

Casa Coste Piane

Prosecco from Casa Coste Piane.



Loris Follador. Photo by Alex Finberg.

Profile

Loris Follador is from a long line of farmers in Valdobbiadene. His family had vines on the steep hillsides when the flat areas of the valley were still pastureland and turnip fields and the main local industry was the nearby pottery and tile factories. Now those flatlands are full of vines, and commercial prosecco with a capital " P" -that insipid, slightly cloying, and frankly disgusting wine- is the main economy of the region.

Thanks to his father and grandfather, Loris and his two sons have never had to plant a vine. This is a good thing because their vineyards are absurdly steep and the soil is very shallow, hitting solid limestone or sandstone rock in a few centimeters. As a result, they have only 60 years or older vines, planted in high pergola on steep hillsides. In high season, the vineyards give the impression of a primaeval vine forest. The Folladors are well aware of this fortunate legacy and treat it with the reverence and respect it deserves. No herbicides, pesticides or fertilizers are used. It's impossible to plow here, but it's really not necessary with vines of this age; they've long ago found their sources deep within the stone formation below and are not in competition with any surface vegetation. The harvesting is, of course, by hand and would seem, especially in the steepest spots, near impossible. Most importantly, the focus on the vinification and the cellar work is to express, as simply and directly as possible, the potential minerality and the terroir of these vines.

Loris follows a tradition of winemaking that was handed down to him from previous generations without adopting any of the methods and "improvements" that followed the economic boom of the 60's, but with a certain regard for technological innovation. The grapes are immediately pressed using a pneumatic press (a relatively modern invention that is more efficient and allows for cleaner, fresher juice than a vertical press.) The must is then partially fermented and the lees and juice are separated and the lees cleaned through filtration. At one time a cloth membrane that resembles a very large tea sack was used, but these days they use a paper membrane. The cleaned juice and filtered lees are reintroduced together in bottle in the late winter and referment by early to mid-summer, creating its own bead and a carbon dioxide environment that prevents oxidation without the use of sulfur. There is no disgorgement, so the expired lees remain in the bottle adding further complexity, but also some cloudiness. The wine can be decanted off of the deposit or poured as is with its natural harmless turbidity. Either way, the flavor is unchanged and the minerality unmistakable.

This is a readily drinkable style of very dry prosecco that has backbone, breed and evident minerality.

Visits

This visit at Casa Coste Piane took place in April, 2012.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Lauren Feldman, Shawn Mead and Ian Becker.

Here at *Louis/Dressner*, we're dedicated to getting as much bang for our buck as we can from these trips, so the plan was to visit Loris Follador of [Casa Coste Piane](#) approximately five hours after landing in Venice. So after a 9 hour flight, we grabbed the rental cars and it was a two hour drive to

the lovely town of Conegliano. After an hour nap, it was time to drive to the famous village of Valdobbiadene!



I was excited, because if there's one thing I drank the most in 2011 (and the first third of 2012), it's *Coste Piane*. It never fails me, and I drink it almost every opportunity I get. It's gotten so bad that I was recently pulled aside by our *Self Consumption Director* Eddie Wrinkerman (**S.C.D**), who told me that I needed to leave some for the customers.

The visit began with Loris heartily greeting us, then almost immediately sitting us down in his dining room to taste Prosecco and eat lunch.



Food was not part of the plan, and everyone had just eaten in the anticipation of the visit. Well, everyone except me, who had napped instead (cause I'm smart). So after a 2010 bottle for the aperitif, a true feast began, which started off with this pan seared salami on a bed of local Friar's Beard.



It was delicious. Another fun thing was the opportunity to try Loris' new *Brichet* cuvée.



Brichet is a single vineyard of 50+ year old vines just outside of the village. Loris rents them from an old guy who recently retired, and they've been worked organically for years. The soils are composed of sandy limestone with red earth. *Brichet* is just as easy to drink as the base cuvée, but a little more structured, with pronounced minerality.

Having the group sit down for a meal gave Loris the opportunity to give us some insight on the estate. *Coste Piane* was founded by his grandfather; in those days, all sparkling wine from the village was made completely dry, with a *méthode traditionnelle* secondary fermentation in bottle. But at some point in Loris' lifetime, two major changes occurred: people began to develop a taste for a much sweeter style of Prosecco, and cave cooperatives began dominating local production. Today, almost all Prosecco is chaptalized and carbonated in the chermat method.

By the time Loris took over the estate in the late 70's, things were taking a turn for the worst. Since most vignaioli were selling their grapes to a coop, the more they had to sell the better, which led many to aim for the highest yields possible (Loris then explained that Prosecco vines are already incredibly high yielding, and that you really need to act responsibly if you want the juice to retain any complexity). And with the dominance of chemical agricultural practices that began post-war (which became the norm in the region in the late 70s early 80s), chemical fertilizers were incredibly popular to beef up yields. But Loris was unfazed: he's always worked the vineyards organically and made the wine naturally. When he started, only 3 producers in Valdobbiadene worked traditionally. Now there are about 20, which makes him happy.

After lunch it was time to check out the vines.





This is what the 60 year old vines look like:





We also checked out some incredibly beautiful 120 year old vines that are apparently still very productive:





While most have shifted to intensive monoculture, Loris continues to let grass, wild flowers and various root vegetables grow free. Free roaming chickens and ducks hang out in the vineyard.





Before swinging by the cellar to taste the 2011's, Loris had to play with his 3 month old puppy.





He was the softest dog I've ever petted in my life, and was adorably cute. The only scary thing was that he was teething and has these uber-sharp vampire dog teeth. He was chewing on everything he could (mostly Kevin's shoe and Ian's pant leg).

In the cellar, we got to taste the 2011's. As always, the wine is direct pressed, then racked to stainless steel and cold fermented until completely dry. The wine ferments in about 12 days then settles in tank for 4 months. A must (which is usually purchased) is then added to the wine and bottled immediately, where it referments in bottle. We tasted the 2011 before pre-must, and the wine was bright, intensely acidic and mineral, qualities that definitely carry over into the final product. Loris always bottles the wine right after Easter (so just a few days ago! Yay!), so that magic re-fermentation should be happening as we speak. We ended our visit by drinking two bottles of 2005 to see how the wine ages.

It ages well.

Wines



Prosecco di Valdobbiadene "Sur Lie" : Grapes are direct pressed, then racked to stainless steel and cold fermented until completely dry. The wine ferments for about 12 days then settles in tank for 4 months. A must (which is usually purchased) is then added to the wine and bottled immediately, where it re-ferments in bottle.