



SCARBOLO

Autumn equinox 2024: scorching bliss

What. A. Summer! Hot, intense, and bright, it burned (figuratively and literally) right through.

On September 18th picking was ceremoniously concluded with the harvest of Refosco. We are beyond grateful and proud for the stars aligning and allowing us to pull through with all the trials and changes we had in plan. Sure thing is, it definitely did not feel this way at the end of June. By the time we shared our last letter, Spring's copious waterfalls had become a cause of concern. Since then, though, we experienced an almost total absence of rain for roughly three months. Our fears that this sudden switch might be a threat (with copious canopies struggling in extremely dry conditions) proved groundless as vines showed enviable resilience thanks to extensive root structures. Despite our challenging soil conditions for deep root development (clay-heavy topsoil and gravel-rich deeper profiles), in fact, we had to emergency irrigate only once and only one parcel, Bicinins, characterized by fair concentrations of gravels in the surface segment. We will not hesitate to irrigate again in the future should the need arise BUT the vintage's natural water intake is a key, defining facet of the terroir's expression and, as such, except for make-it-or-break-it circumstances, it must be preserved unaltered.

Trusting the process is essential. Although, at times, it can be heart-stopping. This year, faith was imperative at the beginning of fermentations: must acidities of 3-3,5 grams per litre were disheartening to say the least - more than scared, we were disappointed, thinking of how hard we worked during spring and summer to preserve acidities. How misplaced our lack of trust was! Yes, a little rise of the parameter during fermentation was expected, but acidities jumping to a range of 5,2-6,5 grams per liter as crystallized acids became soluble again turned into a feast of gratification for the entire team. A trial of Mepari pressed whole clusters carries the highest acidity of all, a joyful surprise.

Otherwise, heat has steadily taken the throne of the main challenge in the vineyards. While we have been implementing the use of kaolin for a few vintages now, for Pinot Grigio (a thin skinned grape) it's not enough of a protection anymore. So, this 2024 we tweaked the way we manage the canopy. With the complicity of this year's long lianas, classic folding on the top wire was challenging and problematic so we accompanied the branches down on the south / west side of the rows instead, tucking them on the bottom wire (akin to how one would hang sheets). Oh, how serendipitous: besides allowing us to fold effectively, this also resulted in less vegetation cramped on top (reducing mildew associated risks) and, most importantly, in additional shading on the side suffering most from sun exposure. Grapes in such conduct (some portions were folded traditionally as control groups) were sunburn-damage free.



Besides what above and some mid-veraison de-leafing on the east / north side of the Tocai Friulano and Refosco vineyards, that was pretty much it for summer operations in the fields. We did not thin grapes; first, because balance is set way before during winter and spring pruning, and second, because the little additional concentration that we might have obtained is something that a vintage such as this one does not require. All in all, this year's work blessed us with yields of about 30 hectolitres per hectare and a phenomenal quality of grapes.

All of the above resulted in a simple and rewarding cellar work. In terms of ripeness, aside from the acidities mentioned above, pH and sugars were exactly where we expected them to be: pHs ranging from 3,4 to 3,6 (being almost all of our wines macerated, either cold temperature or fermentative) and potential alcohol averaging 12,5% vol. Seeds were crispy and brown, skins were tonic, berries were immaculate. Anything below standard (i.e. fruit that suffered heat and dehydration) was sorted at picking. The perfect sanitary state of the grapes that entered the cellar gave us the most extensive freedom with clusters and musts in our minimal-intervention framework. Additionally, the more humane pace of picking (approximately 6 tons per day) was a mood booster and made work much more pleasant and satisfying.

We hand harvested all our parcels and part reached the winery in baskets (something we plan on expanding next year). Starting with Pipinot, where we are looking for a bit more structure, we ran a trial on a 2 tons batch that started fermenting in maceration, so we racked the must only when the cap was fully formed. This way, we achieved more extraction without forgoing drinkability and delicacy. Almost all of the wine will evolve in 20 hectoliters used barrels, where micro oxygenation plays a huge role in gifting complexity and roundness. Areore partially fermented in open tonneaux as whole clusters: so much texture will be a beautiful addition to the rest of mass. Meparì underwent a longer stabulation of two days, plus we ran the above-mentioned test of whole-bunch pressing: this wine remains our most exciting vinification of the vintage and we feel that we are close to finding the dimension that best represents our vision of what a white Pinot Grigio can be. We never had a Meparì like this one! As for Salvadi, we are so happy with the evolution of the 2023 that we decided to repeat the stems vinification for one tonneaux and the long maceration for another one; they will blend beautifully with the rest of the mass, which macerated, as usual, only for the duration of fermentation. Last but not least, Refosco: it started fermenting part whole-bunch and part, destemmed, after a cold maceration. Unlike previous vintages, it will then proceed to age in a 20hl barrel (instead of smaller casks). We are looking for elegance and delicacy and feel like we are on the right path.

To wrap things up, over the last two harvests we have nothing but reconfirmed how Pinot Grigio is by far the most delicate cultivar we grow. It's the one which requires most effort and care. And we are still baffled thinking of how on Earth it became entangled with high yields and cheap juice. Yes, it's the result of decades of industrial approach, flood-like yields, anticipated harvest and in-winery engineering to make up for the lack of everything, yet there is a degree of senseless masochism behind, since so many other varieties (wonderful ones) could better sustain such an approach.



Luckily, the wonderful work of some fellow pioneer vigneroni already reveals the true capacity of this cultivar and vintages like this one make us feel like we too can contribute to this puzzle with our own piece. With utmost dedication and never surrendering to compromises.

“Once you free your mind about the concept of harmony and of music being correct, you can do whatever you want.”

Giorgio Moroder

Mandi,

Lara, Mattia, Valter, Maria Grazia, Bujar, Shkelzen, Ziri, Sahahjan, Annalisa, the Arte della Vigna team, the Romeo team, and Anna