

Clai Bijele Zemlje

Profile

Originally from the Croatian portion of Istria -a region defined as much by the Alpine foothills as the Adriatic Sea- Giorgio Clai moved to Trieste at a very young age, where he later found success managing one of the city's most reputable restaurants.

In the 80's, Giorgio inherited a small amount of vines and olive trees from his mother. This marked the beginning of what would soon become an annual tradition: returning to Krasica, the small village where he grew up, to harvest and make celebratory wine for his friends, family and the restaurant. This newfound connection to his family's land sparked a passion in Giorgio, one that would fully come to fruition in 2001, when he decided to dedicate himself to viticulture and winemaking fulltime.

Today, the estate spans 7 h of vines and 3 h of olive trees spread out over 3 sites. Plavina, Moscato, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc are planted for whites, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Refosco for red. Two of the sites are walking distance from the Clai household; here, the heavy clay soils are surrounded by foothills and mountains, and produce the *Ottocento* bijeli (white) and *Ottocento* Crna (red). Vines are 10 to 16 years old, all planted/replanted by Giorgio himself.

4 km from Krasica, the lieu-dit *Sveti Jakov* is home to Giorgio's oldest vines and most unique terroir. Here, the site's proximity to the Adriatic heavily influences the vines, resulting in a much more mineral, saline style of wine. Both a *Sveti Jakov* bijeli and crna are produced.

Chemicals have never been introduced to the family vines or the winery; Giorgio's goal has always been to produce a celebratory beverage to share with those around him, "*the way my grandparents made it*". The *Sveti Jakov* vineyards were purchased in 2003, and converted to organic viticulture from day one. All of the wines ferment off their native yeasts and minimal doses of sulfur are added only at bottling.