

Camillo Donati

Visits

This visit with Camillo Donati took place in November, 2011.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Alex Finberg.

We began our visit at Camillo's new cellar, which conveniently overlooks his vines. After tasting some 2011 tank samples, Camillo kindly explained his vinification process.

Everything begins in an old concrete tank from 1968 that originally belonged to Camillo's mentor Ovidio (the "Ovidio" cuvée, made with Corvina grapes, is named after him).



The tank has only ever been washed with hot water, and has accumulated over 40 years of tartaric deposits, which is one of the secrets of Camillo's process (the [Baudrys](#) do the same thing with their concrete tanks).



In this tank he makes a pied de cuve for each varietal. The juice remains in this tank for a maximum of 3 days for the whites and 7 days for the reds.

The rest of the grapes are then harvested, destemmed, pressed and placed in stainless steel vats on the skins. After fermentation, he racks off the gross lees but keeps the fine lees, which are essential for the wines to re-ferment in bottle. If the residual sugar is where he wants it to be (12-18 g per l), he leaves the wines as is, but since he lets them reach their maximum alcoholic fermentation, the wines are often dry so he blends it with his Malvasia Dolce.

This is the traditional way to make Emilia-Romagna Frizzante, but almost all producers in the area now use charmat method, which for Camillo completely defies the purpose of making this style of wine in the first place:

"Those who have settled for methode charmat are missing out on the beauty of life and have settled for monotony."

We then checked out the vines, which have all been planted by Camillo in Guyot on heavy clay soils.





We ended the visit by tasting the 2010's, which took longer than usual to referment and have just been released (they should just be getting to the States). We tasted the only way one should when drinking Donati: alongside local panchetta and aged Parmesan (a 24 month, a five year and a 10 year). The 2010's are spot on, particularly the Malvasia Rosa (with 5% Barbera) and the very lively and fresh Lambrusco.