

Tenuta di Valgiano

The Tenuta di Valgiano property, 6 miles (10km) northeast of the medieval walled city of Lucca, goes back to the 15th century or earlier. For most of the past 200 years it was in the hands of the Sani family, from whom it was purchased in 1993 by current owner Moreno Petrini, who lives there with his wife Laura di Collobiano, in charge of the commercial side.

At the beginning they engaged in wine production with mild enthusiasm, but bit by bit became convinced, mainly thanks to the quality of the wine that issued from the fruit of the oldest vineyard, that that they were sitting on, not just a vineyard like hundreds of others, but a terroir capable of bringing forth wine of a very special character. Contemporaneously, and with the invaluable help of winemaker and fellow *appassionato* Saverio Petrilli, there developed the desire to treat the land with as much respect as possible, and so they began to adopt organic (from 1997), and later biodynamic (from 2002) methods.

Today they have established Valgiano as a working farm, with production of oil and honey, eggs and ham, and fresh vegetables from the *orto*. They like to think of themselves as traditionalists, though from a radical point of view that is only partially true. They believe in Sangiovese as a grape for blending rather than for varietal use, which is undeniably the traditional approach, but the accompanying vines are Syrah and Merlot, not Canaiolo, Colorino, or Ciliegiolo. Aging takes place in cement and oak, but the oak tends to be small and French, not large and Slavonian. Certainly they eschew the use of any type of additive or any forcing of the wine, or any adjustments in terms of acidity, aroma, or texture. Their aim is to produce wines of purity and elegance, wines that reflect the land with which they have been entrusted and the weather conditions that Nature gives them from year to year.

The engaging Moreno has carried his enthusiasm one step further, being a founder of the

Associazione dei Grandi Cru della Costa Toscana. This is a group of some hundred producers along the Tyrrhenian coastal strip that takes responsibility for promotion and general cooperation and collaboration between members. Its most high-profile activity is the annual press tasting that takes place in spring in the splendid and not-to-be-missed town of Lucca.

FINEST WINES

Tenuta di Valgiano Rosso

This is selected from the 10ha (25 acres) of top-quality vineyard surrounding the house, and consists of Sangiovese at around two thirds plus Syrah and Merlot. Initial crushing is by foot, and alcohol and malolactic fermentation is in oak. The wine is aged in oak for about a year with a further 6 months in cement. I tasted the '06, '05, and '04 and found them all rich and full of sappy, plummy fruit with notes of liquorice and blackberry, any tendency to jamminess cut by a firm tannic backbone. The '04 and '06 will last 20 years. The '05, from a weaker, rainier vintage, has good aromas on the nose but less fullness and roundness on the palate.

Palistorti Rosso

Also a DOC Colline Lucchesi, this is from soils and vines of lower age or quality than that of Tenuta. Otherwise the grape mix and aging are similar. The 2006 is juicy and plummy like its senior, but with less structure it is aimed at earlier drinking.

Tenuta di Valgiano Bianco

This is Chardonnay and Sauvignon with a splash of Vermentino (the Palistorti white, like its senior, is DOC Colline Lucchesi with more Vermentino plus a bit of Trebbiano and Malvasia). Both are clean and fresh, the Tenuta having more pungency, length, and creaminess of texture. The Tenuta in particular is highly creditable for a Tuscan white.

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Total area: 60ha (148 acres)

Area under vine: 25ha (62 acres)

Average production: 70,000 bottles

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