

Alberto Tedeschi

Interview

This interview with Alberto Tedeschi took place at Fornovo during the *Vini di Vignaioli* fair in October, 2011.

Tell us about yourself.

I come from Bologna, a big city in Emilia-Romagna. In 2003 I started to work in an organic farm and vineyard. I learned a lot and in 2005 I started my winery. It's on a very small scale: I currently only work with 2.5 hectares of Pignoletto. It is a typical grape from the Bologna hills, and it's a bit strange: a white grape with very tannic skin, which you don't often encounter in our neck of the woods.

I was very lucky in finding the land I work. I met this guy who had a single hectare available in Monteveglio. It's a wonderful vineyard called *Spungola*. It's a very interesting vineyard because usually you have a lot of heat in the Bologna hills, but in *Spungola* you have a rare microclimate of hot days and cool nights.

After that, this same guy was able to find me another parcel on the top of the hill called *Bellaria*.

I was renting both the vines and the cellar up until very recently, but I've just bought my own cellar. Finally something that's mine!

I'm just getting started: my parents have other jobs, so I'm starting from scratch! We work organically in the vineyard, and it's very important for me to work traditionally in the cellar. And even though I'm renting my vines, I'm ok with that because they produce quality grapes and I can make the wines I want to make. These are fresh wines with great acidity, that can be drunk young, but can also age in bottle for quite some time. I am also proud to make GOOD territorial wine; most consider Bologna wine to be an industrial product, and most of the time they are right!

So what were you doing before 2003?

I went to school to study agriculture, but I didn't learn much! Unfortunately, it's a lot of theory and not enough practice. It's all ideas□

After that I started my apprenticeship at the organic farm mentioned earlier, and this is when I really started to get my hands dirty.

What state were the vines in before you started renting them?

They were already organic. Honestly I don't even know how to work with chemicals; I've never tried!

How involved are you with the vines?

I do everything! To be fair it's a very small operation, but I don't have any employees so it's a one man show. The vines, the cellar, it's all me. When I have time I sneak away to come to events like

this (*Vini di Vignaioli*) to sell wine!

What's the work like in the cellar?

Again, I only work with Pignoletto. I drive the grapes (which are in boxes) to the cellar in my van. I then do a direct press; Pignoletto is thick skinned and very tannic, so it's important to be gentle. After that I leave the juice outside overnight, then I rack it to stainless steel. The natural fermentation begins, then nothing! After three or four days, I re-rack the wine back to old oak barrels, where they stay on the lees for 12 months. That's for the *Bellaria*.

For the frizzante, the fermentation and aging is in stainless steel (almost a year). I take a bit of must (which hasn't fermented) I've kept in the fridge, and add it to the still wine, then I bottle. The sugar of the must then begins the refermentation in bottle. It's a really typical way of making wine in our region. In Emilia, we are not famous for rich, big wine. We are country folk! We make easy, drinkable wine made to enjoy in the moment.

But this is only the second vintage I've made the sparkling, and I plan on experimenting and ameliorating the process. It's a work in progress! I have so much to learn! I've only been making wine for 7 years, which in the wine world is nothing!

Your wine is labeled as I.G.T. How do you feel about the Italian system for categorizing wine?

I would love to make a D.O.C wine, but the people who decide what makes a D.O.C wine are the chemical and industrial producers. I prefer to make I.G.T wine or even *Vino di Tavola* because I can make the wine I want to make and still sell it. But in a perfect world, these would be D.O.C.G wines!

In theory I love the idea of A.O.C/D.O.C. It's very important to me to acknowledge where an agricultural product is from. But in Bologna, the D.O.C panel has made rules that better suit mass production: Pignoletto is THE local indigenous grape, but you can also make D.O.C Bologna wine with Sauvignon, Pinot Bianco, Chardonnay and who knows what else! For the red it's even worst: Cabernet, Merlot, Sangiovese, Barbera, etc. It's not territorial! It's a relatively new D.O.C too, so these rules were decided from the get-go!

Are there any local, indigenous red grapes in the area, and would you like to work with them in the future?

Yes! There is a lot of red wine in Bologna; the two local grapes are Barbera and Negretto, but in the last 100 years, Cabernet Sauvignon has really dominated red production. I've actually made 2000 liters of red from a small parcel of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in 2010. It was just an experiment, to see how I felt working with these grapes. I still don't know how I feel...

I really want to work with Barbera, but it's very difficult to find a good vineyard in Bologna with any Barbera. In the 60's and 70's all the Barbera was cut because it's wasn't as productive as Cabernet Sauvignon. But I'll always be looking!

As a young producer, how do you feel about the natural wine movement?

The wine and the terroir must speak for itself. I usually talk about about my work in the vineyards and in the cellar because the customer usually doesn't know of this type of wine, so for me it is important to explain, especially if you've only been exposed to chemical and industrial wine in the

past.

It's good to let people know something else is out there, but past that I let the wine speak for itself.

What would you recommend eating with Pignoletto?

I really like Bacalla with Pignoletto. It's a really good pairing with the *Bellarina*. Chicken, turkey, something spicy... Less fatty meats work really well.

What do you like to drink?

I'm a white wine guy. I'm currently obsessed with German Riesling. I really like the sweeter ones and how they manage to find a balance with the acidity and sugar.

French wine is also very inspiring: Chardonnay in Burgundy, Chenin in the Loire. Strong acidity and freshness are what does it for me: wines that are easy to drink but very complex in structure, body and balance.

And of course Emilia-Romagna wines! I drink a lot of Lambrusco, and white sparklings from Parma and Bologna.