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IT'S THE REAL THING: *IN VINI VERI VERITAS*

More and more people are drinking wine these days, so we hear. Apparently, it's supposed to be good for you. You know, good for the body, good for the soul... good, for good time's sake. All good. But, I have to say, is the *wine* any good? I mean, is it good clean product made with purity in mind, or is it Frankenwine? Are the vineyards sprayed to death with pesticides, and drowned in chemical fertilizers? All too often, the stuff on the market is jacked with added sugars and tartaric acid, too many sulphites, too much oak, unnatural aromatic yeasts, rectified musts.... god knows what else besides inverse osmosis, micro-oxygenation, excessive filtering, fining.....you get the picture.

Thankfully, there are winemakers out there reclaiming a traditional, natural, and non-interventionist approach to wine-making, crafting wines that express a certain time and place. Organic and biodynamic practices rule in the vineyard, favouring local, uncloned varieties. Deceptively simple winemaking techniques rule in the cellar, keeping things low-tech and old-school (no filtering or fining, wild yeasts, no new wood, no mucking with the must, etc.) These guys are making good wine that is *real*.

At oenopole, we like our wines as real as possible. And if you do too, you will be happy to know more about the wines of Mr. Real Wine himself, **Teobaldo Cappellano** (Piemonte), founder of the *Vini Veri* group in Italy, and **Fabrizio Niccolaini** (Massa Vecchia, Tuscany), a hard-core member of *Vini Veri*. **Nadia Verrua** (Cascina Tavijn, Piemonte) and **Bruno Schueller** (Alsace) will also be joining us on this trip. Read on dear drinkers!

PIEMONTE TEOBALDO CAPPELLANO *Mr Vini Veri*

Unfortunately, his wines were sold out immediately upon arrival, but we cannot speak about *Vini Veri* without mentioning Teobaldo Cappellano.

A famously quirky icon in Piemonte, this gentle giant of a man loves poetry, philosophy and a good time. Teobaldo, you atheist who refuses to submit wines for scores! He who throws pasta on the wall to see if it sticks! (That means it's done). Cappellano can be quite the character, but is very serious when it comes to working his vertiginous Gabutti vineyard in Serralunga d'Alba that has been in his family since 1870.

Under his guiding and steady hands, this prestigious piece of land produces Barbera, Dolcetto and Nebbiolo grapes of exceptional quality famous for creating wines of purity, longevity and power-and free of any artifice. True to the philosophy of the group, his wines are made naturally: no chemicals in the vineyard, and devoid of over-manipulation in the cellar.



Working 3 hectares of vines in all, Cappellano's hand-crafts very limited quantities of five cuvées, including two Barolos: **Pie Franco**, issued from ungrafted rootstock planted by Cappellano himself, and one from 40 year-old vines called **Pie Rupestris**. Vinification is done in *botti* in the most traditional of ways, and extended barrel and bottle ageing produce wine with classic Serralunga aromas of red fruit, dried roses, tar and sandalwood, wrapped up in firm yet ripe tannins with a mineral finish and a good whack of tangy acidity. While we were lucky enough to receive three of his cuvées, the **Barolo Pie Rupestris 2001**, **Barbera 2001** and **Barbera Gabutti 2003**, regrettably, stock went quickly. There's always next year...



TOSCANA MASSA VECCHIA

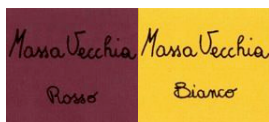
Fabrizio Niccolaini: Keeping it Real in Maremma

Ever feel like giving it all up to do what you *really* want? Quit the daily grind, no more office, no more boss...Well, this is what Fabrizio Niccolaini did in order to farm and make wine in beautiful Maremma, Tuscany. While Maremma is well-known for its expensive Super-Tuscan wines and the aristocratic families that make them, it is also home to **Massa Vecchia**, Niccolaini's artisanal winery producing some of the finest wines in the region.

Tossing out his job in scientific research, Fabrizio and his wife Patrizia Bartolini took over the family's modest estate and started a new life in natural farming and winemaking. Ardent believers in biodynamics and the philosophy of Masanobu Fukuoka (the "one-straw revolution"), they cultivate a tiny plot of 3.5 hectares with their stalwart oxen (a stark contrast to the many Ferraris in the region), tending to crops of wheat, corn and of course, grapes.



Working with both local and international varieties, the grapes are pressed by feet (how old school is *that?*); vinification and ageing are done in old Slovenian oak barrels (*botti*) and traditional chestnut casks (*tini*) just like in the good old days! Of course, only wild yeasts are used, and there is no filtering or fining of the wines. A miniscule amount of SO2 is added to the white during bottling, and none whatsoever is used in the red cuvées. Impeccably fresh and balanced, his wines are *debiles mentales* as we say in Québec. These are truly unique wines made with TLC that are causing a big stir in Europe, so we are pumped to have them in our *Belle Province*.



BIANCO DI MAREMMA TOSCANA 04	\$52,00 / bottle
ROSSO DI MAREMMA TOSCANA 04	\$60,00 / bottle

CASES OF 6

PRIVATE IMPORT

PIEMONTE
CASCINA TAVIJN
How do you pronounce these grapes?

We love funky, hard to pronounce grape varietals. It keeps the tongue in shape (tasting for a living wears it down). We especially love varietals that are hard to find anymore, either because the winemakers keep it for themselves, or foreign markets want little to do with them for fear of freaking out their clients. Here at oenopole, we say, and I quote a famously idiotic American president: "Bring 'em on!"



So here's one that is rarely found in Québec, if ever, courtesy of **Cascina Tavijn**: *Ruchè* (pronounced roo-KAY) di Castagnole.

RUCHÈ 06

Nadia Verrua's Cascina is located in an area of the Asti province of Piedmont that is practically forgotten, and is blessed with old vines of Barbera, Grignolino and Ruchè. Nadia has taken over the family's estate where her father still manages the vineyard work, but she's the boss in the cellar. Ruchè, in the nimble hands of Nadia, produces a wine of saturated purple with plum notes and rose petal aromas. It is made to be drunk young and is a perfect wine for salumi, dried meats like bresaola and hard, aged cheeses. I can't wait to guzzle it slightly chilled this spring with my first BBQs...

\$26,15 / BOTTLE

CASES OF 6

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NATURAL-BORN SCHUELLER: WELCOME BACK

DOMAINE GÉRARD SCHUELLER *PINOT BLANC 04*

Aaah, wines of Bruno Schueller, we hardly knew thee! You came and went so quickly last year. Word has it that you're back soon. We are very happy to be getting more of Bruno's juice. He too works along the lines of the Vini Veri folk (he's good chums with Fabrizio of Massa Vecchia), but is located in Husseren-les-Chateaux, Alsace. Amongst other things, we'll be receiving his **Pinot Blanc 2004**. Here are my tasting notes:

"A rich, ripe nose reminds us that Schueller picks his grapes at optimal maturity. A tidal wave of plump, honeyed apricots, grilled hazelnuts and caramel aromas are followed by an extremely light-handed landing on the palate. The sweet nose belies its dry and spicy finish. Ethereal. Gulp, gulp, gulp-aloo."

\$20,50 / BOTTLE

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