

Cantina Giardino

Visits

This visit at Cantina Giardino took place in November, 2013.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Eben Lillie.

Before I start this recap, can we all agree that Antonio and Daniela di Gruttola's dogs look like they're up to no good in these pictures? I mean, seriously:



Look, they're even whispering evil things to each other!



They were actually super nice, but because they are hunting dogs, needed to be contained or they'd

kill everything non human/dog in sight. Animal instincts, you know...

After getting a little lost, Daniela came to get us and we stepped into the lovely di Gruttola abode. The first thing Eben spotted was this original piece of art that later served as inspiration for the ["Clown Oenologue" label](#).



I know 95% of people hate clowns, but even I have to admit that that is a seriously cool piece.

Antonio was teaching at his school (his full time job), and Daniela informed us he would get back at

around 3. So we had a big ass lunch while we waited, which also permitted us to taste all of the currently bottled Giardino wines. Amongst them, new liter bottlings of both red and white were pretty awesome (and cheap!), but the favorite new guy was a Pet' Nat' Greco sourced from 80+ year old vines. Antonio and Daniela recently started renting this parcel from an 86 year old woman who has always made this wine with her "special technique", which as far as we could tell is *méthode ancestrale*, a style nary if ever produced in Italy.

Antonio eventually showed up, and because our daylight time was quickly dwindling, we all hurried into the di Gruttola's van to visit some vines.



The vineyard is 2,5 hectares, and 250 plants. It's planted in Fiano and Coda di Volpe, the latter translating to "*tail of the fox*" [because of the variety's very long, atypical bunches](#).

The vines themselves are extremely tall.





To give you a better idea just how big these are, here is 6'3 giant Eben Lillie standing next to one.



Antonio and Daniela bought this vineyard a few years ago. It totals 2,5 hectares of vines (the surrounding woods were also purchased to keep it a clos), was planted in 1933, and the soils consist of a very compact, sculpt-able clay with limestone subsoil.



This clay is SO sculpt-able that Daniela now makes all of the estate's hand-made amphoras from it (more on that later). The di Grutolla's never work the soils of any of their vineyards.

As the sun was setting, we cracked open two more of those frizzantes to celebrate.



That's some dramatic imagery right there! Very majestic...

By the time we got back to the cellar, it was already pitch black.



The Cantina Giardino cellar is rather small, but still chock full of every wine aging vessel you could ever imagine.





In the cellar, we tasted a plethora of 2013 Fiano's and Greco's with varying amounts of skin contact, as well as a bunch of yet to be released Aglianicos. From what I could gather, it seems like the decisions are very instinctual and change each vintage, meaning that the juices ferment in different

vessels each year, the skin contact varies from wine to wine, as do the blends.

The wines we didn't get to taste were in these sealed, home-made amphoras.





These are sealed in beeswax, and cracking them open to taste would expose the wine to a dangerous amount of oxydation. It's kind of like a pressure cooker: you just need to let the contents do their things and until it's ready, and trust it'll be good.

Our final conversation revolved around the beautiful labels that people are always going apeshit about. Daniela explained that the first 3 (*Le Fole*, *Drogone* and *Nude*) were done by 3 different artist friends, who then put them in touch with others to do future labels. The name of each cuvée inspires the art or vice versa.

"There is no real rhyme or reason to it."