La Biancara-Angiolino Maule

La Biancara di Angiolino Maule in Gambellara.

The Maule family. Photo by Alex Finberg.

Profile

What force of nature brought Angiolino Maule to the vines? On meeting him, you would swear he was born to it, that he breathes it, that the vineyard is deeply a part of his soul. A man of true conviction in viticulture and viniculture, Angiolino actually started his working life as a *pizzaiolo*, or pizza maker, of some renown in Italy. But the earth and the vines were calling him all the while. Through his hard work and sterling reputation, Angiolino was able to save enough money to start his winery. He chose Gambellara and, principally, the Garganega grape to make his magical music in a glass.

Gambellara is ostensibly the extension of the Soave foothills in Veneto into the adjoining province of Vicenza where the wine changes its name, but not its general composition. The principal white grape is Garganega backed up with small amounts of Trebbiano. These hills are volcanic in origin, and have rich, dark mineral soils with good amounts of fine clay. They are south facing slopes that are protected from the blasts of Alpine northern winds by the southern Dolomites. The altitude here is between 150 to 250 meters.

Angiolino's estate, in the hamlet of Biancara, now covers about 9 HA. For more than 16 years now,

he has plowed in his vines and not used any soil treatments, chemical or otherwise. Using biodynamic viticultural practices, Angiolino has created an organic, living soil and ecosystem for benefiting the health of the vines and their resistance to any form of malady. He is unwavering in his belief that great wines are the result of healthy, beautiful, handpicked fruit, and the only way to achieve this is through natural processes.

Furthermore, he believes that the work in the cellar -- vinification, aging and bottling --must be consistent with the work in the vines and involve no additives that compromise the natural fruit material, for better or worse. The vinifications are conducted without temperature control, the addition of sulfur, enzymes or yeast and without the use of fining or filtration. Annually the production is between 35 to 45K bottles.

"*The wine is the fruit of the earth transformed by mankind; it is the oldest natural beverage known to us. The quality of a wine is that which is imparted by the vineyard; it is indispensable to return to a viticulture and viniculture without chemicals in order to make wines that are expressive of their origins, unique and inimitable and that rise above the standardization and homogeneity that defines the majority of wines commercially available today.*"
-Angiolino Maule.

Wines

"I Masieri" Bianco and Rosso:
The white is made from the grapes of the second pass in the vineyard (the first being the grapes selected for the other cuvees) and from the less evocative vineyard sites. It is vinifed in stainless steel with no skin contact and bottled in May or June of the following year with a minimal amount of sulfites added before bottling to stabilize the wine for travel.

The red is made from his own grapes and some purchased grapes (Angiolino is active in the practices used in the source material's vineyards) and is a blend of varying amount of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Lagrein depending on the year. Detailed percentages can be found on the back of the bottle. The vinifications are done in open wooden vats with punching down 3-4 times a day for 12-15 days and 10 more days of skin contact before the initial racking. The wine is aged partly in stainless and in large wooden barrels. It is assembled in February and bottled early to capture the fruit and its easy-drinking style.

Sassaia:
White wine made of 80% Garganega and 20% Trebbiano from better vineyard sites is mineral rich. The fermentation in stainless steel without temperature control that normally peaks at 22-26 degrees F. It is bottled in April/May of the following year without fining or filtration. Often, part of the bottling is done without the addition of any sulfur (the wine we normally choose) and another bottling with a minimal dose of sulfites.

Pico:
Pure Garganega which is heavily selected on harvest and begins its fermentations in open vats without additions or temperature control for 2-4 days. It finishes its fermentation in large 1500ltr barrels (none new) for 12 months. It is bottled without fining or filtration.

Recioto di Gambellara:
Angiolino's pride and joy. A desert wine made from dessicated Garganega grapes. The fresh grapes are hung vertically on large moveable screens and exposed to the drying winds until the month of December. (In most cases, other winemakers use flat horizontal plastic caskets which do not allow for the grapes to be free of surface contact with the plastic. Angiolino does not agree with this technique.) The grapes normally reach a potential of 33 to 37 degrees and are fermented on their skins in open vats for around 20 days in a way that reinforces the natural microbial flora. (Angiolino

has tried using buried amphorae in the past, but has not been completely satisfied with the results.) At this time the natural yeasts on the skins of the grapes are less numerous and viable because of the winter cold. So Angiolino takes a small part of the must to a warmer place, the yeasts activate and he then adds it back to the larger mass of must. After pressing, the wine goes into 1500ltr barrels for 8-9 months and the alcoholic fermentations stop between 14-16 degrees. Three years after the harvest, it is put in bottle.

"Cana'":
A wine made from Cabernet Sauvignon 80% Merlot and 20% from predominantly clayeycalcareous soils in Berici (20 km south of Gambellara). Spontaneous fermentation with the skins in open vats for 15-20 days.

The wine is then aged in 1500 liter oak barrels for eighteen months. Bottling is done without clarifying treatments or filtering two years after harvest.

"So San":
The vines are planted on very calcareous & clay soil with white rocks of marine sedimentary origin.

After the harvest (early September), the grapes are crushed and fermented with the skins for approximately 15 days, then the wine is drawn off and aged for 18 months in 1500 liter casks.

"Taibane":
Pure Garganega late harvested in late November or early December directly in Taibane. Normally a good part of the berries are botrytized with aromas of overripe fruit. Spontaneous fermentation in old casks for about three months, where it remains with the lees for three years.

The wine is bottled without any clarification or stabilization treatments. This wine is only produced in more favorable years with less humidity in the months of October and November; this way the grapes remain healthy and intact on the vine. So far this wine has only been produced in 1991,1996,1999 and 2000.