



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

CORSICAN WINES

A new wind blows on the Island of Beauty

In 30 years, Corsican vineyards have metamorphosized. Its size has been reduced, its vigneronns have strengthened, and its wines have developed in charm and typicity thanks to the rediscovery of local varietals.

It's an upheaval! In thirty years Corsican vineyards have completely changed face. In the 1970's, vines occupied over 30000 hectares, for the most part planted on the eastern plains with excessive yields. In 2011, only 7000 hectares remain in production on the island. Far from being a failure, this contraction heralds a tremendous renewal.

Let's say it clear: Corsica is *the* most exciting wine region in France. Twenty days of inquiry and a complete tour of the island have permitted us to identify the factors of its dynamism. Foremost, the recognition and protection of a rich heritage of indigenous varietals after thirty years of research. Secondly, spectacular work on modernization of cellars and the emergence of a generation of *vigneronns* liberated from the errors of the past and assuming their identity. Finally, there are the wines; delicious, fine and distinct, in particular the reds.

The beginnings of the reconquest

It's in the Valley of Taravo, between Sartène and Ajaccio, that Jean-Charles Abbatucci, descendant of an officer of Napoleons Empire, has launched the reconquest. In 1962, Jean-Charles father, Antoine, a notable from the Chamber of Agriculture decided to save (on a parcel of one hectare) 18 indigenous varietals menaced with extinction : paga debiti, rossola Bianca, bianco gentile for whites ; aleatico, carcojolo nero, morescono for reds... Today, the wines from this mythical parcel sell for nearly 50 Euros a bottle, from London to Tokyo. And it's all of Corsica that rediscovers the virtues of its traditional varietals, thanks to the work conducted since 1982 by researchers at the CRVI (Centre de recherches viticoles), under the direction of an enthusiast, Laurent Bourde. In 2011, this unique ampelographic diversity is at the disposition of growers on the island and also has found interest in North Africa, Lebanon and producers throughout the Mediterranean basin.

How to not evoke the spectacular modernization of cellars as well? Clos d'Alzeto in Ajaccio, Clos Canarelli in Figari, Domaine Pieretti in Luri, La Punta on the eastern plain, Yves Leccia's Domaine d'E Croce in Patrimonio, Clos Columbu in Balagne, Clos Venturi in Ponte-Leccia : everywhere are flourishing new constructions, audacious and well equipped. Corsicans knew how to find help: FranceAgriMer, a state funded institution, financed up to 40% of certain renovations and creations of cellars. And more constructions and renovations are planned: Clos Capitoro in Ajaccio, Clos Nicrosi on the tip of the Cap Corse.

Finally, there are the people involved. The young vigneronns of the island profit from unity and openness towards the mainland developed in the 1980's by the pioneers Christian Imbert (Domaine Torracchia) and Jacques Bianchetti (Clos Capitoro). Precise consultants like Antoine Poupponeau or the enologist Emmanuel Gagnepain consult for Clos Canarelli, Pero Longo and Vaccelli. The "locomotives" of Patrimonio, Antoine Arena and Yves Leccia, are challenged by the audacious Jean-Charles Abbatucci,

Yves Canarelli or even the promising Nicolas Mariotti-Bindi. All are inventing the *grand vin* that Corsica deserves and that connoisseurs are expecting.

FROM AJACCIO TO FIGARI

Marriage between granite and Sciaccarellu

It's within this zone, amongst the steepest there are, where the granitic arenas follow each other under maritime influence, that the sciaccarellu grape blooms best, in particular within the appellation of Ajaccio.

Domaine Comte Abbatucci

Ajaccio

Jean-Charles Abbatucci leans on a heritage of grape varieties unique in Corsica. On the slopes of the Taravo valley, he vinifies since 2006 his "Collection" cuvees, in homage to his ancestors. The domaine has converted to biodynamic certification since 2000. His wines impose themselves among the most remarkable. One of the great successes of Corsica.

General de la Revolution blanc 2008

17/20

Still on its reserve, yet delicate and saline on the palate, with tension on the finish, this is a white to age, to put in the cellar.

Ministre Rouge 2008

18/20

Melted tannins of finesse, with elegance on the nose. Superb notes of red fruit. Long, dazzling wine.

Faustine Rouge 2009

16/20

Wilder, with notes of the *maquis*, this cuvee needs to be well decanted. It's a most pleasant wine, thanks notably to the great finesse of its tannins.

FROM CAP CORSE to PATRIMONIO

Lord of the Reds

Domaine E Croce – Yves Leccia

Patrimonio

In 2005, Yves Leccia launched his domaine after a rupture with his sister Annette. Having kept the historic parcels of the family domaine in the sector "E Croce" (magnificent schist terroir) in the village of Poggio d'Oletta, he was immediately celebrated by the critics. His ability as an excellent grower and winemaker illuminates his wines. We appreciate the proper balance between good maturity, freshness and

the expression of pure terroir. With a new vinification cellar in 2010, he now has at his disposal a particularly efficient tool of vinification.

Vin de pays Blanc 2009

16/20

With 40% ugni blanc, this wine is declared a vin de pays, which removes nothing of its subtlety. The mineral character mixes to a distinct and sincere fruit, offering roundness and length.

Rouge 2007

16.5 / 20

Corpulent and expressive; the notes of black fruit are well presented in the nose and mouth. Evolves slowly, with complexity. Air does it well.

Domaine Antoine Arena

Patrimonio

Antoine Arena is the indisputable leader of Patrimonio and Corsica in general. He was the first to produce elite wines, seek terroir, isolate the vinifications and develop great wines through his cuvees of strong personality, with whites as with reds. He has thrilled the palates of all wine enthusiasts. In the past, he may have gone a bit far in the ripeness of his whites (slight residual sugar) and in the power of his reds, however the last vintages have found a balance with finesse and more reasoned extraction. An influential figure, he has been emulated many times over, and his sons, who today are taking over the domaine little by little, bring a new impetus (with the arrival of cuvees seeing ageing in wood). The domaine has never known a static moment.

Cuvee Zero Rouge 2009

14/20

Whole cluster vinification made for rapid consumption, in the mold of a bistro wine. Pleasant and just the right amount of fruit. To drink now.

Morta Maio Rouge 2009

15/20

A red from a clay terroir, more muscular and large than fine. The 2008 is more delicate and expressive on the palate, with a more silky spirit.

Grotte di Sole rouge 2009

17/20

A red with fine, beautiful and elegant tannins, extracted with precision and finesse. Sharp on the finish, this 2009 is chiseled for a long aging.

Carco Rouge 2009

17/20

With an ageing of ½ in 600L demi muids, this wine is built up and offers a bouquet blending spices and fruit. The softness of the tannins is remarkable.

Grotte di Sole rouge 2008

15/20

This 2008 contains 8g of residual sugar! Today in barrel, it is awaiting its evolution before its bottling. An original red, with a sweet sensation brought by the sugar and a light astringency of tannins brought by the niellucciu.

Bianco Gentile 2010

14/20

With the malolactic fermentation done, this white, at once rich and suave, affirms itself with a noble bitterness on the finish.

Carco Blanc 2010

17.5 / 20

Deep and mineral, this is the wine that today tastes best in the cellar. Lovely noble reduction on the finish. Grand potential.

Grotte di Sole blanc 2010

18.5 / 20

This white attains perfect balance, with a heightened tension compared to the carco. Superb substance and length, all in finesse, which brings out a supplement of minerality. Magnificent.

FROM CALVI TO PONTE LECCIA

Pleasure in a glass

Without possessing a grand terroir, the Balagne region imposes itself with its quality whites, reds and rosés.

Domaine Maestracci

Calvi

In the 1980's (first vintage: 1981), this was *the* principal domaine of the Balagne. Property of the Raoust and Maestracci families, the domaine is, since harvest 2009, run by Camille-Anaïs Raoust. New methods of grape growing are gently being applied: curtailment of herbicides, progressive plowing of soils (limon and clay) that will be followed by a program of re-plantation. Enologist, Camille-Anaïs is a young woman decided and ready to revive the domaine of the "back country" back to the top of the Calvi Appellation.

E Prove blanc 2010

16/20

With a better working of the lees, this cuvee rediscovers nice amplitude on the finish, with a rounder, more generous body.

Villa Maestracci blanc 2010

16/20

Vinified in barrels with indigenous yeasts and aging on fine lees with batonnage. Good potential, but it still needs to gain in body and richness.

E Prove rouge 2008

14/20

Soft, supple and rounded by aging in barriques. Ready to drink this year.

Villa Maestracci rouge 2006

16.5/20

A wine issued from a parcel selection of old vine Sciaccarellu, Niellucciu, grenache and syrah. Charming, with an elegant woodiness in a Mediterranean style.