

La Biancara-Angiolino Maule

Visits

This visit at La Biancara took place in November, 2011.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Alex Finberg.

When we arrived to la Biancara, we were a little shocked to see one of the Maule dogs hanging out on the roof.



Angiolino was off harvesting his olives, which he uses to make oil for personal consumption, so his son Francesco gave us a tour of the vines.



With the exception of a few rows, every vine of the estate has been planted by Angiolino over the years in [Guyot](#) as opposed to Soave traditional [Pergola](#). When I asked why, Francesco answered: "quality". While Pergola vine tending is used in hotter climates to protect grapes from the sun, Francesco explained that in the case of Garganega, the main grape grown at the estate, the grape does not benefit in any way from this type of vine tending, and growers hide behind this excuse because Pergola vines are much more productive, resulting in higher yields.



For those who don't know, Angiolino is the founder of [Vinnatur](#), what I consider to be the most forward thinking and progressive association dedicated to "natural wine". Vinnatur is more than a group of vigneron working in the same way: it's an institution dedicated to exploration, research

and analysis of what goes on in the vineyards -and most importantly in the soil- in order to find reliable and proven methods to work as naturally as possible. Francesco told us their ultimate goal is to eliminate mildew and oidium in order to stop using copper and sulphur treatments, which he and his father feel are the final step to producing 100% natural wines.



Francesco showed us a small plot of six rows that is funded by Vinnatur; in each row a different technique is used (he didn't elaborate further) in order to observe the results and report back to a laboratory in hopes of finding an answer. While they're still searching, one thing is certain: this answer lies in the soil.

Francesco explained that vines have only suffered from chronic illness like mildew and oidium since the beginning of chemical warfare, the very same technology that ultimately led to the creation of all chemical products used in industrial agriculture today. In just 70 years, the soils have completely shifted in their composition, and while Angiolino and Vinnatur hope to find out why and rectify this, he acknowledges that even if they do, we have many generations of work ahead of us to bring the soil back to its' original state.

Francesco then showed us their new cellar at the very top of a beautiful hill surrounded by the family's vineyards. The installation is completely solar powered, and is much more spacious than the one currently used. They also plan to build a tasting room and a kitchen for parties, and maybe have the top floor converted to a bed and breakfast. 2012 will be the first vintage produced here.

Well, that's not entirely true, as the Maule's have begun using a specifically designed open air room to hang the grapes that will become this vintage's Recioto.



Francesco says that this room is much better than the one they were currently using, because the elevation provides a more steady and constant wind which greatly benefits the drying of the grapes.

We ended our visit by tasting some 2011 barrel samples, currently bottled releases and a special treat no one knew existed:



Angiolino loves Chenin Blanc and planted 3 rows of it for fun. It was a very unique expression of the variety to say the least.