

Chinati Vergano

Visits

This visit with Mauro Vergano took place in November, 2012.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Jake Halper and Josefa Concannon.

Tucked away in a small alley street in the heart of Asti, you will find Mauro Vergano's magic laboratory. Mauro has very little room to store the base wine, which stays in the stainless tanks pictured above. He drives over to each estate to grab the base wine right before they bottle their own. To reiterate: the *Chinato* is produced from [Giuseppe Cortese](#)'s Nebbiolo, the *Luli* from [Vittorio Bera & Figli](#)'s Moscato, the *Americano* from [Cascina Tavijn](#)'s Grigolino and the Vermouth from [Cascina Degli Ulivi](#)'s Cortese and the Bera's Moscato.

These little guys hold Mauro's herb and spice concoctions.





Mauro sources his herbs from 3 different suppliers, and the only ingredient he picks himself is chinotto, a bitter citrus rind. On average, he picks 20-30 k of the fruit at the end of September, then peels and cuts them himself. Chinotto is smaller than a clementine, and apparently doesn't taste very good.

In the moment we had all been waiting for, Mauro opened his closet of secret ingredients, many of which you can see in the following picture:



All of the herbs and spices are kept together. Many of these are very hard to obtain, because they are protected when grown in the wild.. But Mauro has a friend who knows all the guys who go to the mountain, and they get him everything he needs on the low-low.



We got to smell many different types of absinthe (or wormwood), which really burns your nose if you sniff it too hard. We also smelled cumin, sage, cloves, oregano, and bark from the bahamas! After our scratch-n-sniff tasting, Mauro surprised us with a new experiment: a Ruché Chinato! It was very sweet, and he joked it was a "*Chinato for girls*". In this case, he used a mix of the extract used for the *Chinato* and *Luli*.

Before leaving, we got a little history lesson. Mauro showed us the **original** Chinato recipe from a century ago, scribbled on an old piece of paper. You see, Mauro's uncle's father was a barman, and always had fun messing with recipes. After many years of tinkering around, he came up with the

base for how all Chinato is made today. His name was [Giulio Cocchi](#), a name you might recognize since it was trademarked many years ago, and is one of the biggest producers of Chinato and Vermouth in Italy.

"I have the original recipe! I don't think the current owners even have it!".