way, which is to say that the wine underwent the second fermentation in bottle.

Tasting Note: smooth, fresh acidity with a lovely, elegant, vertical profile. Candied peel and sweet lemon fruit, pear, a fine note of sweet brioche and yeast. Elegant and with lovely structure overall, but the mousse is not quite as fine as I expected from a wine of this age. The finish is long and beautifully saline.

Jermann

If there was just one thing to take away from Michele Jermann's brief words about Friuli and his family's historic estate, it is that the future of the region lies with the grape variety *Ribolla Gialla*, which is only found in Friuli and Slovenia. This appealed to me on a couple levels; first, because I prefer native and traditional grape varieties generally, and, second, because I think *Ribolla Gialla* is underestimated – and often mishandled. A learning curve remains, but good wines from this oft-tart and overly-lean variety have much to offer.

Who Came: Michele Jermann

Wine: Vinnae Ribolla Gialla 2016 – *Venezia Giulia IGT*, 12.5% abv

Made with 90% Ribolla Gialla, 5% Friulano (Sauvignon Vert) and 5% Riesling Renano (Riesling)

Tasting Note: pale lemon and extremely restrained in the nose (but also a very young wine). There is some good lemon and green herb, with a hint of "cellar" that I associate with amphora or unlined cement vat fermentation – neither of which were actually used with this wine. Smooth and creamy mouthfeel right up until the finish, which has good bite. The lingering impression of ripe yellow fruit, white blossoms and iodine are very enjoyable.



This is part of why I am here . . . photo courtesy of fotococco.ch

Alois Lageder

One of Alto Adige's legendary estates, and a biodynamic pioneer in the zone. This wine, however, is neither organic nor biodynamic. The estate has some really interesting varietals planted – including *Assyrtiko* and *Tannat* – so the fact that they have chosen a *Pinot Bianco* to present instead of something either very innovative (from the Kometen series, for example) or something very classic (like the *Löwengang Chardonnay*) makes one wonder. On the other hand, *Pinot Bianco* is a traditional

variety in Alto Adige, so perhaps the intention was to represent the region in general. In that case, a *Lagrein* or a *Vernatsch* would have gone a long way.

Who Came: Alois Clemens Lageder

Wine: “Haberle” Pinot Bianco 2016 – *Alto Adige DOC*, 13% abv

Made with 100% Pinot Bianco, fermented and aged primarily in large oak vats.

Tasting Note: creamy and elegant, with some smoothly-integrated wood and plenty of cotton candy on the palate. Decent stone fruit, some melon and a hint of beeswax and decent acidity – but quite youthful and exhibiting a bit of a bitter finish.



Panel, Part 1 . . . Photo courtesy of fotococco.ch

Masi

A flagship estate of the Veneto, and the only one managing vineyards owned by the direct descendants of Dante Alighieri. As far as I am concerned, their particular claim to fame is the rare native variety called *Oseleta*. Masi found a few vines of a particular, high-quality biotype of this variety in a small, aged vineyard and has been cultivating it for more than a decade, learning the ways of this grape and waiting for the opportunity for the laws to be amended that would allow its addition to the classic wines of Valpolicella. That time has arrived, and Masi is adding it in small quantities to some of their wines. It is a powerful, sometimes rustic variety with massive tannin and acidity – and an altogether thrilling grape if it can be tamed. The wine they presented at the seminar is the only monovarietal of this biotype that I am aware of, and I first had the pleasure of tasting it at the producer just six months ago. I was grateful to see it at the seminar.

Who Came: Alessandra Boscaini, Sales Director and from the 7th generation of the family

Wine: “Osar” 2009 – *Rosso del Veronese IGT*, 14% abv

The wine is made with 100% Oseleta, aged for 24 months in highly-toasted new oak barrels followed by six months in bottle.

Tasting Note: deep ruby with a suggestion of garnet brick at the rim. Mulberry, graphite, cedar and some of the dusty character that one normally associates with *Sangiovese* are all quite present, followed by a subtle serving of cherry syrup. Dense and brooding, with huge, tight structure and still offering plenty of dark, smoky tannin alongside the graphite and granite. Very long finish with a mineral tang. Impressive stuff. Even at eight years of age, the wine is a bit wild and raspy. I love it.

Michele Chiarlo

The region around the small community of Nizza is particularly and justly renowned for *Barbera*. Up until recently, “Nizza” was a subzone of the *Barbera d’Asti DOCG*. As of the 2014 vintage, however, the 19 communes in the subzone are able to proudly label their *Barbera* simply as *Nizza DOCG*.

Who Came: Alberto Chiarlo

Wine: “La Court” 2013 – *Barbera d’Asti DOCG Superiore “Nizza”*, 14% abv

Made with 100% Barbera fermented in oak barrels, then aged for a year in a 50/50 mix of large barrels and small barriques, followed by at least 15 months in bottle.

Tasting Note: deep, youthful ruby red. Loads of red cherry, some appetising vanilla and mint. Wood integration is very good and the acidity is vivid and fresh. There is good structure; the wood tannin is very fine, lovely balance and good length, with just a bit of heat at the end. A very drinkable, enjoyable wine offering plenty of potential.

Gaja

Surely one of the titans of Italian wine, not to mention Piedmont. The brief words from Gaia Gaja concerning the estate marked the first time that I got the feeling someone was trying to sell me something. In this case, it was probably the effort she put into talking about the estates holdings in other parts of Italy. Nevertheless, there were some interesting things said and the wine speaks for itself. The estate is located in Barbaresco, and it was Barbaresco that made it famous. Nevertheless,

Gaja have been producing wines in Barolo since the eighties, even if, in the case of *Sperss*, that wine was not a *Barolo DOCG* from 1996-2012 due to the small amount of *Barbera* that was in the blend. As of 2013, *Sperss* is a real *Barolo* again – though Gaja has chosen to use the EU designation of *DOP* instead of the traditional Italian *DOCG* on the label. According to Gaia Gaja, 2013 was a classic, elegant vintage for Barolo.

Who Came: Gaia Gaja

Wine: “Sperss” 2013 – *Barolo DOP*, 14% abv

Made with 100% Nebbiolo aged in oak for 30 months.

Tasting Note: surprisingly dark, limpid ruby. Dusty and ripe in the nose, full of roses and damson fruit. Astonishingly approachable for such a young vintage, with smooth, oily tannin rising particularly in the middle palate. Smooth and slick, with a creamy mouthfeel and throat-coating length, not remotely astringent. Loads of small, red berry fruit, deep, spicy, complex and still very young – yet easy to enjoy right now. A hedonistic *Barolo*.

Pio Cesare

Presenting on the heels of Gaja, with their named wines, Pio Boffa gave me the laugh of the day when, as he presented his 2013 *Barolo DOCG*, he said “Barolo doesn’t need any extra names to be recognised for its quality”. The Pio Cesare estate produces classic *Barolo* and other Piedmont wines. Mr Boffa explained that their single-vineyard *Barolo* was conceived to show that such wines are not necessarily better than their blended brethren, they are just different. It’s an idea I wish more people would get behind.

Who Came: Pio Boffa, Proprietor and 5th generation of the family

Wine: Barolo 2013 – *Barolo DOCG*, 14.5% abv

Made, of course, with 100% Nebbiolo, it is vinified in steel and aged for 30 months in oak, followed by six months in bottle.

Tasting Note: more garnet in colour than the *Sperss*, and more restrained in the nose. A bit dusty like a *Sangiovese*, but with an element of acai berries, quite tannic and old-school with ripe red fruit and kiln-fired brick, accented with dried herbs. Very crunchy tannin, excellent length, great acidity and very dry, this is a classic, young *Barolo* that fits right into my preferred style. Elegant and powerful, it is showing much less fruit and far more structure than its counterpart above – but they are equally beautiful.

Tenuta San Guido

Home of the original “Super-Tuscan” wine: *Sassicaia*. The importance of this estate to recent (the last sixty years) Italian wine development cannot easily be overstated – and if you look at the denomination, you will see that it has its own designation: *Bolgheri Sassicaia DOC*. Now, of course, *Bolgheri* is home to many “international” grapes, but the *Cabernet Sauvignon* that continues to make up the core of *Sassicaia* was first planted (for private use, no less) way back in 1944. At the seminar I had the pleasure of tasting the 2013, which I very much enjoyed. A few days later I was able to taste the 2013 and the 2014 back-to-back. Buy the 2013, if you can.

Who Came: Priscilla Incisa della Rocchetta, 3rd generation of the family

Wine: Sassicaia 2013 – *Bolgheri Sassicaia DOC*, 13.5% abv

Made with 85% Cabernet Sauvignon and 15% Cabernet Franc, aged for 24 months in French barriques, followed by six months in bottle.

Tasting Note: deep ruby. Roasted red bell pepper and some green bell pepper, chased by a hint of hot pepper and an almost savoury element. Tight and tannic, but with plenty of dark fruit and red berries, with cedar and spice. Excellent, balanced structure with the tannic firmness offering a counterpoint to excellent length. The nose was very definitely not Bordeaux, despite having all the elements Bordeaux offers. An exquisitely Italian expression of grape varieties that just happen to be from France.

Marchesi Antinori

Possibly the estate with the longest history of all present, going back to the 13th century. Their wine portfolio is broad and diverse, with a few very recognisable brands – particularly when it comes to super-tuscans. So I was very pleased to see that the wine they brought to the seminar was, in fact, a more classic kind of Tuscan, even if the specific category has only existed for a few years: a *Chianti Classico Gran Selezione*. Obviously, *Chianti Classico* has been around for a long while, but the *Gran Selezione* modifier is relatively new. There is a fair bit of debate about the usefulness of the category, but according to Albiera Antinori it allows producers to exhibit the finest selection of fruit from their best vines, giving another shade to the palette of wines possible.

Who Came: Albiera Antinori, CEO and 26th generation of the family

Wine: Badia A Passignano 2012 – *Chianti Classico DOCG Gran Selezione*, 13.5% abv

Made with 100% Sangiovese (until relatively recently, a monovarietal *Sangiovese* did not qualify as *Chianti Classico*. I am very grateful for the change) aged in tonneaux for 12 months, followed by 12 months in bottle.

Tasting Note: ooh, a very dusty *Sangiovese*! Barely any cherry fruit at the moment, but very fine, intense, small, red berry fruit otherwise. Quite firm wood tannins complementing the fruit tannin, and a surprisingly dark colour. Good, concentrated length and also very good acidity – but a bit overshadowed by the wood. Minty finish. Definitely need to let this wine rest for a while to digest all that wood – surprising, since tonneaux are a larger-format barrel than barriques.

Tenute Ambrogio e Giovanni Folonari

A long history in wine and diverse holdings in Italy mark this family. At the seminar, they chose to present their *Brunello di Montalcino* from their Tenuta la Fuga estate – which occupies a mere nine hectares on the South-West side of the slopes at Montalcino. When pressed by Christian Eder on the 5-

star quality of the 2012 vintage, Mr Sarcone seemed a bit unimpressed at being compelled to defend the decision of the *Consorzio del Vino Brunello di Montalcino*. Can't say I blame him for that, but a bit of explanation would have done good.

Who Came: Attilio Sarcone, Export Manager

Wine: La Fuga 2012 – *Brunello di Montalcino* DOCG, 14.5% abv

Made, of course, with 100% Sangiovese, aged in oak for four years – at least 24 months of which was in Slavonian barrels.

Tasting Note: good and dusty, just like a *Sangiovese* should be. Black plum, some cherry – and glorious intensity underscored with beautiful acidity. Good length and nice balance overall, there is great fruit depth, warmth and a hint of mint. Approachable tannin, lovely sandalwood note. Delicious and drinkable! Mr Sarcone insists on a 30-year ageing potential. I'm not sure I agree, but I'll give him a good 15-20.



Could be worse. . . . Photo courtesy of fotococco.ch

Lungarotti

This estate has done much for Umbria, and they continue to raise the profile of the denominations of that underappreciated part of Italy. Chiara Lungarotti's presentation made me feel like she had memorised it for talking to importers, which probably contributed to me not enjoying it very much. I was a bit surprised that she chose her *Torgiano Rosso Riserva*, since it was the third 100% Sangiovese presented at the seminar, following *Chianti Classico* and *Brunello*. Particularly surprising since Lungarotti also make a *Montefalco Sagrantino* – the grape for which, *Sagrantino*, is both unique to Umbria and very exciting, if difficult to tame. But she clarified her choice by explaining that *Sangiovese* is her favourite grape.

Who Came: Chiara Lungarotti

Wine: Rubesco Vigna Monticchio 2010 – *Torgiano Rosso Riserva* DOCG, 14.5% abv

Made with 100% Sangiovese, aged for 12 months in a mix of barrels and barriques, followed by five years in bottle.

Tasting Note: very deep ruby in colour. Bit of dust, lots of plum. Very international/modern in style. Oily tannin, plush berry fruit, lots of cherry, some eucalyptus in the finish. Still very youthful in the flavour profile, with only a bit of leather and spices. Good acidity and nice structure overall. A little hot in the finish.

Umani Ronchi

One of the few estates practicing organic viticulture. Michele Bernetti also provided one of the more enjoyably memorable moments of the seminar when he addressed Christian Eder's provocative question about the grape *Montepulciano* being one of Italy's greatest grapes. "I'm not sure the other estates here would agree with that assessment" he responded, laughing. That was also the limit of his answer; draw your own conclusions.

But *Montepulciano* really is one of Italy's great grapes. It is said to be difficult to work with, but it is also responsible for the entire spectrum of wine quality, from simple, fruity, easy quaffers on up to intensely serious, ageworthy and complex wines.

Who Came: Michele Bernetti, CEO and owner

Wine: Campo San Giorgio 2010 – *Conero Riserva* DOCG, 14% abv – €55.00

Made with 100% organically-farmed Montepulciano, aged 12-14 months in barriques followed by six months in tonneaux, and finishing up with 8-10 months in bottle. This is the second vintage of the wine.

Tasting Note: very deep, dense ruby – nearly opaque. Intense and profoundly spicy nose, with some dark berry fruit in the background. And then boom! Superb dark fruit accompanying the box of spice on the palate. Not oily, but brilliantly textured. Velvety. Not fat, but plush. Not a large amount of minerality, but truly huge extract. Long finish, carried by a fruity juiciness that I didn't expect. A big wine, but still manages to offer some tightness and potential.

Mastroberardino

Campanian wines – red or white – can be great. I love *Aglianico* in any case and I really love good *Taurasi*. So I was very much looking forward to trying the *Radici Taurasi Riserva*, which I have drunk on many occasions.

Who Came: Piero Mastroberardino

Wine: “Radici” 2009 – *Taurasi DOCG Riserva*, 13.5% abv

Made with 100% Aglianico, aged for 30 months in a mix of French barriques and larger Slovenian barrels, followed by at least 40 months of bottle aging.

Tasting Note: strong, deep ruby. Sultry aromas of black truffle and leather, but not overly intensive. Restraint and elegance are the bywords, here. A persistent, intense palate of dark fruit, some spice and leather, with tight, fine, smooth tannin. Full-bodied and balanced from attack to finish, the wine signs off with a haunting memory of fennel.

Rivera

Who Came: Sebastiano De Corato

Wine: “Puer Apuliae” 2011 – *Castel del Monte Nero di Troia Riserva DOCG*, 14% abv

Made with 100% Nero di Troia, aged for 14 months in new French barriques followed by a year in bottle.

Tasting Note: deep ruby, with a hint of violets and wet earth in the nose. Dark fruit, plums and eucalyptus. Well-executed balance of acidity and alcohol, and the length is good, with a nice, juicy finish tinged with anise. A very tasty, solid wine for this *DOCG*, showing nice typicity.

Argiolas

Probably the most significant producer from Sardinia, whose wines are extremely well-represented both in Switzerland and in Germany. And with good reason. *Cannonau* (Grenache/Garnacha) is likely the most characteristic of the red varieties, certainly the most planted. I have always loved this variety, and I enjoy tasting it no matter where it comes from.

Who Came: Valentina Argiolas, 3rd generation of the family

Wine: “Senes” 2013 – *Cannonau di Sardegna DOC Riserva*, 14% abv

Made with 90% Cannonau, 5% Carignano and 5% Bovale Sardo, aged in small oak barrels for 12 months, followed by three months in bottle.

Tasting Note: this is a deliciously juicy wine, very cleanly-made and with good, typical colour. The nose if very much redolent of ripe black fruit, almost port-like, with a nice rasp of dried *garrigue* herbs. Very good length, with an iodine tang. A very Mediterranean wine.

Tasca d’Almerita

I don’t regret very many things, but I very much regret not being able to try this wine. Unfortunately, I had to leave the seminar before it ended, as it got started 15 minutes late. I managed to try everything else, but not this. *Nerello Mascalese* is a fascinating native variety from Sicily, with a Nebbiolo-like colour and ethereal, floral elegance. It can be absolutely enchanting – and it can be awful. I was very optimistic that the wine would be a floral, mineral and tightly-structured thing. So sad that I couldn’t try it.

Who Came: Alberto Tasca

Wine: “Il Tascante” 2010 – *Sicilia IGT*, 14% abv

Made with 100% Nerello Mascalese from the Northern slope of Mount Etna, aged in large oak barrels for 18 months, followed by 12 months in bottle.

Tasting Note: none, alas. If I can taste the wine soon, I will absolutely update this.

Donnafugata

As I just mentioned, I had to leave the seminar before it finished. But I nearly begged the servers to pour me this wine before I had to go. A *Nero d’Avola* from 1996? Heck, yes! I needed to try it. They very kindly obliged. But Donnafugata is legendary in their own right, and this wine is certainly one of their best-known.

Who Came: Josè Rallo, 5th generation of the family

Wine: “Mille e Una Notte” 1996 – *Contessa Entellina DOC*, 12.9% abv

Made with mostly Nero d’Avola and a little bit of other varieties, aged for 24 months in new oak barriques.

Tasting Note: the colour remains a beautiful ruby/mahogany. Truffle, mushroom and leather dominate, with a hint of port. There are still some wood tannins, and the wine is delightfully elegant. Good length, a hint of caramel and marzipan – it is even slightly unctuous, which is a surprise given the relatively low alcohol and its age. A lovely wine, a pleasure to drink.