

Agnanum

Profile

On the very Western edge of Naples lies the Campi Flegrei, a volcanic area marked by its large craters and proximity to the Tyrrhenian Sea. Wine production has existed here since Roman times, with the majority of vines planted in steep terraces. Sadly, most growers have abandoned these historic sites because mechanization is near impossible and it's too much work. Agnanum's Raffaele Moccia isn't one of them.

Located within the crater of Agnano, Raffaele tends 10 hectares of very old, terraced vines that sit high atop an impressive hill with a beautiful view. The indigenous Falanghina is grown for white and Piediroso for red. The vines are as gnarly as they come, and range from 60 to 200 years old. Because of the unique, layered composition of the soils (volcanic ash and sand, sandy basalt and basalt subsoil), the entirety of the estate is planted in franc de pied.

Though it feels much higher, the vines are 150 to 200m elevation. Raffaele lets grass grow wild to absorb water, which would otherwise overfeed the vines. The grass also helps create a layer of moisture that helps cool down the vines, an old trick that has been passed along for generations. No chemicals are used in the vineyards, and nearly everything is done by hand.

In the cellar, slow native yeast fermentations take place in stainless steel, and in some cases the wine is racked to barrel for aging. Minimal sulfur is added during winemaking, and none at bottling. The wines are shockingly crisp, refreshing and low alcohol for such a hot area. Besides the obvious advantage of having very old, low yielding vines, Raffaele accords this to the constant Tyrrhenian winds.