

Costadilà

Prosecco from Venetian producers Costadilà.



Ernesto Cattel. Photo by Lauren Feldman.

Profile

Costadilà ('the hillside over there') was founded by Ernesto Cattel and a group of partners in 2006. Though Ernesto has now quit his full time job to focus entirely on the operation, everything started as a labor of love. The Costadilà project's goal is to valorize and rejuvenate Tarzo's rich agricultural traditions by reintroducing natural farming to the region. The scope goes well beyond wine, with a strong emphasis on polyculture: a farm where vines, fruits, vegetables, cereals and livestock coexist on the same plots of land. Completing the cycle, the produce grown from Costadilà land is then used and sold in local businesses. By creating this "model farm" for the region, Ernesto and his partners hope to show a successful example to other farmers trapped in a monoculture economy.

Everything at Costadilà is farmed organically. As far as the wines, they are fermented with native yeasts until completely dry, then bottled with must made from passito grapes they dry themselves for secondary fermentation. No sulfur is used at any point in the vinification. Each bottling is named in accordance to the site's elevation (330=330m, etc...).

The four traditional grapes of Prosecco, Glera, Prosecco, Bianchietta and Verdizo, are grown and used to make wine. The three lesser known varieties used to be widespread in the area, often blended together to make the region's famous sparkling wine. But in an all too common scenario, farmers began to realize that Prosecco was more prolific and high yielding, and began tearing out

their remaining vines to replant the more productive varietal.

Visits

This visit at Costadilà took place in April, 2012.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Lauren Feldman, Shawn Mead and Ian Becker.

From our hotel in Conegliano, we were immediately greeted by Ernesto Cattel, the brainchild of Costadilà.



He easily recognized us since we were the only obnoxious, loud Americans screaming in English.

For the most part, we here at Louis/Dressner haven't put up too much info on Costadilà (check out their [meticulously detailed profile](#)), so I'm glad that we can finally shed some light on what Ernesto has been doing since 2006 (the first wine was in 2007). The Costadilà project is the combined effort of Ernesto, Mauro Lorenzon (who owns the famous Osteria Mascareta in Venice), their oenologist Leonello (didn't catch his last name) and a few silent partners/investors; it's truly a labor of love, since all three currently have full time careers. The goal is to valorize and rejuvenate the rich agricultural traditions of [Tarzo](#) by reintroducing natural farming -however small the scale- to the region. The scope of the project goes well beyond wine, and emphasizes polyculture: the long term goal is to have vines, fruits, vegetables, cereals and livestock coexist on the same plots of land. They hope that by creating this example, they can create a model farm for the region, so other farmers who are trapped in monoculture can see the way out. Completing this cycle, the produce grown from Costadilà land is then used and sold in local businesses, such as Osteria la Muda where we had dinner.



Nestled in the little mountain village of [Cison di Valmarino](#), Osteria la Muda is one of the oldest restaurants in Italy, dating back to the 1470! When the last owner decided to sell the space, Ernesto and 6 other partners didn't hesitate to remodel and keep this landmark alive. They are currently touching up the upstairs and planning to open an agriturismo. Also, the place is open till 1am almost every night.

The next morning, it was time to visit the first of many vineyard sites.



Our first stop was a completely isolated plot, only accessible by a single dirt road. Tucked away in the mountains, this little area has a rather interesting history: up until the early 70's vines had been grown here, but when the owner retired no one wanted them and the land became abandoned. It was then taken over by a [German hippie](#) commune. Then they left, and nothing really happened until Ernesto saw the terroir's potential and decided to replant vines two years ago. These vines are coming from 6 different clones, all in selection massale, and are a mix of the four traditional prosecco grapes (Glera, Prosecco, Bianchetta and Verdizo, but more on that later). The soil is composed of clay with a marn subsoil at 15-20 meters.



Ernesto is replanting the vines exactly where they were originally located in the 1970's.