

Elisabetta Foradori

Wines of the Dolomites from Elisabetta Foradori.



Elisabetta Foradori in her Teroldego vineyards. Photo by Alex Finberg.

Profile

How can one try to describe the wines of Elisabetta? It's easy to say that, in this case, the grape does not fall far from the vine or the hand that cultivated it. Foradori - immediately striking, gracefully elegant, discerningly tasteful, soberly serious while at the same time wry and playful, and above all always generous and sincere. Wait, is that Elisabetta or her wines? In fact, it could easily be used to describe one or the other.

Elisabetta's journey in her "wine life" is a familiar tale, but one that we never tire of hearing. The early death of her father unexpectedly hurtled her to the management of the family estate. Though "born among the vines" as she says, she took the helm at first more from a sense of duty than one of passion or vocation. Eventually, however, that passion and vocation came through the work itself, both in the vines and in the cellar. A path of questioning, experiment and intuition (that included everything from biodynamics, to massale selection and the use of amphorae) eventually led her to give up any sense of chasing market trends of the "wine industry" to develop the estate towards the goal of making wines respectful of the soil and the local grapes she wants to honor, and using the techniques she found more interesting, less invasive, and more wine "holistic".

In a lot of ways, she has come far, but we think, that for Elisabetta, like for other great grower/winemakers we are privileged to work with, it is a process, and one that doesn't necessarily end.

Interview

This interview with Elisabetta Foradori took place in Los Angeles in March 2011.

Tell us about your estate.

I live in the Dolomites, which is in the north of Italy, close to the Austrian border. A lot of mountains, a fresh climate; it's a place where the people are very much surrounded by nature and a bit closed off from the rest of the world.

Our region has a very interesting history with Austria. The area used to be under Austrian domination for 800 years, and many cultural traits remain, including agricultural work.

As for the wines, I work primarily with Teroldego, and indigenous varietal. I have around 18 hectares of it. For white I grow Nosiola, another local varietal, and Manzoni Bianco, a hybrid of Riesling and Pinot Bianco. Because of our history with Austria, Riesling found itself being planted in the area and this is how this varietal came to be. So I work mostly with Teroldego but in the last three years I've had a lot of fun making my whites because I feel these are relatively unknown varietals that have a lot of personality.

How did find yourself at the head of this estate?

I was born in the small village of Mezzolombardo. Our house is in the vineyards, and I was born there. My grandfather started the estate, and my father followed in his footsteps but died very young. I was the only child and had to take over. I had just finished high school; I started studying oenology

and took over at 20. At the time it didn't feel like a choice. It's not obvious being 20 and in this position; I struggled with it at first.

But even as a very young child, I always felt a very strong connection with nature. As a young girl I loved working the garden, playing in the forest... I had a passion for plants and flowers then, and I still have it now. And regardless of the ups and downs over the years, I am very grateful for what I have today.

What's the work like in the vineyards?

For a long time Foradori was a wine that didn't get much farther than Trentino. It was a local wine for local people to drink at the bar. Besides Damijan, not many wines left the Dolomites.

When I took over I wouldn't say I took over a tradition. Of course my land was linked to Trentino but it was more or less a disaster. Clones and mechanical work were the norm in the area and my father had done just that. The grapes made some perfectly fine table wine but not much else.

As a young oenologist I was taught that working industrially was normal, and at that point I didn't know any better. Eventually I realized what I was doing and decided to change everything. I replanted a large part of the vineyard with selection massales and everything eventually changed for the better. It was very instinctive and happened naturally and at my own pace.

Around the year 2000, I got tired of my work. I still think I was making very good wine, but it didn't speak to me. I took this as a sign that I needed to start over. This eventually led me to Rudolph Steiner's philosophies and biodynamic agriculture. A good friend in Alsace happened to have been working biodynamically for years and this was a big inspiration to me.

Are you certified organic or biodynamic?

Yes I am certified both, but I didn't do this just to put demeter on the label. Rather it permits me to meet and interact with a group of people who share a common philosophy in how they work.

I started working organically and biodynamically because I needed to move away from technical agriculture and cellar work. I am an advocate of science, but science without a philosophy is all technique and technique has no soul. It's a dry process; you're making wine but it has no connection to nature.

Do you have an opinion on "natural wine"?

The most important thing is to be a good farmer. You need to interact with nature in order to make a wine that symbolizes a region. And to do this you have to be proud of what you do. For me this is working the right way: with respect and knowledge of your land and your roots.

What food would you pair with Teroldego?

The food from the area is very simple. A lot of what we eat comes from the forest. We also make delicious cheeses. These might not sound like the best food pairings, but when you're here in the mountains, it just makes sense and everything tastes great together.

What's important to me is the feeling of the moment. Taste is personal. If the food or the wine or both is making you feel good, then go for it. A lot of people don't give themselves enough freedom

when it comes to trying something new. This is a beautiful thing.

What wines do you like to drink?

I'm a big fan of wines from the Mâconnais and Beaujolais: Morgon, Fleurie, Cote du Py...

For Italian I really like Nebbiolo. I think Italy is changing for the better right now. It's almost like a renaissance. People are working closer to nature and wines are becoming distinctive again. For example, I think it's great you that you can now find a pure, honest expression of Trebbiano in Italy.

Visits

This visit with Elisabetta Foradori took place in November, 2011.



Words by Jules Dressner, photos by Alex Finberg and Josefa Concannon.

This is my first time in the [Dolomites](#), and it's one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen in my life. As the photos prove, everything is a landscape, and it's no surprise Elisabetta's wines come from such an inspiring area.



After breakfast, we headed back down to Trentino to visit Elisabetta's main vineyard, home to 15 hectares of Teroldego. The traditional method of vine tending in the area is Pergola, but Elisabetta has progressively replanted all 15 hectares in Guyot from a selection massale of her best Pergola vines (a few rows remain untouched and go into the *Granato*).



Elisabetta's Guyot vines yield about 40hl/h while her neighbors' Pergolas average 150.

We also bore witness to neighboring vines already pruned and green harvested in early November! Essentially the vignaiolis are tricking the vines into thinking it's a different season (winter) so they shut down and hibernate early. In the Spring they kick start them back up with fertilizers which ultimately leads to, you guessed it, much higher yields. Elisabetta considers this a shame and a tragedy.



In the cellar, we got to taste some 2011 samples of whites and reds that had been fermented in tank and in amphora.



The amphoras that Elisabetta use are not the traditional Greek or Georgian kind and do not have any bees wax on the inside.



Only one Spanish producer makes a limited amount of these each year, and they are hard to come by.



Elisabetta has accumulated a serious collection of these, and they bring an unparalleled freshness to what could easily be much heavier wines.

After an extensive cellar tour, we went to check out the 3 hectares of vines Elisabetta rents.



This is where she grows her Manzoni Bianco and the Nosiola that goes into the two Fontanasanta wines. Fontanasanta is a lieu-dit which means holy fountain. Low and behold, there is it!

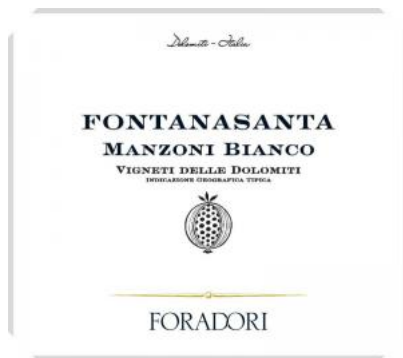


This is a very unique terroir for the area: limestone with a pink hue due to a very strong presence of iron.





Wines



I.G.T Vigneti delle Dolomiti "Fontanasanta Manzoni Bianco" **GRAPE:** Manzoni Bianco

LOCATION OF VINEYARDS: Hills above Trento, Fontanasanta

SIZE OF VINEYARDS: various vineyards, in total 3 hectares

6,000 vines per hectare (guyot)

SOIL: calcareous clay

VINIFICATION: fermentation, with one week of maceration in cement tank, followed by 12 months of aging in acacia casks.



I.G.T Vigneti delle Dolomiti "Fontanasanta Nosiola"

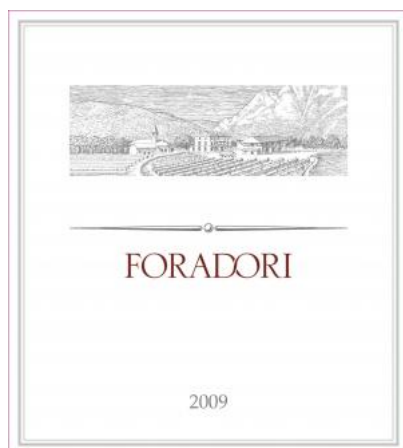
GRAPE: Nosiola

LOCATION OF VINEYARDS: Fontanasanta, hills above Trento

SIZE OF VINEYARDS: Two vineyards for a total of 2 hectares. 6,000 vines per hectare (guyot) -

SOIL: calcareous clay

VINIFICATION: fermentation with 8 months of maceration in amphora, followed by 2 months of ageing in acacia and oak casks



IGT Vigneti delle Dolomiti "Teroldego"

GRAPE: Teroldego

SOIL: stony alluvial soils with pebbles and gravel

LOCATION OF VINEYARDS: various single sites, in total 10 hectares.

VINIFICATION: Fermented in stainless steel tanks. Aged 15 months in wood and stainless steel.



I.G.T Teroldego Vigneti delle Dolomiti "Granato"

GRAPE: Teroldego

LOCATION OF VINEYARDS: Town of Mezzolombardo, Morei, Vignai, Sgarzon, Cesura, Regin

SIZE OF VINEYARDS: various single sites in total 5 hectares. 6,000 vines per hectare (guyot)

SOIL: stony alluvial soils with pebbles and gravel

VINIFICATION: Fermentation in large, open oak barrels. Aged 15 months in barrel.

Dolomiti - Trentino - Italia

2009

MOREI

TEROLDEGO

VIGNETI DELLE DOLOMITI

INDICAZIONE GEOGRAFICA TIPICA



FORADORI

I.G.T Teroldego Vigneti delle Dolomiti "Morei"

GRAPE: Teroldego

LOCATION OF VINEYARDS: Morei vineyard, Mezzolombardo, Campo Rotaliano

SIZE OF VINEYARDS: 1ha of the 2,5 hectares that make up the vineyard

6,000 vines per hectare (guyot)

SOIL: sandy with alluvial debris

VINIFICATION: 8 months of maceration in amphorae followed by 3 months of ageing in oak casks.

Dolomiti - Trentino - Italia

2009

SGARZON

TEROLDEGO

VIGNETI DELLE DOLOMITI

INDICAZIONE GEOGRAFICA TIPICA



FORADORI

I.G.T Teroldego Vigneti delle Dolomiti "Sgarzon"

GRAPE: Teroldego

LOCATION OF VINEYARDS: Sgarzon vineyard, Mezzolombardo, Campo Rotaliano

SIZE OF VINEYARDS: 1 ha of the 2,5 hectares that make up the vineyard 6,000 vines per hectare (guyot)

SOIL: sandy with pebbles and gravel up to 30 cm

VINIFICATION: 8 months of maceration in amphorae followed by 3 months of ageing in oak casks.