

WHAT IS SOLCO?

What is Solco? It is neither a magazine, a journal, nor a book. Even less is it our house organ. Solco is a project, transcribed on paper. It is the fruit of a need to assess the state of the art. Of making wine. Of a specific wine, Frappato di Vittoria. And yet more than that. Twenty years ago, Arianna Occhipinti took her first step on the path of working with a vineyard, making wine, and building her own winery. And for those same twenty years, the world of winegrowing has undergone a revolution—a brand-new way of carrying out, and conceiving, this centuries-old art. Solco, in brief, serves as a vehicle for reflecting on that world. Natural wines? Pure wines? A trend? A lifestyle? The questions are endless. Solco serves as the perfect platform for raising and discussing them: its purpose, though, is not so much to provide answers as to stimulate reflection and exchange. “Solco”, or furrow, is an incisive feature of agriculture, but it can also be understood as a pathway that leads on forever. This is our spirit. Our concept. Solco.

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This is the agora of the magazine: an open space where the theme of the issue will be addressed from different points of view and with different food for thought and debate.

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Here we look up to observe the landscapes, the land, the horizons. From here we scan the past and cast our eyes towards the future: human geography, territory, roads to be travelled.

It is the space of space.

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What have these 20 years of love been for?

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

“Talking about Frappato is like talking about love” “But you’re still talking about love?” “Yes.” “Yes, it’s the love that flows in your veins, rebellious when it infuriates

you,
tactile yet
when you
home. When
young, if



romantic,
hidden
return
you’re
you set no

boundaries, it sets you adrift, but, if in the end, it’s right for you, then it helps you find yourself, with full respect for both of you.

It's that absolutely providential intuition or encounter that you can recognize at times in life. The love that raises you up, where you can give the best of yourself. That love helps us build, and not destroy, our life, piece by piece.

I remember, walking through one vineyard after another, when, working for the University of Milan, I had to survey the Frappato di Vittoria vineyards, the first time I discovered the local contrade. I remember that red, almost orange, earth, the thin sand clinging to my sweaty calves, my shorts and socks streaked with red, as though I had played tennis for three hours straight on a dirt court. I had given up tennis, although reluctantly, since it was hard, while I was playing, to find the serene mind the game required, that self-consciousness that perhaps only today I am slowly mastering. It was better to run the 100 metres, all out, turning the blocks into power--not the starting blocks, but the blocks, the blockages of life. In those years, I still ran, but a running different from that I do today, which is a yearning, a striving at all costs for a self, for a path to run that, if discovered, surging amidst the waves, might never leave me.

I found it rather quickly, my hands gently pushing aside the curtains of the foliage in a vineyard in Pettineo and finding those leathery, intense green leaves, observing those purplish-blue that the berries of Frappato create in reflecting the sun, revealing their subtle veins.

You have to chew the skin to really understand that grape, just as I find today regarding the tannins in its wine. It's a moment of revelation. The grape seemed of some royal lineage to me,

in its similarity to Pinot Noir and Nebbiolo, mythic perhaps, leading to my, and others', certainty that we could trace its journey back to some corner of the Mediterranean, far from the matrix of European viticulture that I was studying.

Frappato and I took each other by the hand. I needed its elegance, the history it had to reveal, its beauty and layers of complexity, the winemaking qualities it possessed to become what it is today. And Frappato, of

course, needed me. Needed someone to gather it in with love and pride, that same pride that, at its first official release, in September 2005, my very first 2004 vintage, a blend with Nero d'Avola to produce Cerasuolo di Vittoria or an entry-level wine, was on display in my words, witnessed in surprise by those who had not heard anyone defend their creation with such fervour, even though it was not yet a fully-fleshed vision.

FRAPPATO AND I TOOK EACH OTHER BY THE HAND. I NEEDED ITS ELEGANCE, THE HISTORY IT HAD TO REVEAL, ITS BEAUTY AND LAYERS OF COMPLEXITY, THE WINEMAKING QUALITIES IT POSSESSED TO BECOME WHAT IT IS TODAY. AND FRAPPATO, OF COURSE, NEEDED ME.

We are not children of a lesser god, a sentiment all too often evident in the attitudes of some Sicilians when, 20 years ago, they had to discuss this area, and themselves, in meetings with others.

What is the source of this pride? The stories of my uncle Giusto; the history and life with Marco De Bartoli; the stories of Beppe Rinaldi; the French legends; the look of Giovanna Morganti when she describes that magnificent Le Trame that in 2004 brought tears to my eyes. Porthos, noble, rebellious, desperate. The virtuosity and talents of Luca Gargano. The music within and outside wine, and Frank Cornelissen's Pindaric intuitions. The commonality with Elena Pantaleoni, with whom I took my first and second steps in understanding the sense of beauty. The passion, determination, and sensitivity of Elizabeth. The hands and greatheartedness of certain Friuli border producers, Stanko, Dario, Josko. The seriousness and beauty of the Planetas' estates; the history of the Tascas. The dialogue, on Sicily's other coast, with a young vigneron at the start of his career, like me, Nino Barraco, who made Marsala come alive again for me, the city where I was born, that along with my mother I had known for its myths and its sea, for the fragrance I loved of the fermenting algae, which helped me to quickly recognise reduction in wine and to sometimes even love it, a Marsala, finally, on land and not of the sea, of vineyards and farming traditions.

That eats mutton and not the Stagnone mullet that I love so.

I lacked experience, and I lacked gaining harvest experience around the globe, but I had intently watched those who crafted deep, ambitious wines and I understood that, above all, an emotional connection had to be established; that accomplished, the winemaking practice followed, the simple process that allows a human being to make wine.

The artisan, composing his canvas, piece after piece, with hands that move in synchrony with the eyes and the mind, eyes than could even close, continuing to recognise thread after thread flowing through the fingers moving on their own with delicate power, the work emanating the odour of what will emerge.

¹ Giusto Occhipinti
Producer in Vittoria RG, Azienda Agricola COS

² Marco De Bartoli
Cantine Marco de Bartoli, 'visionary winemaker' known for his commitment to enhancing the Marsala wine

³ Beppe Rinaldi
Azienda Agricola Giuseppe Rinaldi, Barolo CN

⁴ Giovanna Morganti
Producer in Castelnuovo Berardenga SI, Cantina Le Boncie

⁵ Porthos
Independent magazine launched in 1999 by Porthos Editore

⁶ Luca Gargano
Velier GE, a historic family business in Genoa that deals with the import and distribution of spirits, liqueurs and wines

⁷ Frank Cornelissen
Producer in Passopisciaro, Castiglione di Sicilia CT, Azienda Agricola Frank Cornelissen

⁸ Elena Pantaleoni
Producer in Piacenza PC, Azienda Vitivinicola La Stoppa

⁹ Elisabetta Foradori
Producer in Mezzolombardo TN, Azienda agricola Foradori

¹⁰ Stanko Radikon, Dario Princic, Josko Gravner
Friulan border producers

¹¹ Planeta
Planeta winery, Sicily

¹² Tasca
Tasca d'Almerita winery, Sicily

¹³ Nino Barraco
Azienda Agricola Barraco, Marsala

For me, making wine is just this, a natural activity. And Frappato is a sweet-souled friend that accompanies me.

These past 20 years have been rich in encounters, sleeplessness, and awakenings. The first ten went by quickly, but they were nonetheless lived to the full, building a dream that began then, or better, an intuition, a call, while the second ten have become understanding, perfectionism, sturdiness, reflection, loss, and reparation.

FOR ME, MAKING WINE IS JUST THIS,
A NATURAL ACTIVITY.

From the accounts and observation of the red sand, an always-recurring motif when Vittoria producers described their wines, to the discovery of limestone. Calcarenites, turbos, chalks, marls: a brand-new world to me.

Diving from the surface into the depths. A necessary journey yet one with no return. If it is difficult to return from a world that gifts you rediscovery of your sense of taste and of persons through the offering of an artisanal wine, then equally challenging is beginning the descent into the depths that the roots take to study what you then do find in the wine, in terms of nose and taste. When rock is dry, we can't say that it has a smell, but you can definitely smell that odour in the wine, and savour that rock on the palate. All things considered, it is precisely that: in the wine you can feel the Bombolieri limestone.

And it is right in that interplay between sand and limestone, in those nuances that are the myriad colours of kaleidoscopic soils – since the earth that “cancia ri parlo a parmo” (changes from centimetre to centimetre) can yield very different wines-- that we find, proceeding abreast, together in time, the studies of friends such as Roberto and Alfonso of Envinata in Tenerife, and in Spain, of Dani and Fernando of Comando G – an entire generation of explorers of soils and vineyards, tirelessly walking pathways that would be endless but for their good sense in not excessively confusing the consumer and in fortunately moderating the compulsive exploration these wines invite.

A similar pathway can be trodden here in Vittoria too, a terroir of truly inimitable qualities, model of an agriculture attracting the gaze of the Mediterranean to these shores. 8 kilometres from the sea, 8 from the Iblean Mountains. Between the scirocco and Provence.

Heat, wind, dry weather, drought at times, Europe's most intense solar radiation, together with Almeria in Spain, sand that can touch 70-80°C but mantles reserves of moisture and

coolth absorbed by the rock beneath, like a terracotta jar of fresh, cool water offered you on a torrid summer day. And my friends across the Alps, in France, and my discovery of winelands loved by so many, vigneroni who taught me to refine a nose that step by step led me to a deeper recognition of my own land and my Frappato.

That led to an interior zonation study of vineyard parcels that had been initially leased, by necessity, and later purchased. Forming a square some 5 km by side, they lay in history-rich contrade studded with a wealth of venerable palmenti (wine-making cellars), they themselves becoming a treasure as they reveal their precious secrets.



This process of identifying soils and contrade will not only enable my Frappato, which has been with me from the very beginning and which I want to celebrate today, to find its definitive direction, but it will be of invaluable assistance with the three VINI DI CONTRADA: Pettineo, Fossa di Lupo, and Bombolieri. Frappato with its vineyard in contrada Bastonaca, of sand-silt and tuff that gift it a silky elegance and cherry hue, and the large Contrada Fossa di Lupo vineyard, the first I planted, using a meticulous massal selection but with respect too for its biodiversity and a certain freedom, with soils of dark sand and compact white limestone that give fruit, acidity, and dense tannins.

But there are more, too...Santa Teresa, Serra d'Elia, Spedalotto, Fondo Monaci.

And finally from Vittoria to Chiaramonte Gulfi, exploring the Iblean Mountains, following the track of limestone amidst the cultivated fields rich in clay marl, reaching 500 metres' elevation in Contrada Santa Margherita, in search of the ancient sea, chert, and Grillo.

A road with no way back, a journey that continues without finding its final destination, except in the roots of its own vineyards... because, after all, isn't love all the more beautiful when it evolves?



PART I

THEMES

THE WINE YOU LEAST EXPECT

SALVO FOTI – WAIATA KALMA – GUGLIELMO MANENTI
ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI – GIUSTO OCCHIPINTI – NIKOLAS RESIN

Frappato is a totally unexpected wine and surprising interpreter of a complex land. It is also versatile, adapting itself to embody the story and vision of its grower, the winemaking philosophy and qualities of those who work with it. And its roots go deep in its homeland: Vittoria. In this report, several leading Frappato producers reveal their thoughts on this intriguing variety, all representing diverse prospectives but with a common, shared sentiment: their passion for this wine.

The discussion, which took place at Arianna's wine estate in Vittoria, involves several leading Frappato producers, as they consider the present and future of a wine uniquely able to express its terroir of origin. The discussion table bore a goodly number of bottles and wineglasses, all fruits of personal interpretations of this variety.

On 20 February 2025, Arianna Occhipinti, Giusto Occhipinti, Guglielmo Manenti, Nikolas Resin, Waiata Kalma and Salvo Foti met in Arianna Occhipinti's company lounge to talk about Frappato, the future, the territory and gestures, actions that can help develop it.



Giampaolo Gravina had been invited to conduct this discussion, and he would certainly have contributed substantial considerations, thanks to his acknowledged ability to shed light on areas of wine culture of fundamental importance. But Giampaolo is no longer with us, and so we want to dedicate the present discussion to him.

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI



ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

In April, I'll be releasing our 20th vintage of Frappato, an important occasion for me. I need to stop for a moment to reflect on the overall situation—what Frappato has been, what it will be, what possibilities it still gives us, and what precisely Frappato is for me, for us. I felt the need to share this occasion with some of the producers in our area, with those who have worked here for many years and those who have recently arrived, who decided to move here for the love of this wine.

It pleased me to bring together different people, all with a different idea of their work, but whom I particularly respect. Protagonists of Frappato who, in their diversity, put into their work so much effort, so much culture, so much commitment, and **emotion as well**, which is what I believe has characterized our work a little, of all of us.

FRAPPATO IN THE WORDS OF THOSE WHO MAKE IT

GUGLIELMO MANENTI

Well, my story is a bit of an outlier. I have a small winery in contrada Bastonaca. I'm probably the most microscopic of the producers in the Cerasuolo di Vittoria Consorzio, but they asked me to serve as its President...

SALVO FOTI

Serving as an interpreter of a vineyard through its wine has always intrigued me. That's what I've been doing a long time now, particularly as a winemaker on Etna, where I run a small operation together with my children.

NIKOLAS RESIN

I'm German. When I was studying enology in Germany, I learned about the wines of Vittoria through those of Giusto Occhipinti's Cos winery. I fell in love with them, and I decided to come and work here. Then, my wife and I found a place where we could create our own winery, which is not easy in Vittoria. We now have a total of five hectares at Serravalle.

GIUSTO OCCHIPINTI

I have just finished working with my 45th harvest here at Cos, my winery. That's always the most exciting moment of our work. Nothing like it.

WAIATA KALMA

I, on the other hand, was born in New Zealand; then, at 14, I went to France to study. Later on, I worked as a sommelier in London, Melbourne, and again in Paris. In Australia, I discovered the wines of Sicily. And then, with Nikolas, we came here to start working.



What does it mean to you to work with Frappato, in this area of Sicily that is not as easy as other areas, such as Etna, for example? Why? Who made you do it?

WAIATA KALMA

When we selected where we wanted to live, work, make wine, have children, we also considered what grapes we wanted to work with. Sure, Nero d'Avola is interesting, but Frappato was the grape that we wanted to touch, work, drink. It was that love that brought us here.

THE CHALLENGE OF IDENTITY: FRAPPATO "FROM VITTORIA"?

What is unique about making wine in Sicily?

GIUSTO OCCHIPINTI

If you think about it, there is no place in the world where the harvest lasts from July to the end of October. We are talking here about only 200 kilometres, a very brief distance, on an island, all things considered, apparently homogeneous. And yet, everything changes from kilometre to kilometre. Sicily, as we all say, is actually a continent--in geology, in its macro-areas, micro-areas, temperature differentials, and in its rainfall.

GUGLIELMO MANENTI

Very true. We, for example, use the low bush-trained alberello system, a training method that goes a bit against the grain here in Vittoria. From an agricultural point of view, we are experimenting with how the vines behave. And this allows me to make some observations. Since 2006, when I started, I have seen a whole series of "no" years that delivered over-abundant rain in the various production phases. What I noticed, too, is that in extremely hot years, Frappato suffers less than our Nero d'Avola. This last harvest was really hard because of the rain that didn't come: Frappato is a vine that responds well even in conditions of great climate stress, and so it works very well in this growing area. This could bode well for the future.

Does climate change impact ageing as well?

How does Frappato age?

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

Currently, all of us sell our Frappato, for better or for worse, in its first two years of life, and the market works through the vintage in 5-6 years. But its ageing potential is a different matter, of course. Some time ago, we tasted a vertical of 17 vintages, and I have to tell you that the results were absolutely solid and that the wines still had much to say for themselves. This comforts me. So nothing stops us from deliberately cellaring it, then seeing it on prestigious wine lists, perhaps in a few years. It has acidity, pH, a thick skin, very high tannins: there are many things that make this wine last over time and, on a production level, you can rely on it a lot.

GUGLIELMO MANENTI

Its longevity potential is still untried, because there hasn't been time, for many of us, to really verify it. It would be interesting to focus on this characteristic, which may well enhance the reputation of our growing area.

However, we now sell a refreshing wine that should be enjoyed, let's say, in a fairly easy way. I don't mind being in a wine bar, exploiting the capacity of an easy-drinking, approachable wine. I would tend to be less interested in a limited clientele, certainly much more serious and willing to spend a little more for a wine that actually has the potential, rightly, to be able to age. However, that is definitely a possibility. Let's talk about it.

The question is interesting because it also significantly determines the way we tell the story of Frappato, which is currently presented as a wine that is, as you say, pleasant, straightforward, crisp, and youthful. However, you could also underscore its excellent aging potential, thus expanding the market. And its image.

WAIATA KALMA

Frappato has never been vinified to last over time, but to be consumed immediately. And yet, it is excellent even after twenty years. So, that means that it can be drunk immediately as well as last over time. I see that in the market it possesses an extra edge because it is Sicilian, it is crisp, fresh, fruity, and low in alcohol. It is a grape variety that is now found on the wine lists of the world, because it is unique. Nero d'Avola also has many beautiful aspects, but it is more linked to Sicily in general, **while Frappato gives a completely different image of our island.** And one strongly bound to this growing area. The only people I have met who do not particularly like Frappato are its Sicilian customers.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: CLIMATE, MARKET AND THE FUTURE

Do Sicilians understand Frappato?

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

When I started producing Frappato, it was an inexpensive product, selling for a few euros. The value of the grape variety was not recognized. I tried to steer the conversation to the identity of Frappato and at the same time, I increased the price. Today, the situation has certainly changed, even if many local restaurateurs still do not fully understand the grape. That there are still only few producers is a limiting factor, in the sense that more Frappato labels would lead to a more articulated discussion, even with sommeliers.

GIUSTO OCCHIPINTI

It's true. The problem is that we are still too few. I must honestly admit that Arianna's entry into the community constituted a quantum leap, but we need a few more producers distributed around, cloned like Dolly the sheep and sent to colonize this territory. She has also brought younger generations closer to wine and has given her work an imprint of joy, of redemption. This is to say that it takes passion, rigour, and above all human resources. This is why I believe that **every producer must give back a share of their value to the territory.** The truth is that in a place like this, it is really difficult to orient oneself. We need to be together. Of course, alone you go faster, but you lose a view of the horizon. **We need the territory, and we need to recognize ourselves in the identity of Vittoria.**



Salvo Foti



Guglielmo Manenti



Waiata Kalma and Nikolas Resin



Giusto Occhipinti

SALVO FOTI

This is why I insist: we should always call our wine “Frappato di Vittoria.” I would never abandon this fundamental identifier. I also insist on the food service sector: customers probably don’t care for it because they are used to other Frappatos, grown in areas that are not exactly appropriate. So, it is clear that Sicily, in general, can gain an even higher reputation if we manage to create and communicate the internal biodiversity of what we rightly call a “continent.”

Can we use Frappato as a key to understanding a wine culture and a specific area?

SALVO FOTI

Of course. Nero d’Avola is a grape variety from southeastern Sicily that marketing initiatives have made generically “Sicilian.” But that’s not really the case. Nerello Mascalese, which is presented as an identifier for an area, shows that the intimate relationship between a grape variety and its preferred place of origin also functions well commercially. **Another fundamental aspect is the winegrowing civilization, those who create it.** The producer. When they bring me a Frappato, I want to know if it’s made by Giusto, by Arianna or by Guglielmo. We must convey, above all, who is the interpreter of this grape variety.

At this point, would it be useful to ask ourselves if Frappato is more identifiable with this growing area than other varieties?

NIKOLAS RESIN

This is the reason why Waiata and I came to Vittoria. We were convinced by the idea of working with such an elegant wine, with such promising potential. In our interpretation, we don’t see it as a wine with a high alcohol content, nor with an excessive maceration. In Italy, many believe that a wine must be very macerated to be impressive, like Brunello and Barolo. For me, wine must have a simpler expression. We hope, over the years, to increasingly enhance the agricultural work behind it. And an approach that can enhance the organic substances, life, and biodiversity, within a territory.

WAIATA KALMA

It is a wine that you do not expect, one difficult to describe in words, with technical notes. The ideal would be for consumers to come here to really get to know it and see where it is born, taste it, and above all meet the people who make it.

How do you approach the problem of the younger generations?
Can the low-alcohol, straightforward Frappato attract an audience that is moving away from the world of wine?

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

I have always striven to make accessible something difficult. When I started working in this sector, significant economic investments were made and people were running away from a more strictly agricultural approach in favour of answering the demands of the market. The fact that I started at twenty was proof that it is a job that can be done, even in a simple way, starting from modest projects. In this way, you grow with your project and are not overwhelmed by something far bigger than you. I believe that

a young audience has responded to me because I have tried to convey **the idea of an agriculture that is eminently possible, of a wine that is possible.** However, I have also preserved a complex of agricultural traditions that are essential to preserve, a culture of agronomic practices that must not be forgotten.

Is it difficult to practice agriculture in a land like this?

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

Look, I like to talk about agriculture in positive terms because my generation is the offspring of a world that has suffered because of agriculture: farmers sent their children away to study, to learn a profession, far from working the earth. And that is the reason why Vittoria has no young winemakers. Here, those who made wine have suffered the most. That is the reason why our denomination has not developed sufficiently. Here, the agriculture that works best is greenhouse farming. The Vittoria farmer, the son of a Vittoria native, would never do what we do, toiling in the vineyard. If we don’t analyse the social component of our land, we will find it difficult to glimpse new perspectives.

How can you relaunch a denomination, a growing area, an agricultural way of life?

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

You can do it if you have a vision—which these producers here have, and very few others. Like Planeta, Master of Wine. But it is clear that you establish or relaunch a growing area only if there is a commonly-felt identity.

Taking as an example other growing areas, is a denomination for Frappato feasible, based on more structured efforts to create a common image?

GIUSTO OCCHIPINTI

The problem is that **viticulture is not visible here.** And the landscape does not help. Salina is easily promoted, thanks to the fact that it is in the Aeolian Islands, and Etna has its volcano. These are places where the territory almost communicates itself. **The real heroic agriculture (laughs) is done by us – with only 90mm of rain per year and a wine landscape that you struggle to even notice.**

NIKOLAS RESIN

I see it more optimistically. We are focusing a lot on the purely agricultural aspect of this territory: not only wine but also oranges, olives, vegetables. And to do so we are inspired by regenerative agriculture--the most modern and futuristic approach that we can find, in my opinion. And this is because we see that every year is increasingly difficult. We have to recover and improve the land, but we have to somehow manage to slow down climate change at the same time, and even reverse it. But there are theories on how to do it.

CONCLUSIONS: A WINE, A STORY, A LAND

Given these problems, do you have any specific actions in mind for relaunching the Vittoria wine region?

GUGLIELMO MANENTI

For a real relaunch, we need to shore up the weak points, such as the low number of bottles produced. And in recent years, also due to climate issues, production has dropped even more. We need young, new producers, such as Nikolas and Waiata, who come here and plant new vineyards. This would trigger a virtuous circle, and then some problems, such as a certain neglect and abandonment of the land, would begin to disappear. We also have poor communication skills: we are an out-of-tune orchestra. We live, each of us, in a comfort zone, because for better or worse we manage to sell our bottles. But if the approximately 40 producers that make up the consortium could instead speak a single language, we could grow. **We need a common lever to work with – the denomination or the grape variety or the territory:** they are all concentric circles that we need to activate together.

GIUSTO OCCHIPINTI

We could also operate like the FAI, which buys villas and historic buildings and revitalizes them. We could do the same with our old and abandoned winecellars and with the vineyards: buy land and give it to young people to manage, young entrepreneurs. Involve, for example, the local banks, which have every interest in making this land rich and productive.

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

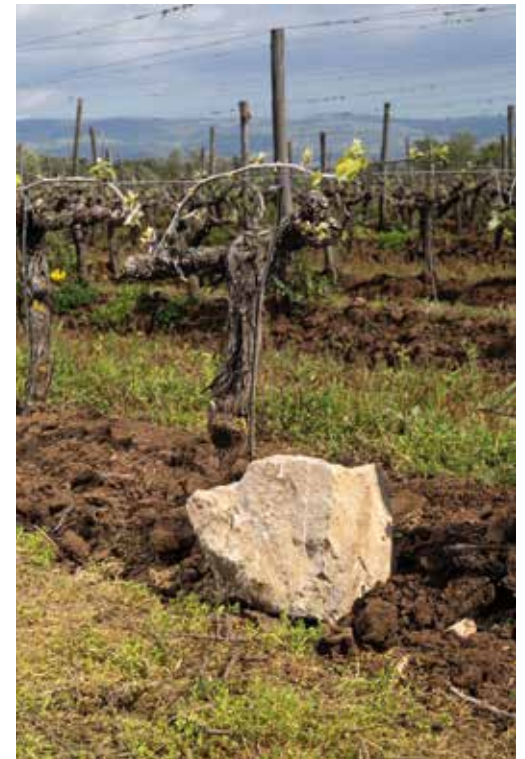
It is also essential to activate sharing, exchanges, between producers: that is, to create the opportunity to taste each other's wines, regularly: this increases the awareness of our wine and viticulture, and our growing areas. **Because while it's true that we lack vineyards, we also lack a vision regarding wine. It is essential to also create a common narrative: a geological identity, a wine identity.**

GIUSTO OCCHIPINTI

Remembering, however, to pay close attention, first of all, to the residents of this area, because this is where we live. Only in this way can we think of elevating ourselves. We need to feed and grow a venture not only made up of enthusiasts like us, but also of producers who do the bare minimum. Make them love this land more, keep it clean. Respect the territory: those who made Brunello great were an incredible community that worked with respect for Brunello. **Those who went to produce on Etna respected Etna. Let's remember that.**

SALVO FOTI

Training the people who work in the vineyard is also fundamental. When I started, it was easier to find people who had agricultural knowledge; now that is no longer the case. We need specific training that can respond to the needs of this particular territory. I agree with Arianna on the need to form a critical mass: meet, discuss and grow together as producers. A way to exchange problems and solutions. In this way we begin to **create a community and true identity**. A moment of growth for everyone. And face the challenges together. Today, we have only one certainty: climate change. Every year we face new challenges, and sharing solutions will be increasingly necessary. Finally, communication: I would focus first of all on the locals, the restaurants, the trattorias, the pizzerias. What do they know about Frappato? Are they telling its story? And how? **We should first of all recover pride in our roots.** And form a conscience. Focus on the people. After all, they are the territory.





**WHAT HAVE
20 YEARS OF
REVOLUTION
BEEN FOR?**

Beyond noise.

A thought by
FABIO MAZZA

Everything flows rapidly, all too rapidly.
Time for others, for one's own passions,
for oneself: always less time, the moments
always more fleeting. If it's a struggle to
carve out even a moment, how can we ever
stop to observe what is around us?

What we eat, what we breathe, what – without even realising it – defines us every day. Always in motion, in a hurry, immersed in a flow that we never really interrupt, we leave it to others to cast light on our path, to suggest directions we should take and even to anticipate our decisions, to the point of making them inevitable. The result? Pre-packaged perceptions, delivered tastes, canned thoughts. The mere illusion of a selection that, in reality, has already been made.

We are fascinated by beautiful stories and often prefer to be lulled by an artfully-crafted narrative rather than ask uncomfortable questions. Telling a story is by now a refined art, a skill able to shape desires and perceptions, to add value to what previously had less, and to remove meaning from what, on the other hand, deserves consideration. In the world of wine, this dynamic has been multiplied to the umpteenth degree. "Markèting" my theatrical Professor Davide Gaeta called it. Yes, the story is a subject that deserves treatment in depth. Knowing how to tell a story, or still better, knowing how to tell one's story, is worth more than substance today, more than experience, more than consistency. The world is moving fast, memory is shortening, and the market devours stories and wants more. A company that is on everyone's lips today might not even exist tomorrow. A brand that is the icon of the moment is old the following day, overtaken by the latest novelty. So, from all this turmoil, does anything real emerge? Are we becoming excited about something truly authentic or

are we simply following the latest cunningly-crafted, pre-packaged narrative? Are we still capable of distinguishing real value from background noise, or are we, in fact, losing the ability of objective analysis? And what if the problem is not simply the story, but a compulsive need for something new that propels us to follow, discover, burn, and then forget?

With wine, the tension between substance and story is increasingly heightened. New producers, new faces, new growing areas are constantly emerging, feeding a public starved for changes, for new stories, for the new cult wine on everyone's lips. But how many of these new actors will still be on the stage in 20 years? How many, instead, will be bubbles dissolving in the glass, swallowed up with no trace, like so many before them?

Between those who chase after the wind and those who exude solidity there is often no easy guide. On the one hand, newly-emerging producers with soap-bubble ambitions; on the other, new wineries founded on solid ideas. Those with solid foundations have no fear of passing fashion; a coherent story and style enables them to shrug off trends, since proven constancy is their guide, and the organic process that has brought them to this point. Whether these are historic producers in the midst of generational change or new wineries taking their first steps, they are, it is true, most exposed to the tempest in the theatre, but they have no need to storm and shout, since they have chosen coherence over hype. It is, yes, a silent movement, but one that is starting to make itself heard. It includes individuals who choose to return to their native locus to assume the family heritage and give it new lustre, thus burnishing the value of the labour that preceded them, or they are new to the craft, investing time, resources, and hopes in a concrete dream. Once again, it is neo-classicism that is taking steps forward: recognising and respecting the greatness of others, not seeking useless disputes. Rather, it is marked by curiosity and a desire for discussion. Among phenomena dominated by the need to appear, the true

Consumption patterns: more than 63% of Italians happen to drink "alternative" wines, with shares of 73.2% among young people, 64.8% among adults and 51.8% among the elderly. A choice also linked to the ability to narrate territories, a value for 87.9%.

SOURCE: REPORT ENPAIA-CENSIS 2024 FOR VINITALY

For 89.3% of Italians, wine is expertise and culture. 70.1% say that they are interested not only in the flavor of a wine, but in the provenance, history and culture of local wines as expressions of our country's extraordinary territorial biodiversity.

course is to return to solid substance, to depth, to truth. But to accomplish this, one needs courage and doggedness, a vision and study – endless study. It also requires refusing shortcuts, temptations to premature attention, and compromises with the too-facile dictators of timetables and modalities of a fast entrance, a premature birth, and a quick end. Once again, let's take the time necessary for understanding where we're headed, what and who we have with us to achieve that end.

Because when that bottle of wine leaves the cellar, it has completed only a third of its journey. And at that point begins its real challenge. One needs vision, ability to read the market, and, above all, the courage to subject every certainty to discussion. To stop, listen, re-consider, without being afraid, if necessary, of re-booting the entire process.

Another component often overlooked? Self-criticism and listening, both rarely performed, both absolutely necessary.

So, how does one start? How does one navigate this "great sea of shiny, new things"? How does one re-learn to distinguish gold from dross? By studying, travelling, meeting and challenging new ideas. By opening a dialogue with "the old," with what was once great, in spite of whether it corresponds or not to one's tastes and aspirations. "Out there" are incredible stories to hear and interiorise, wine regions now forgotten but yet impressive, winegrowers just as great but faded from sight. Renown does not dissolve: time, like a catapult, conserves it, holding it back until just the right moment, when, unexpectedly, it launches it into the future. And the market will remember.

We often put ourselves in the shoes of our clients. We ask ourselves how to make them our partner, how to have them accept our values without being overbearing, to adopt our vision. How to remain, rather than to return.



And we have to question ourselves about our own responsibility. Because, in reality, those who produce, communicate, distribute wine have a duty with regard to those who will be drinking it. A duty that goes beyond marketing, beyond the aesthetics of the narrative. A duty that requires the creation of culture, the transmission of knowledge and understanding, the formation of good taste without bowing to passing fancy. All too often, we forget that there is a world out there that takes our labours at their worth, a public that rewards us with its faith and its money. And when they select one of our wines, they want, quite simply, to enjoy a moment of pleasure.

Do we really want to deprive ourselves of the delicacy of this gift that we offer others? If we aren't working on their behalf, then on whose behalf are we? And above all, let's remind ourselves that unless someone pulls that cork, everything we're doing is a useless exercise in ego and vanity.

What's behind the cork

INTERVIEW BY GIANLUCA BISCALCHIN

Massimo Vitale is the last cork-worker in Sicily, an ancient profession kneaded into the territory, boasting multi-faceted knowledge, respect for nature and environmental protection. And obsessions: caressing the trees, smelling the cork, seeking perfection to provide wine producers with a vision. A small miracle.

The wine cork has become synonymous with a sensory defect, the winemaker's worst nightmare. And yet, the cork represents the last act of a year's work in the vineyard and in the cellar. It seals the effort, the hopes, the choices of a winemaker and delivers their product to time. It carries with it an enormous burden of responsibility. This is why the Occhipinti winery has chosen to collaborate with and support an inspired craftsman like Massimo. A meeting with Arianna, during the cork-bark stripping in the Bosco di Santo Pietro, gave birth to the idea of collaborating to create an optimal cork. Together, they began a common journey of stewards of a landscape made of vineyards, but also of woods, trees and knowledge. In short, of biodiversity, genuine biodiversity. Which also includes the valorisation of an ancient profession, in danger of extinction, like that of the cork worker...

“Doing this job is crazy. I never live peacefully because I never know what will happen over time. It's the number one problem of us cork workers: if the wine goes bad, if it tastes of cork, it's our fault, and at that point you can't fix it. Do you understand?”

I do. How do you work to calm your anxiety?

I am a guy who is always in a frantic search for perfection. I have practically always lived with cork; I was born and raised with it. My father did this job way back when. And in 2005, I reorganized the family business, aiming precisely at the production of the natural one-piece cork intended for local companies. With a lot of very hard work.

A single-piece cork?

Everyone writes “a bottle-stopper of natural cork,” but that's a vague definition that includes many types: “technical” corks as well as the ones we make. The “single-piece” is a whole piece of cork, intact. There is nothing artificial inside. Whereas the most popular corks, the technical ones, are obtained by crushing the cork into very fine granules and then treating them with steam.

GROWTH TIMES
For the first extraction of cork, the tree takes 25-30 years. But the first extractions are not yet suitable for processing. In the end, 50 years are needed for optimal production.

Let's say it's the same difference between chipboard and solid wood...

Exactly. This “chipboard”, the technical cork, is obtained with glues and a small amount of plastic to give elasticity. This way they become “perfect” corks, they give no TCA problems - that “cork smell.” However, in my opinion, something of this glue gives way... We work in a different way.

So where does your anxiety come from?

Since ours is a natural product, never the same, with different interactions from one bottle to another, we never have absolute certainty of the result. You have to take that into account. Natural cork is like that, and those who appreciate it do take risks. However, we have brought them to very low percentages, 0.5%. Those who choose it, though, have a vision, an idea of wine that is not just merchandise.

In what sense?

I start from the tree and go all the way through the cellar. This is why I create a close relationship with customers, like Arianna Occhipinti. I discuss and learn: we talk regularly, I taste their wine, to see the evolution of my corks and I try to understand if there are errors, if there is something to correct. Through this dialogue, we have managed to grow a lot. I waited for Arianna for several years. She encouraged me to correct some mistakes. And we talked. In the end, I think I have provided her with a product that is on a par with the quality of her wines.

Why do certain producers choose your corks?

Because they interact with the wine, which allows for optimal oxygen permeability. That, over time, makes a difference. It is a product suitable for wines that have a certain structure and that can afford the luxury, so to speak, of evolving through time, of improving over the years.

PERCENTAGE OF USE
The part of cork suitable for processing is never be more than 20% of that extracted; all the rest is now ground up.

So, this exchange of air, even if minimal, makes the difference?

I really think so. There is no better combination for the wine, when the cork is perfect. Together they help each other. We are always looking for perfection, respecting naturalness.

How does your cork supply chain work?

Let's start with the decortication: the cork is stripped from the tree and taken to the warehouse. Here the first selection is made, and the quality ones are shipped.

PHELLOGEN
This is the layer of the tree where the cork grows. The quality of the cork is also established here.

Shipped?

Yes: with a chainsaw, we remove all the bark in contact with the base of the tree, with the earth, and which therefore contains a lot of mould. This allows us to smell its quality, just by the smell it produces. Then the cork is placed on nets about 30 cm above the ground and seasons in the sun.

How long does the seasoning last?

Cork can generally be processed only after 6-8 months and needs a calendar year of processing in total. We then boil it for an hour and a half in special stainless-steel boilers. Then it is ready to be processed. To obtain the bottle-cork, the cork bark is cut into strips, graded according to thickness and for the various desired cork sizes. We then begin processing it: we perform an olfactory analysis on each individual piece. After that, it is heat treated to completely destroy the bacterial flora.

CORK OAK
The *Quercus Lexus Suber* is a close relative of the holm oak, which however do not produce cork. It produces two types of cork. The male, from the first extraction, is used for uses such as nativity scenes. Mature extractions become female, or gentle, and this bark is used for processing.

You said olfactory analysis... do you smell them?

I told you I was crazy... We smell the corks one by one. Even when I cut the cork, during processing, I perform a continuous sniffing: the cutting blades heat up the cork and bring out hidden odours. It took me 50 years of work to develop this sensitivity (laughs).

So, can you perceive the famous “cork taint”?

Exactly. The defect is caused by an anisole which, in contact with wine, develops a substance that is extracted by alcohol. Hence the well-known musty smell, the musty odour. To try to overcome this problem, we have been using our sense of smell for some time now. It is not a 100% foolproof technique, but it allows us to identify the TCA, which is the correct name for the molecule. Then it depends a lot on the batch of cork.

Speaking of which: can the quality of cork change from tree to tree, even if they are in the same oak forest?

Let me give you an example. We can divide Sicily into two prime areas for cork. One area, in the north, runs from the Madonie Mountains to the Nebrodi Mountains, overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea. The other is where we are, in the south-eastern area: Syracuse, Ragusa, up to Catania. In the northern strip, production is heavier, but the quality of the cork is poor. Our own cork oak forests, like the “Bosco di Santo Pietro”, have unique characteristics, excellent quality. But they are disappearing. For the type of product I work with, the cork oak forest is an essential component. I go and look for those that are well exposed to the sun, and ventilated, since this helps to give us cork with less moss, less lichen and less humidity. In Sicily we use to have a territory with a lot of cork. Today there is very little left. There was no economic factor, so it was not correctly valued and also because the production cycle is so long.

SEASONALITY

Cork extraction takes place in the summer period, roughly from 15 May to 31 August. However, the timing may vary depending on seasonal trends: in particularly dry years, such as 2024, cork oaks tend to close early, making the operation more difficult.

So, it is also a question of environmental protection...

You have to learn to work in harmony with nature. Many cork oak forests that could have survived better have been damaged due to carelessness and a lack of respect for the trees. Consider that cork only grows in the Mediterranean (and in Portugal). It needs the sea breezes, the sun, mild air--that is, it needs our climate. It doesn't grow above 700 metres. It is a tree that feels the cold (laughs). So, we should work well here where we are, with people who have respect for the tree.

And how?

You have to know them, the trees. Love them. I think of them as old giant elephants, slow, that have lived many lives. I always caress the tree after the bark removal. It's a wonderful feeling. What I ask my guys when we work in the forest is to respect the tree. Since it's a job that has to be done with an axe, it's easy to damage the phellogen, the place where the cork grows on the tree. Every blow you give is a wound you inflict on the tree. This wound needs to heal. If done badly, the bark removal can even kill the tree. You always have to know when to stop.

Isn't it economically profitable?

Of course: cork oak forests are now only on state property. They survive only for this reason, and we hope that they will continue to keep them alive. And there are many problems flowing from a lack of training and professionalism... Many times, we see cork oak forests that are poorly cared for. They could be fixed and could produce excellent cork.

Despite neglect, arson and other misdeeds, the Bosco di Santo Pietro, donated by Roger the Norman to Caltagirone in the 12th century, is the largest cork oak forest in central-southern Sicily.

Once upon a time, a single bark-removal operation produced 15,000 cartloads of bark for the production of corks. Today the situation is as described by Massimo. But the Occhipinti winery, which uses only Sicilian cork, dreams of replanting the forest, which is a few kilometres from Vittoria. The project would protect the area, preserve an ancient craft, and create a truly local supply chain, all in support of a product like wine in such a renowned growing area as Vittoria.





PART III

LANDS

What use is an ancient vineyard?



by ROBERTO MERLO

The “Pettineo Project” is an agricultural laboratory, a genetic encyclopaedia, to study the grape varieties that over time have proven to survive, and to produce, even in extreme conditions.

The evolution of the viticultural world in the last 30 years has achieved unthinkable goals and continues to take constant steps forward.

The selection of genetic material has also made constant progress, influenced by viticultural and qualitative aspects at the same time. However, this evolution has determined a sort of genetic “homologation” of the viticultural heritage, which in some cases has also lowered resistance to particular diseases and impoverished viticultural “biodiversity.”

In the past, viticulture was characterized by the multiplication of varieties with positive characteristics, such as crop yield and resistance to water shortages or particular diseases. The vineyards hosted different biotypes or varieties, and with this differentiation, winemakers enjoyed greater guarantees of production continuity. The objective of good viticultural practice, in fact, was to obtain resilient strains that could adapt to variable annual weather conditions so that crop yield was constant and long-lasting over time. This is the reason why the “old vineyards” are often made up of vines that are not identical to each other, but obtained from a lengthy process of massal selection aimed at favouring cultivars that had demonstrated in the field the most-desired characteristics.

We are living in a period in which sensitivity towards the environment and in some respects the recovery of traditions are regaining ground in common thought.

The “Contrada Pettineo” vineyard, which is the fruit of massal selection, represents an example of an “old vineyard” and for this reason efforts have been undertaken to preserve it.

Project

The “Pettineo” vineyard in Vittoria was selected because it is considered the oldest in its territory.

The first documents regarding this parcel date back to 1963, the year in which the previous owner purchased it. It is not known how old the vines are today, but at the time of purchase they were already mature and productive. The age of the vineyard cannot help but make us reflect on the great resistance that its vines have shown in surviving over so many years, many of which were challenging, due to difficult conditions that were often quite variable. It is for this reason that the Pettineo vines will furnish propagation material to preserve this precious genetic treasure and create a new vineyard.

Vineyards like Pettineo are often a source of inspiration. Here Arianna found some splendid examples of vines propagated at least 25 years earlier through the layering technique, traditionally used to replace failed vines. Today, this method has been re-evaluated and is widely used by the winery.

Massal selection began with the observation of the most “beautiful” vines and those apparently free from viruses, which often affect vines in old vineyards. Subsequently, the buds were removed to produce young vines useful for replacing vines missing within the vineyard.

The production of the young shoots was entrusted to Vitis Rauscedo, a professional nursery specializing in vine propagation. The new vineyards were created by field-grafting the shoots onto previously-planted wild vines. The aim is therefore to plant vines with un-grafted roots, that is, not grafted onto American rootstocks, in order to maintain the characteristics of the grape variety as intact as possible and the link between the soil and the grapes as direct as possible.

The vineyard recovery process will be slow; it's likely that the first results will be observed in no less than 5 years. But if this ambitious project is successful, we will have a vineyard that can be defined as perpetual.

Massal selection is the traditional technique of vegetative propagation of the vine. It is so called because it allows the multiplication of an entire vineyard, maintaining maximum genetic variability within the same variety.

Layering is a technique that consists in burying a shoot in order to multiply a certain plant by propagation. Layering creates a new vine that remains anchored to the mother plant.

The poetry of the *palmento*. Is it just nostalgia?

INTERVIEW WITH ARCHITECT
BRUNO OCCHIPINTI

Rural architecture tells the story of the culture of wine, agricultural traditions, and the peculiarities of a land. Like Vittoria. But can it also be a model for the future?

In Sicily, every town and city has its own specific agricultural architecture. The peculiar trait of Vittoria is that no one lived in the countryside. In the evening, farmers returned to the city. People only went to the countryside to work. This led to a local variant of the *palmento*, or grape-crushing and fermentation vat, usually carved into living stone, and agricultural buildings.

Architect Bruno Occhipinti, who has worked passionately to recover this heritage and who knows the history and evolution of the peasant culture of Vittoria, tells Solco about it.

B.O. Vittoria is a city that was specifically founded, dating back to the period of the Spanish viceroyalty, at the beginning of the 1600s, so it is only 400 years old. In that period, new cities were created and new inhabitants were attracted by the abolition of duties for those who moved there. In addition, in the founding decree, each new citizen was promised an amount of land to cultivate.

So, the city was born with a strong agricultural bent?

B.O. Yes, it was, but it was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the great transformation took place, thanks to viticulture. In fact, what made Vittoria great was its wine production, since the entire territory planted with vines, from the upper part to the sea. In parallel, an architecture designed for the needs of wine production also evolved.

Hence the *palmento*...

B.O. Not only that. There are two types of architecture. A poorer one, linked to the need to protect oneself from the elements, from the heat, the cold or the rain. These homes were very basic, sometimes just a few square meters – a room, in short. They were not linked to agricultural productivity, but simply answered a personal need. This is the first architecture, defined as subsistence, just the bare minimum.

And the second?

B.O. With the development of wine production, things changed. More organized structures began to be built, such as the *palmento*, and everything that surrounds the world of wine. But the architecture linked to the *palmento* had a typically Vittoria evolution here.

With what characteristics?

B.O. The local *palmento* here was not the same as that of other areas. In Marsala, for example, white grapes were pressed and the must immediately put into barrels. Here, however, red grapes were grown, and therefore vats were necessary for the must to macerate.

Did this determine the birth of a typical Vittoria *palmento*? How did it work?

B.O. So, the *palmento* is essentially made of a furrow or trough. The grapes were transported by mules, then unloaded. They were pressed by foot, literally (actually, the workers wore boots, otherwise they would hurt themselves...). The pulp, together with the must, flowed down the trough into vats dug into the ground, where everything macerated for about 48 hours.

All this happened in the *palmento*.

B.O. Exactly. Then, the other architectural module was the cellar, which had no particular design other than that of a room holding wooden casks and vats. After the 48-hour maceration, the must and pulp were transferred to the open vats, where the fermentation then took place. While the *palmento* had the trough and floor for crushing, the cellar was a simple environment. Normally the cellar and *palmento* were connected to each other, one in front of the other or side by side.

In practice, a combined production unit...

B.O. Yes. Around this unit, depending on the economic conditions of the family, houses were built, which could be small complexes or other buildings. The Occhipinti winery is an example of this: a typical rural building intended for production, with a *palmento*, an olive mill to make olive oil, stables and more, in short, a complex structure that revolved around a courtyard.

How long did these winery complexes survive?

B.O. Vittoria maintained a typically wine-based agricultural economy until the 1950s. After that, things began to change. Other grape varieties began to be planted and “protected agriculture” began to spread, inside greenhouses. This led to a **significant change in the agricultural landscape.**

Like the dry stone walls?

B.O. Yes, another fundamental element of our territory. Those walls had a double function: that of clearing the land of stones, and of creating the boundary walls that served to delimit the parcels and the grazing areas. Today everything is being lost, because as they fall no one rebuilds them. A metre of dry stone wall costs 80-90 euros. In a property there are kilometres of them, well, just do the math...

But is it just an economic issue?

The biggest obstacle is money. But not only that. There is also the issue of time.

What do you mean?

B.O. The rush to make money. The young business class in the area is not oriented towards wine production, but towards greenhouse agriculture. To plant a vineyard and see the first results, you need three years. Not to mention the olive tree and the carob tree. In a greenhouse, for tomatoes, 3 months are enough. **Today, the concept of waiting no longer exists!**

Has this led to the abandonment of agricultural architectural structures?

B.O. In part, yes. **However, we are trying to recover what can be recovered.** Regarding the palmento, some of them have actually been restored, but many structures remain in a state of abandonment. For now, 20% of the structures have been put back into operation. Some palmenti have been converted to other functions, still connected to wine, such as tourist facilities, tasting rooms or museums, but often these renovations have led to the loss of their original agricultural functionality.

Like that of a winery?

B.O. Yes, even if some companies are trying to bring this heritage back to life. The world of wine is more sensitive to this type of direction, because it's more accustomed to waiting and has a different sensitivity to the passing of time. And then it is more tied to the suggestions of tradition because the great narrative of wine values the poetry of old buildings where the harvested grapes were processed. Wine tells stories. Certainly, a tomato or a cucumber - even if they represent driving sectors of the economy - a little less so. For this reason, **we develop and promote this growing area and its wine, the Frappato di Vittoria and the Nero d'Avola, so that they can become more recognized and appreciated tools to give value to an architecture with a unique character.**





PART IV



CREATIVITY IN THE COMPANY?

Massimiliano Saccarelli invites us to think of a company as a marketplace of innovative contributions, as a porous ecosystem between within and without, with hybrid figures between employee and management capable of delivering creative contributions.

By MASSIMILIANO SACCARELLI

A REFLECTION OUTSIDE THE PROCESSES

Cryptolaemus montrouzieri

- coccinellide predatore di numerose specie di cocciniglie cotonose (pseudococcidi)
L'adulto può vivere oltre due mesi
- Le uova sono deposte in vicinanza delle prede così che le larve possano trovare facilmente cibo in grande quantità.
- In poco più di un mese si compie il ciclo da uovo ad adulto che passa attraverso lo sviluppo di 4 stadi larvali (in fx della t) : a 27 gradi la larva impiega un mese a diventare adulto mentre a 20 impiega 50 giorni.
- Gli adulti devon cocciniglie, così
- La capacità di p del fitofago.
- La femmina dop prodotte.
- Una volta nate, del parassita.

"One climbs the sycamore
to see if the Lord ever passes by.
Alas, I'm not a climber
and even standing on tiptoe
I've never seen him."

– Eugenio Montale

I was asked to write a reflection on creativity in companies. I take my inspiration from Montale. I too, in over forty years, have passed through companies in Europe and Asia, walked through corridors, projects, hierarchies. And, like the poet, I have found no traces of true creativity. The company is an organism whose architecture is born with a precise objective: efficiency. All the managerial theories of the twentieth century - from Taylorism onwards - are the children of the need for control, standardisation, and predictability. Innovation, therefore, in the best of cases, is, rather, continuous, sustained improvement, not generative creativity. And yet, at the origin of every enterprise there was a creative, visionary, founding act. Creativity was not born within the company, but before the company. The challenge, therefore, is not to find creativity in the company, but to understand how to keep alive the drive that generated it.

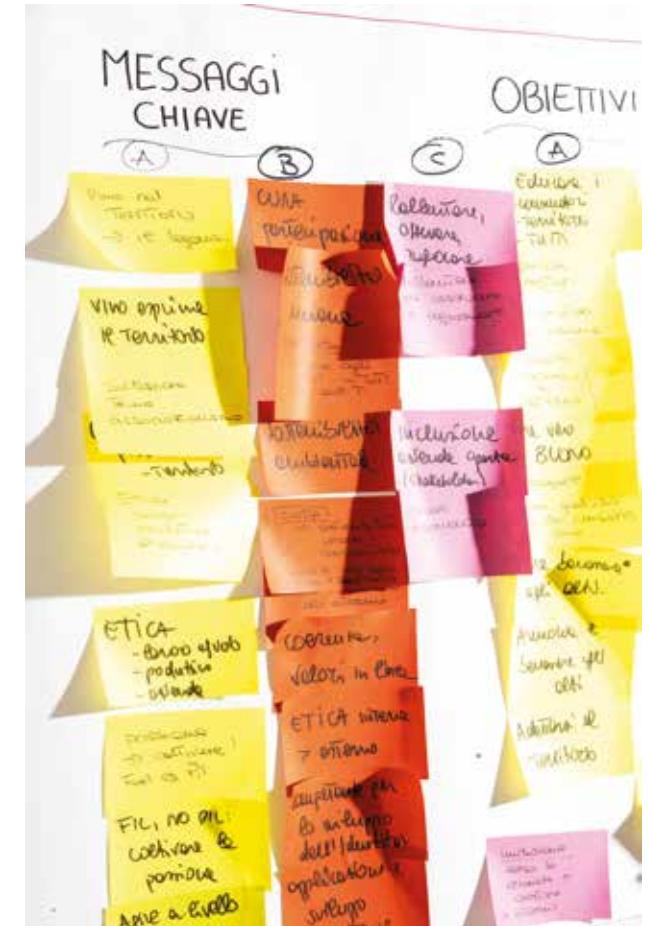
Why does creativity struggle to manifest itself in the company?

Because, paradoxically, creativity needs voids. Voids of control, of prediction, of efficiency. Neuroscience tells us that during moments of mental inactivity, such as mind-wandering, a brain network called the Default Mode Network (DMN) is activated. This network is associated with self-reflective and creative thought processes. A recent study showed that the DMN plays a causal role in creative thinking. During tasks that require the generation of original ideas, the DMN shows significant activity. Furthermore, when the activity of the DMN is temporarily reduced through electrical stimulation, the creative capacity of the participants decreases significantly. Creativity does not arise in productive effort, but in the interval. The company, however, is designed not to leave voids. Even when, provocatively, “white hours” or “empty time” are introduced by the company, the logic that governs them remains the same: predict, channel, measure. **But creativity is more like Eros, Plato would say: elusive, unprogrammable, unrationalizable.**

Creativity as misalignment

Creativity, after all, arises from a gap in vision, from a point of view that is “other” than the mainstream. In this sense, the company could be the perfect place to host creative visions, because it is full of contradictions, tensions, misalignments. (Gallup surveys also say so: most people do not feel aligned with the values and functioning of their organization.) But today the outsider is expelled, not integrated. Thinking of the

company as a marketplace for innovative contributions, as a porous ecosystem between inside and outside, would be the real revolution. Otherwise, talking about creativity in the company will remain just impressive, sophisticated hypocrisy.



What's next?

A future in which, rather than pushing creativity into the company, the company accepts that creative processes happen outside of it. And it equips itself to recognize them, welcome them, integrate them. In this sense, even the word “employee” should be overcome. We need a new figure, a hybrid between employee and manager, capable of bringing creative contributions that are not just “ideas to put in the box” to win company awards, but initiatives to co-develop. The real turning point will be to rethink the mechanisms of participation

and value distribution. Those who contribute with a radical solution do not remain external or subordinate, but participate in the value generated. In this way, the company can begin to generate the conditions for something that does not yet fully exist: a hybrid figure, **neither employee nor manager**, but bearer of visions. A presence capable of moving between rules and intuitions, between belonging and autonomy, between identity and transformation. It will not be the result of a new organizational scheme, but of the cultural evolution that we will be able to accompany. Perhaps the true act of creativity is finding a way to let creativity happen wherever it wants to happen, but then also finds advantage in returning to the company.



BREAKING THE FRAME

ROMPERE GLI SCHEMI

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

The world of wine is full of preconceptions: small is good, large is industrial, natural wine is not good, wine is always natural, conventional wine is the devil's work.

Over the past 20 years, I have seen many sector and media professionals lock themselves into preconceived thought patterns. A comforting grip on the public, perhaps, but a foothold often far from the truth. In a historical juncture in which it is increasingly difficult and revolutionary to hold an independent opinion on things, how can we untangle ourselves from the plots of preconceptions, always so complex? A close friend of mine who teaches at an international business school used to say **"Break the frame"**: Break the mold, burst through the limitations imposed by rules, habits or predefined expectations. Adopt a creative

approach, dare, explore new ideas, teach in an unconventional way. Encourage creative thinking, be curious, adopt new behaviours and habits, change your perspective, face those challenges. Explore your internal and external world with courage and, indeed, without any preconceptions.

I found this way of thinking stimulating in places such as the Arlberg Weinberg festivals in Lech, Austria, Montréal en Lumière in Quebec, and the Mad Symposium in Copenhagen. Here, in exchanges with people from different parts of the world and with an open attitude, we asked ourselves what we were going to do, where we were going, and what was happening in the world of wine. We have not come up with definitive answers, but we have asked wonderful questions, in the belief that crises are necessary in

order to design a future that is different, new, unprecedented. And that only individuals, by joining together, have the power to change things.

Physical and mental places, people, relationships: Solco tells us how wine can unite and profoundly transform us. Today more than ever, we feel the need to be together, to touch each other, to feel each other, to listen to each other. To live the beauty of physical experiences, true emotions, to follow an ethic, to rely on understanding and altruism towards others. Wine has shaped me, and I want to convey to everyone the power that it has had on me. Wine has transformed a block into something new and regenerative. First, for me alone, and then for all those around me. We are in a moment of powerful change, in wine, in politics, in society, in people. In this state of affairs, what can be our contribution as farmers and, even prior to that, as human beings? How can we really impact the present? By acting on people through wine, which is both a means and an end. It is the means to transform our wineries into engines of culture and identity, with the aim of making the best wine possible, harvest after harvest, growing area after area.

Agriculture is an engine of development in growing areas: as farmers, we are custodians of places. We choose a portion of soil and sky to protect and, together with other farmers, together with the sea, with our forests, these protected spots design our landscapes. Agriculture is biodiversity: diversity of shapes, colours, identities, people, professionalism. Agriculture represents the diversity of the world; we farmers know this better than anyone else. So, let's keep all this firmly in mind, and create a bridge to the future that embraces biodiversity.

We create connections with our own corner of earth through artisans, photographers, architects, agronomists, historians, and fellow producers, all those who steward a portion of wisdom and knowledge of the places that we farmers protect with so much love. Let's exchange ideas, participate in the activities of local associations to create a strong and resilient community over time. And let's tell all this to those who come after us. People are our great challenge. We work every day to shape sensitive people, with a respect for Nature and a culture of work, that beautiful culture

that springs from passions and generates passions. Let us invest in training, workshops, meetings, striving to develop a cohesive group in which new ideas without preconceptions can take root. And in our wineries new loves, new products, and new projects that will last over time.

Solco represents a journey that starts from wine and returns to wine. I hope that, by reading it, everyone can develop unconventional thoughts and a new sensitivity, inspired by those who, like me, have followed the wonderful path of a farmer, guardian of our land.

It is not an easy path, but who ever said it would be easy?

Arianna Occhipinti

PS. The following section is designed to leave space for an artist, a photographer, for someone who through their own optics and personal gaze can interpret the themes that Solco explores. In this issue, that personal gaze into the territory is Melissa Carnemolla's.

PHOTO SECTION CAPTIONS, IN
ORDER OF APPEARANCE.

1. Life under our feet: macros of the communities that inhabit the surface soil. Tireless ants play a key role in the organic cycle that nourishes the soil.
2. Germination: a newborn bunch of grapes reveals the promise of future harvest.
3. Baglio Fossa di Lupo in late spring.
- 4-5. Within the ruins of an ancient farmhouse, vestiges of a vanished baglio.
6. Still life of an iron gear: symbolic discovery in the baglio of Arianna Occhipinti. Traces of the mechanical history of wine.
7. Detail of a wall that has become detached over time.
8. The ruins of an abandoned baglio: architecture that resists silence.
- 9-10. Working moments.
11. A fully trimmed tree visually intertwines with road signs. Man and nature in a raw and necessary dialogue.
12. Portrait of Mr. Vaccarella: face of someone who has experienced the work of the land.
13. Antique abandoned lathe: object-memory.
14. Macro of the soil in Contrada Bastonaca.
15. Spring landscape with the arrival of rain: the anticipation, the breath of the countryside.
16. Architectural detail of a place of refreshment: shade and care in the rural heart.
17. Massimo Vitale with a burned cork tree.
18. Pattern of glass bottles during bottling.
- 19-20. Working moments during bottling.
21. Portrait of a Vigna Madre plant in Contrada Pettineo: plant identity of the place.
22. The dilapidated interior of a once stately mansion: wine was made in the basement.
23. Arianna Occhipinti: portrait of someone who guards the soil with respect and vision.
24. The vineyard in Contrada Fossa di Lupo: vigor and plant geometry.
25. Engraving of the year of construction of the renovated millstone in Contrada Bombolieri in Vittoria.
26. Exterior of a rural dwelling in the countryside of Vittoria.
27. Remains of a decaying rabbit. Even in death, the rabbit is part of the cycle of the earth: prey, problem, nourishment.
28. View of the ancient village of Fossa di Lupo XVII, Piazza del Progresso.
29. Detail of the calcareous clay soil of Santa Margherita, Chiaramonte Gulfi.
30. Massimo Vitale and son in front of cork barks: portraits in the heart of cap art.
31. The sky above Arianna Occhipinti Estate: the gaze opens, the work continues.
32. An insect above a wildflower: the miracle of pollination in spontaneous life.
33. Facade of an abandoned, roofless ruin. On the top, spontaneous flowers grow: botanical endurance.
34. Detail of the trunk of a 'pianta madre': strength and layering of time.
35. Growing bunch of grapes: time translated into pulp and hope.
36. Macro detail of a poppy flower with pollinator insect: silent dance between forms and functions.
37. During bottling: the wine, the tube and the 'garolla' attachment, the precision that preserves.
38. Two walls built in different eras look at each other: dialogue between stones and generations.
39. Bottling in progress: the wine enters its final form.
40. Plant of Vigna Madre in Contrada Pettineo, without buds: life on pause.
41. Contrada Santa Margherita, Chiaramonte Gulfi: a curiously shaped olive tree sculpted by time.
42. A large fracture in a perimeter wall: from this open wound we glimpse a dark forest that has invaded the interior, claiming man's space.
43. Detail of a consolidated fracture inside a room belonging to an ancient noble house devoted to wine production: matter holds memory.
44. Restored antique lathe: a gesture of care that restores dignity to an object that bears witness to hands, gestures and toil.
45. Secular olive tree.
46. Architectural detail of an abandoned baglio: traces of forgotten elegance between crumbling walls.
47. Macro of a bud at the end of winter: the vine's first response to the return of light.
48. The underground: invisible layers nourishing life on the surface, interweaving organic history.
49. Wild plants and flowers under a sky threatening rain: delicacy that defies the moment.
50. Spontaneous composition of elements, in the countryside of Vittoria.

ARIANNA OCCHIPINTI

Arianna Occhipinti, born in Marsala and raised in Vittoria, inherited a passion for wine-growing from her uncle Giusto, founder of the COS winery, and a love of the countryside from her architect father Bruno. After studying Viticulture and Oenology in Milan, she decided to dedicate herself to artisanal wine as an authentic expression of the territory. In 2004, he founded his own winery in Sicily, investing in Nero d'Avola and Frappato vineyards. Over time, the winemaking project turned into an extensive biodiversity project also consisting of olive groves, wheat, pear orchards, citrus groves, vegetable gardens, carob trees and Mediterranean scrub. Its wine philosophy is inspired by biodynamics and respect for nature, producing wines that reflect terroir and human labour. With an annual production of around 160,000 bottles, his wines are distributed in 60 countries.

GUGLIELMO MANENTI

Guglielmo Manenti is the owner of the Manenti Vini winery, located in Vittoria, in southern Sicily. The winery was founded in 2006, with the first harvest and the first bottles of Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG. In March 2024, Guglielmo Manenti was elected president of the Consorzio di Tutela dei Vini Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG e Vittoria DOC.

SALVO FOTI

Salvo Foti, born in Catania in 1962, grew up working in the vineyard and in the palmento. An oenologist since 1981, he has worked with Sicilian companies, particularly those in the Etna region, contributing to the birth of successful wineries. He has carried out internships in Italy and France and taught oenology in sommelier and 'Wine Manager' courses. He has published technical and popular books on viticulture, including *Wine in the History of Sicily and Etna. The Wines of the Volcano*. He has also collaborated with scientific institutes and newspapers in the wine sector. Today, in addition to continuing his consulting activities, he directs a winery on Etna.

NIKOLAS RESIN E WAIATA KALMA

Nikolas Resin and Waiata Kalma are a German/New Zealand couple with a passion for natural wine. In Chiaramonte Gulfi, they created their project Azienda Agricola Kalma, where they produce Nero d'Avola, Frappato and Merlot, olive groves and citrus orchards. Nikolas studied oenology in Germany. He then worked in South Africa and Spain before moving to Vittoria as collaborator of COS. Waiata worked as a sommelier in London, Melbourne and Paris. After working in Roussillon at Domaine Matassa for two years, they chose Sicily for their wine and life project.

GIUSTO OCCHIPINTI

Giusto Occhipinti is Arianna's uncle, but above all he is her mentor. He founded this winery in 1980 together with two friends. From the first letters of their three names (Cilia, Occhipinti, Strano) the name Domaine COS was born. Giambattista Cilia and Giusto Occhipinti, who now run the company alone, have become renowned as pioneers in Sicily of biodynamic viticulture and amphora winemaking. They are also staunch defenders of Sicily's only DOCG: Cerasuolo di Vittoria, and their cuvée is a marvel of delicacy. Giusto is as sincere as his wines.

FABIO MAZZA

Fabio Mazza, class of 1996, export manager for Kippis. With a background of more than four years in wine imports, he has turned his passion into a profession, driven by his curiosity about the stories, places and people that bring each bottle to life.

ROBERTO MERLO

Born and raised in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Roberto Merlo has been a viticultural consultant since 2003 and a founding member of Uva Sapiens in 2013. The company provides oenological assistance, training and viticultural consultancy. Merlo is the viticultural manager with a specialization in pruning and management of Esca Disease. He published a book entitled "Il doppio capovolto: potatura e gestione del Mal dell'Esca per un vigneto longevo," and has written several articles on the subject in industry magazines.

MASSIMILIANO SACCARELLI

Massimiliano Saccarelli lives in Paris and works throughout Europe. He has 25 years of managerial, entrepreneurial and consultancy experience behind him and a background in training and education that touches on diverse fields: from business to psychology and architecture. He has led large companies in Asia and Europe through change projects. He headed a large consultancy firm in Paris supporting people in their change journey, using an original approach that combines entrepreneurship and psychodynamics, to support leaders and organizations in their process.

MASSIMO VITALE

Massimo Vitale inherited his passion and professional vocation from his father. He trained professionally over the years with different companies, where he learned various processing methods. From the 1990s until 2005, he explored the decortication process of cork oaks, for the extraction of cork bark for the production of bottle corks. In 2005 he founded his family business, Vitalcork, where he definitively follows the process from start to finish, from the decortication of the cork planks to the delivery of the finished product. He is the last cork worker in Sicily to direct the production of the cork in every phase.

BRUNO OCCHIPINTI

Bruno Occhipinti, born in Ravenna in 1951, works as an architect. He mainly deals with restoration, with particular reference to rural architecture and wine cellar design. With his daughter Fausta, a landscape architect, he has supervised the recovery of numerous rural settlements involved in winemaking, which over time, due to the introduction of new production techniques, had lost their functionality and had been abandoned. Today, after their restoration, they have often become the image of agricultural companies that are increasingly attentive and sensitive to the environment and the territory.

SOLCO

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out of wine with
the desire to
make culture
and explore the
world.

From an idea by

ARIANNA
OCCHIPINTI

Editorial
Coordination

GIANLUCA
BISCALCHIN

Photography

MELISSA
CARNEMOLLA
@assile_m

Graphic design

STUDIO FORWARD

Communication
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INEDITA

Translations

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