



SCARBOLO

Spring equinox 2024: Piove (ciao ciao ~~bambina~~ semino) reinterpreting Modugno's song title, translates to "It rains (bye bye darling seedling)"

Finally, the most symbolically beautiful days of the year: Spring blossoms! Daylight hours come to win over nighttime, the countryside's palette is again imbued with colors, and all is calmly fermenting – on top of that, yesterday was also our parents' wedding anniversary. 😊 Feels like the weather too has indeed realized it's season-changing time – when we started writing this diary, a week ago, we finally witnessed a much welcome change of pace: from the persistent showers that defined the barely ended quarter, accompanied by temperatures that felt more Autumn-like than winterish, to clear skies and dry breezes that whisper with optimism.

Rains dragged for almost the entirety of the three months past, shaping the season in its entirety and conditioning the works we planned in the fields. To sum winter up, some key facts: January will be remembered for its rains, almost double in comparison to the average of the past thirty years; hand in hand, average wintertime temperatures were 2°C greater than ever recorded. Overall, then, it's been a warm quarter with lots of rain. While we cannot do much in regard to the thermic conditions, it's up to us to preserve the water accumulation of this phase so that it can be functional in the coming weeks.

Given these circumstances, work progress – pruning, branch removal, and cane bending – has been much slower than we were hoping for, despite the reduction to today's 14 hectares under vine (compared to an historical almost 30). The choice to focus on fewer vineyards was driven by the wish to blissfully forgo a speedier pace of work and truly approach instead each and every vine with artisanal care.

Besides the new Chardonnay plot, spurred cordon trained, all our vineyards grow in guyot. As per our tradition, we pruned each vine down to two spurs and a single fruit cane, this year with some novelties: the branch that will yield grapes is now tied to the second wire, 20 cm higher than before, and the orientation is straight and parallel to the ground instead of bowed; the fruit cane is also shortened to a maximum of six gems instead of the historical eight. These choices were motivated by the following goals: 1) grant more permanent wood to each vine, for a more generous nutrient buffer (essential in lately drier vegetative phases), 2) increase the fruits' distance from the ground, hence reducing the greater phytosanitary risks associated to non-tilled underrow soils (we leave it grassed and folded, like a "living mulch", to preserve water, nutrients, and microbiome), 3) lower yields to a sustainable minimum for plants that nonetheless dig their roots in very fertile soils, and 4) redefine the aerial part of the vines with a straight bending of the cane, which will grant a more uniform ripening of the cluster area, and a knotting of the branch along the wire, so as to choke the lymphatic flow, lessening its push to the final lymph vessels, and grant vitality to the central ones as well, an issue especially for Pinot Grigio, Tocai Friulano, Chardonnay, and,



above all, Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso, all suffering from this non-conformity. This alone requires almost one and a half the time we previously spent on this task. With Refosco the procedure is even more laborious since we also curve a little hump at the beginning of the bent, favoring an even greater uniformity of flow.

We are slightly behind schedule compared to what we were hoping for, but the intermitted showers over the season have indeed meaningfully impacted our pace in the vineyards. Cane bending was the main task these last days of winter, now demanding even greater care since air is not as humid and wood is becoming more and more challenging to work. We are anyway proceeding swiftly since, to this day, the vegetative phase is roughly two weeks ahead of average, with some buds already showing the initial swellings.

Alas, the drier conditions we find above the surface are not yet matched in the ground. And this is perhaps our greater cause of discomfort: with a soil still generously wet, conditions are not yet favorable to sow the underrow and the stable meadows, and to plant the trees and bushes, all tasks we mentioned in the last diary. If it dries quickly enough, we will give absolute priority to the underrow essences, otherwise all will be postponed to the Fall. Nature sets the rhythm and we, peacefully, adapt.

On a brighter side, something is making us quite joyful: the layering of the Pinot Grigio seeds we prepared last harvest has ended and we have now sowed them in vases; we also cut roughly 300 branches from the better vines of Codis and planted them in vases. The former mark the beginning of our project to research new genetic material of Pinot Grigio, while the latter will be the first leading actors of a new vineyard we will plant ungrafted, hoping to finally reveal a more “integral” expression of this special cultivar.

Nonetheless, the greater novelty of this sleepy winter is perhaps a choice we made almost impulsively during the canonical tasting of the wines undergoing *élevage*: this year we will release two vintages, 2021 and 2022, marking the passage from three to two years of aging. 12 additional months in stainless steel add little to none to the character we seek to express in our wines, and we rather eventually favor a longer aging in the bottle instead. Moreover, the changes in how we handle the wines in the winery, which Lara highlights below together with details on both vintages, result in fewer traumas to the juices and hence a more proper readiness in less time.

Let's start with 2021. The vegetative phase commenced with a slight delay, courtesy of a colder end of winter, reminiscent of vintages long past. The initial slow down dragged on in the following seasons and, coupled with meaningful diurnal shifts, grapes highlighted the consequences of these conditions well: a paced and homogeneous ripening and a full and broad organoleptic patrimony, able to withstand the alcohol levels, on average 0,5% greater than our norm. What's in the bottle carries on the narrative: dense and substantial wines, balanced by an acidity slightly greater than usual (by a mean of roughly 0,5 g/L), and aromas marked by a delicate finesse. Co-fermenting, Areore is the perfect wine to exemplify the vintages' character: this year, an almost



perfectly aligned ripening of the three varieties allowed Sauvignon to stand tall and palpable with its aromas and characteristic mouthfeel. Overall, with this vintage, the identity of our wines is even more in focus, and yet many of the changes that became a driving practice in 2022 (and even more in 2023) here were barely in an embryo phase.

Vintage 2022 was quite different from the previous one and quite an unusual overall: slightly ahead of schedule in its vegetative phase, without hiccups in its developments in Spring and beginning of summer, worrisome at the end of the season, cooperative during harvest, and surprising (wine-wise) from the end of fermentations onwards. A very hot and dry climatic trend in the last month of ripening caused the vines to temporarily “shutdown”, halting their metabolic and physiologic processes, and serendipitously translating into a greater acidity in the wines. This acidic shoulder survived *élevage* wonderfully, thanks to lower than usual levels of potassium, gifting us with wines of remarkable freshness, beneficial to a long ageing. It was indeed a vintage that matched well the changes we introduced in the winery: low pH levels, great phytosanitary conditions, typical grape/must yields, lower than usual sugar levels – all contributed to favor the spontaneous fermentations of each *pie de cuve*, the work of the indigenous yeasts, and the ageing of the wines. This will all reflect in the bottles: it's not a coincidence that we decided, as hinted above, to release the 2022s this year. We find that the approach we implemented this vintage – which will also be the foundation for future ones – gave the wines greater autonomy in finding a balance in a shorter time; hence, we can already now enjoy a stage of readiness that we wish to “immortalize” by carrying it to the bottle. To give justice to the Areore reference above, this following vintage clearly highlights the Tocai Friulano aromas instead, with the aromatic precursors of Sauvignon tamed by the August climate, resulting in a lower tone in the wine.

2022 was also witness to a little revolution in the winery. With this vintage, in function of lower intervention, we put into effect meaningful changes, two above all: the end of clarification and of micro-filtration. After ageing for almost two years, most of which in oak, the wine has reached a balance we do not want to interfere with. An intervention now would impair the delicate, spontaneous dimension the juice found while whole and untouched. With a full malolactic fermentation occurred, there is no point for a micro-filtration; we just strained at 5 microns, with the simple goal of removing possible particles in suspension, such as specks of wood or fine lees the wine was resting on until right before bottling. We are thrilled for these fewer steps as we believe the wine can reach the glass in a more integral, harmonious, and well rested state, better representing our work.

As you know, for the time being we keep on releasing the Pinot Grigio *ramato* within 12 months from harvest, as a vintage witness and a village approach (while the others are *cru*). Hence, together with the 2022 vintage of Mepari, Areore and Salvadi, we will also release Pipinot 2023. For this wine, the matter is quite different: 2023 was, again, a very different vintage (and quite a challenging one); unlike the 2022s above, Pipinot preserved a relevant amount of malic acid which, on one side maintains some much-needed freshness in the palate, but on the other forces



us to make different choices. Since we do not force malolactic conversions, if the wine reaches bottling with high enough levels of malic to feed malolactic bacteria, we rather microfilter the wine and avoid risking secondary fermentations in the bottle. This choice is also dictated by the fact that the pH levels of this Pinot do not allow us to reach safe levels of molecular SO₂ with only minimal additions; the amounts of sulfur dioxide we would need to avoid this passage would be organoleptically much more impactful than a microfiltration.

We are working hard to improve on this front as we pursue a balance combining lower intervention with varietal and elegant wines. Following a very tough vintage, when some critical issues associated with climate changes revealed themselves like never before, our attention is devoted to finding a new balance where grapes anyway reach their full phenolic ripeness (hence never forgoing the fullness and texture identifying of our terroirs) yet keeping a greater focus on maintaining lower pH levels and greater acidity in the grapes, key elements in the winery for our goals. We will update you more on this in the next letter.

To wrap up this diary celebrating the start of a new season, I want to share a few words on what was a much more intimate Spring. In June last year I became a mom: my daughter, Olivia, was born and there is no need to explain how this filled my existence with a previously unfathomable joy (and I would not anyway be able to find proper words). This bliss brightens all my days (the tougher ones too) and the ones of all my family. A child barely a few months old reminds us all how perspective in life is essential: it allows us to recalibrate life's pendulum when things don't go as planned, because it reminds us that all we have to do is look at things from another point of view to find beauty all around us. I hope to carry these feelings in our wines: joyfulness, lightness and meaningfulness. Wines made not with fearful awe but with an emancipated sense of freedom to express their beauty with purity and candor.

Mandi,

Lara, Mattia, Valter, Maria Grazia, Bujar, Shkelzen, Ziri, Shazan, e Annalisa