

Cà de Noci

Interview

This interview with Alberto Masini took place during Vini di Vignaioli in Fornovo in November, 2011. It was conducted by Kevin Mckenna and translated by Pietro Straccia.

Tell us about Cà de Noci's history.

We started eighteen years ago, in 1993. At the time, the only grape planted in our area was Lambrusco, which was being produced mainly by large, commercial wineries. Mass produced Lambrusco! When we decided we wanted to work under an artisan model, we weren't quite sure what was possible or not, because other varieties had been abolished from our region's vineyards.

Ten years ago we started to replant Lambrusco, but more importantly we began planting other native varieties that had been abandoned throughout the years: Spergola, Lambrusco di Montericcho, Marbo Gentile and Sgavetta. Once upon a time, these were the traditional varieties of our area.

Choosing to work with these grapes also led to a reevaluation of our work as vignaioli, and we eventually decided to work the vineyard organically and to use simple methods of vinification in the cellar. This quickly led us to understand something very important: to make good wine, you need good grapes. To get good grapes, you need low yields.

The next big realization was that fermentation must be controlled with the least amount of manipulation as possible. This is much easier said than done, as it has taken us eighteen years to figure it out! I feel that we now do a good job with this.

Can you elaborate on the process of learning how to work this way (organics/low intervention in the cellar)?

It started with my father, who had the vineyards in the 70's. There was no cellar until 2000, when my brother and I decided to build one. This was at the same time we started replanting all the varieties I've just mentioned, so it's been a very slow evolution.

Initially we were only making frizzante wine, which is the local tradition. Our desire to make an authentic product led us to work with re-fermentation (secondary fermentation) in bottle, a tradition that had vanished since the industrialization of wine in our region (**note:** typically, mass produced Lambrusco is now made in the charmat method). This decision was key to our identity, because we were amongst the first to reintroduce it and work with the methods of our grandparents.

As time went by we were able to perfect these methods, and we were able to elevate rare varieties: Spergola in particular, but also the hill grown Lambrusco's, which are the Montericcho and Marbo Gentile. The various phases that the vineyards went through were not immediate; it took a very, very long time. In the end I believe the most important thing that we obtained was to give value to the land. We've brought back tradition and value to a land that had forgotten what that was.

What about the work in the vineyard?

It's the most important part. With organic production, you must control all phases of production. You cannot leave anything behind. You have to be present for everything, from the pruning to the harvest. Our work begins with good pruning and maintaining the land without fertilizers. It took us a long time, but we were able to find a perfect balance in the vineyard, which results in high quality grapes and very low yields. This allows us to vinify our wines with a fruit that is always very concentrated, very intense.

All the work in the vineyard allows you to work "organically" in the cellar and not use sulfites. There is simply no need to, because the fermentation develops sulfites naturally. These same sulfites actually protect the wine already. If I did not have a healthy fruit I would have a "sick" wine and I would have to use a lot of sulfur. This is not case.

How does Cà de Noci relate to the conversation of DOC, IGT?

There is confusion because no one is sure of what they want to do. The legislators, those who are in charge of creating these regulations, do not have a clear agenda. This is a problem for us.

We have chosen to go with Indicazione Geografica (IGT) because we want to assure the consumer that our origins and location are well understood. However, it is not important to have a denomination because it doesn't guarantee quality. It doesn't guarantee low yields per hectare. If I am under a DOC I could have very high yields.

We must always trust the farmer who tends the land. He's the only one who knows what's truly going on. This is who we should rely on as a testament to quality. Regulations and DOC's are made for industrial wines.

What do you think of terms like *Natural Wines*, *Vivacious Wines* or *Real Wines*?

Everyone uses their own name to differentiate themselves but in essence we are wine artisans. As long as you can drink a lot of what you're making in your own cellar, you're doing a good job.

What food do you recommend for your wine?

Emilia is the homeland of pork and also the homeland of pasta. Stuffed pasta: Tortelli, il Cappelletto; basically the Tortellino.

It's fun to be in the land of frizzante wines because we need to pair fatty foods with our acidity and vivaciousness. This a historical pairing that was born unknowingly and naturally. It works really well!

Aside from your wine are there other wines other regions that you like?

We grew up in the 80's. When we were 18, my brother and I would go around Italy to get an idea of other realities, of different places. We are lovers of Piemonte but also of Tuscany because it was THE legendary region for wine.

We also realized that in every region, there are many small producers that work very well, and little by little we have learned about these small regions. I can no longer say that I'm in love with only one region but of all regions and small, independently made wine.