

Danila Pisano

Rossese di Dolceacqua from Danila Pisano.



Danila Pisano in her vines. Photo by Kevin Mckenna.

Profile

Danila Pisano founded her estate in 1990 with the goal to restore her ancient family estate of vineyards and olive groves. Believing in traditional methods, she immediately began to work organically and has been certified since 1996. She works exclusively with the Rossese grape, a variety native to Western Liguria.

Vineyards are at an altitude of 150-250m with southwest exposures. Vines are terraced and supported by the traditional stone walls (behold her rolling a cigarette in the vines above); this promotes ventilation and keeps the grapes healthy.

Introduced to this region in the 13th century (most likely from France), Rossese di Dolceacqua is named after the Ligurian village of Dolceacqua, known for its beautiful castle ruins. The vines are traditionally grown in "trees" so that during the summer the top of the plant shades its foot and root, protecting them from the sun during the hottest hours.

Danila's Rossese wines are full of charm...ruby red with delicate aromas of rose, violet and currants. The normal cuvée is from the vineyards that she and her partner Tino own. The Savoia cuvée is from a beautiful terraced vineyard of old vines the they rent, also pictured above.

Visits

This visit with Danila Pisano took place in November, 2012.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Josefa Concannon.

After saying goodbye to Antonio Perrino, we drove up to the village of Soldano, home of [Danila Pisano](#)! The single mountain road to get there was full of upward twist and turns, and the further along we went, the more remote it felt. We were trailing Kevin, and after losing him I couldn't help but feel like we were in the [beginning of a horror movie](#).

Fortunately, we arrived unharmed and were greeted by a joyful Danila hanging out at the cafe with her long time boyfriend Tino.



Because it was later in the afternoon and the vines are a 20 minute drive out, we proposed that the couple hop into one our cars and show us the way. Tino laughed heartily and told us there was no way what we were driving could make it up there. He was not kidding! The drive in Danila's 4x4 was full of super sharp turns and one of the steepest I've ever experienced. There were points when we were on a 60% incline!

Danila and Tino parked the cars, and from there it was a short walk to one of the most peaceful vineyard sites I've ever experienced.





From the vineyards, you can spot the beginning of France.



The estate consists of 0.8 h of vines spread over three different sites in the Val Verbone valley, all in Rossese. The vines are actually from Tino's family, and were inherited when his father retired. Tino has always worked in highway maintenance, but decided with Danila to start cultivating the vines and making wine in 1996. They immediately converted the vines to organic viticulture. The parcel we visited is exposed Southwest, and though it felt much higher, at 250 meters elevation.

They are also beautifully terraced, which has always been the tradition around these parts.

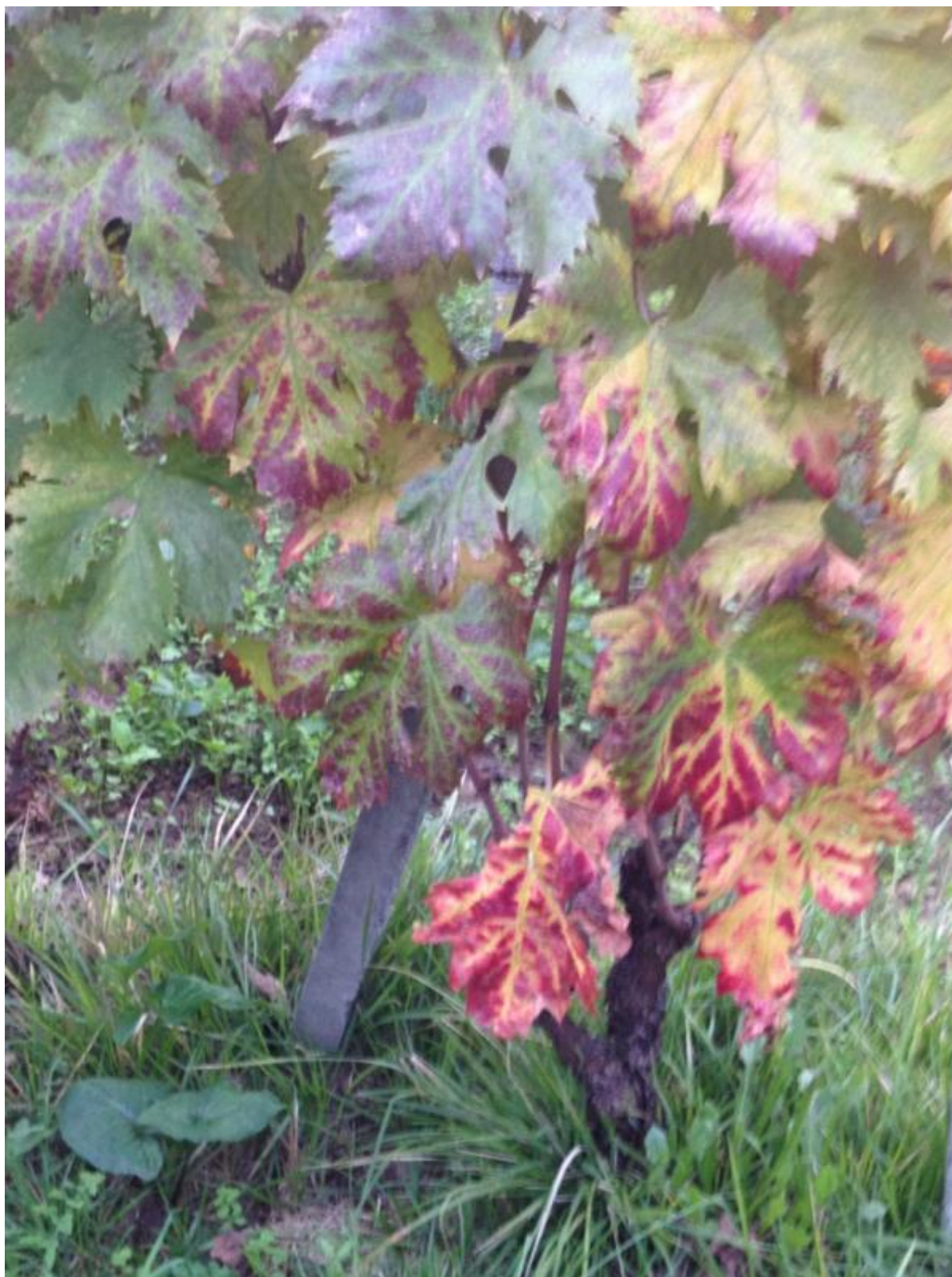






The terraces were built in 1933. The soils consist of 40% sand, 40% clay and 20% limestone. All the vineyard work is done by hand, but they have a small tractor for transportation. The vines are all trained in *albarello*.





It's hard to tell from the pictures, but the rows are on very steep hill. I think this one with Denyse looking like a superhero (with Lee as her sidekick) gives you the best idea of the steepness.

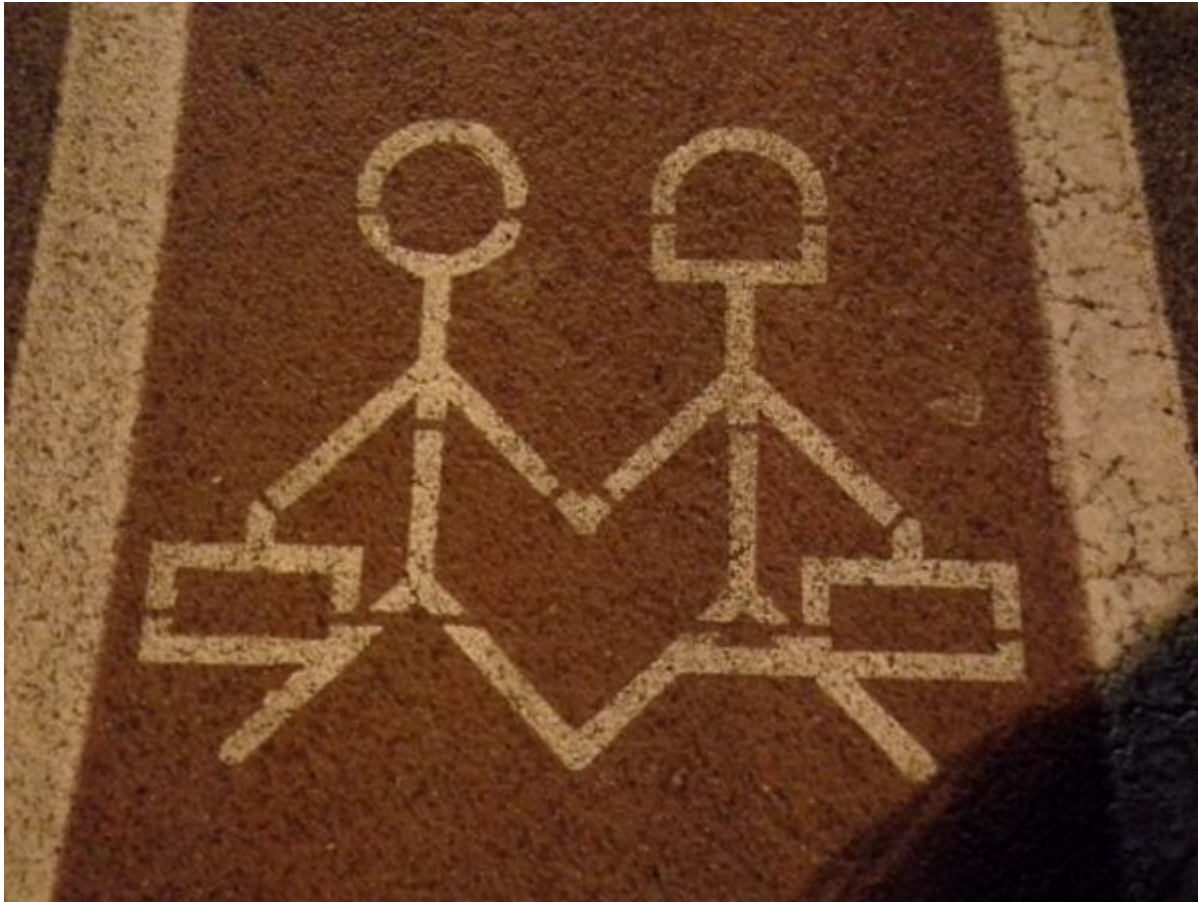


After visiting the vines, we drove back to Soldano to taste the recently bottled 2011's. They were incredibly good. Both cuvées are vinified the same way: 8-15 days maceration in stainless, then racked and hard pressed. Fermentation usually takes 10-15 days, also in stainless steel. "*Savoia*" is a selection of the best grapes from their best site. It's the best!

With the 1978 Testalonga fresh on my mind, I asked if there were any back vintages to taste. At first Tino was hesitant, as he truly believes that the wines need to be consumed within two years. Nonetheless pulled out a 2006 for us to try. And you know what? He was right. The wine hadn't completely fallen apart, but had none of the vibrancy and brightness that I'd come to expect.

Fortunately, the wines are so good young that they get drunk up promptly!

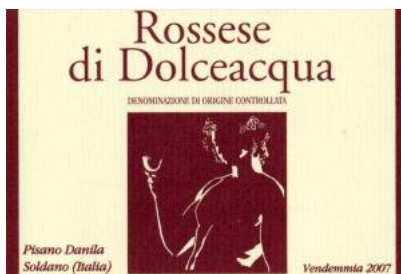
As we left, this painted sign on the road caught my eye.



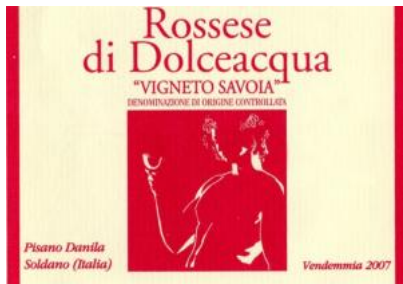
I don't know, I just found it funny that the girl basically looks like a shovel.

After saying goodbye, we drove to Sanremo, gambled the night away, drove to Nice the next morning and flew back to our respective cities.

Wines



D.O.C Rossese di Dolceacqua



D.O.C Rossese di Dolceacqua "Vigneto Savoia"