

Vittorio Graziano

Profile

Though Vittorio Graziano's family has always owned farmland and vines in the village of Castelvetro di Modena, his father made a living building and selling furniture. A "late bloomer" in regards to wine, Vittorio only started drinking at 18 to please his then girlfriend, who was a fan of the dry, sparkling reds of the area.

Working as an administrative accountant in his early 20's, Vittorio soon found himself miserable behind his desk. After a few years on the job and the daunting realization that it would take an additional 30 years working at the firm to reach his pension, he decided it was time to find an alternative life path. This was the late 70's, an era that coincided with an ever-increasing amount of Emilian producers abandoning the local tradition of making bottle-fermented, dry reds to instead produce a heavily chaptalized, sweet style. Instead of following this trend, Vittorio did the exact opposite.

With no formal training, the young *vignaiolo* began tending the .5 ha of vines from his family farm. This quickly proved insufficient to start an estate, so Vittorio began befriending the village's old *contadini*, asking them about their work methods, local varieties and which soils would be best to plant in. Heeding their advice, he started sourcing land and replanting vines, first a hectare in 1978, then another in 1981, then another in 1990, everything meticulously selected by massale from old vines. The acquisition of more farmland around his house in 1992 and subsequent re-plantings brought the estate up to approximately 5 hectares, where it remains today.

Though un-certified, Vittorio has never used chemicals in his vineyards. He refuses to use manure, opting for wild herbs and planted legumes to help aerate and diversify the soils. In the spirit of having as much diversity as possible (which benefits both the biodiversity of the land and the complexity of the wine), he grows about a dozen local grape varieties. With the exception of Trebbiano, Lambrusco Grasparossa and Malbo Gentile, he has no idea what their names are.

3 wines are produced: a sparkling white (*Ripa Di Sopravento*), a sparkling red (*Fontana dei Boschi*) and a still red (*Sassoscuro*). Both white and red grapes are de-stemmed, then fermented in fiberglass containers. For the sparkling wines, Vittorio racks the wine off the lees with about 10 g of sugar left before bottling them. A re-fermentation in bottle then occurs, usually within two to three months. The still red is aged in old barrels. Vittorio used to fine the wines with egg whites, but gave up this practice a long time ago.

Many consider Vittorio to be the *maestro* of traditional Lambrusco, and we are infinitely excited in sharing these with you.