

Luciano Saetti

Visits

This visit with Luciano Saetti took place in November, 2013.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Eben Lillie.

Luciano Saetti doesn't like sulfites. In fact, he owns a **Sulfite-Free Mobile!**



That translates to: "*Wine Without Conservatives. Sulfur? No thanks.*"

Luciano bought his vineyards and house in 1988, after a successful first career as an egg distributor in the city of Modena. He made a good amount of money and originally planned on buying a nice apartment in the city, but the reality of spending the rest of his life there quickly lost its appeal.

We began our visit with a tour of the cellar, where the wines ferment and get bottled.



This is Luciano's completely home-made disgorge station.



To give us a demonstration of the disgorging process (more on that later), Luciano grabbed some

bottles and put them in this vat of ice cold water, which freezes the lees on the top.





As those bottle tops started to freeze, Luciano showed us the rest of the cellar.



At this point, he only works with stainless steel. Originally, everything was fermented and aged in cement tanks, but Luciano shifted to stainless after realizing that it was better for sulfur free winemaking, as it drastically reduces oxydation.

Since the vines are 10 km from the the cellar, Luciano brings the mini de-stemmer you can see below with him to the harvest. This way, they can work as quickly and efficiently as possible.



He also brings 3 of those little stainless vats to hold the grapes so they don't get too hot on their way to the cellar.

"I came up with this simply because 3 vats is a day's work".

These smaller tanks are also used for fermentation, a full carbonic maceration that lasts 4 to 5 days. Luciano usually leaves 13 or so grams of RS before racking. The wine then stays minimum 3 months in bottle before disgorgement, though it only takes about a month for the re-fermentation in bottle to occur.

Following our little chat on vinification, Luciano beckoned us over to the disgorgement station, where he showed us how he manually disgorges each bottle of his production ONE BY ONE.

In those two minutes, Luciano explains how he usually puts some wine in a separate vessel to top off the other bottles, that you have to avoid the frozen bits from when the wine sprays out, that the machine gives a blast of air which doesn't go in the bottle, and is just for dusting off any cork particles. He also points out that these bottles haven't frozen enough yet, and therefore won't disgorge correctly.

Because manually disgorging bottles one by one quickly becomes a tedious task, Luciano has built this sweet homemade work chair from a horse saddle. I decided to check its comfort to make sure he wasn't putting too much strain on himself.



That chair is JULES APPROVED.

After our cellar time, we drove to Luciano's only vineyard, 3 ha planted in the local Salamino strain of Lambrusco.



The oldest vines here are 50+ and planted every other row; Luciano replanted the rest in 1997. The soils are limestone with a clay subsoil.

As you may have noticed, the vineyard is set up with an irrigation system, which Luciano uses 3 to 5 times a year, and only on the younger vines (usually with a very light 30L dose each time). He doesn't use any fertilizers, composts or chemicals, just the remains of cut grass.

There is always the danger of frost in the Spring, but Salamino is a late variety, so this is rarely a problem.

The training system is called *Spalliere*, which is more typically used for fruit trees.



Here's some shriveled up second growth grapes to give you an idea what Salamino looks like.



Here's the church you can see on Luciano's labels.





Speaking of Luciano's labels, if you've ever seen or felt them, then you know they are made from a very cool fabric. Here again, the story is simple: his friend has factory that adds patched fabric to clothing for a few major brands. Luciano asked him if he could make a wine label, and he said it wouldn't be a problem. These are made to order based on Luciano's periodic disgorgements over the year.