



THE
ATHENÆUM
PALL MALL LONDON

Tuscan Wine Dinner with Music

November 15th, 2023

Operatic extracts from the great Italian Maestros

Introduced by: Dr Victoria Preston,
musical introduction by David R F Thomas (Members)

Guest Speaker: Giuseppe Mazzocolin (Fèlsina Winery)

Special Guest: Inigo Lambertini, Italian Ambassador to the United
Kingdom, introduced by Desmond Cecil (Member)

Chairman: Professor James Crabbe



The Cantina, Fèlsina Winery

Music in the Drawing Room

Introduced by: David R F Thomas, Chairman of the Music Committee

Accompanied by: Fèlsina Spumante Brut Metodo Classico Sboccatura Tardiva 10 Anni, 12% ABV

MUSIC PROGRAMME

Una Voce poco Fa from *The Barber of Seville* (Rossini) sung by Serena Kay

Gioachino Antonio Rossini (1792 –1868) gained fame for the 34 operas he wrote between 1810 and 1823. He set new standards for both comic and serious opera before retiring from large-scale composition while still in his thirties, at the height of his popularity. Born in Pesaro to parents who were both musicians, Rossini began to compose by the age of twelve. In 1824 he visited London (at the time of the founding of the Athenaeum.) He died in Paris in 1868 where his funeral was attended by more than four thousand people. In 1887 his remains were moved to the basilica of Santa Croce, Florence.

Vissi d'Arte from *Tosca* Act II (Puccini) sung by Natasha Day

Nessun Dorma from *Turandot* Act III (Puccini) sung by Anando Mukerjee

"Minnie, dalla mia casa son partito" from *La Fanciulla del West* (Puccini). sung by Alexander Learmonth

Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924) was known primarily for his operas, and was perhaps the most successful proponent of Italian opera after Verdi. Although his early work was firmly rooted in traditional romantic Italian opera, he later developed his work in the realistic *verismo* style, of which he became one of the leading exponents. He was born in Lucca, Tuscany, as a member of a sort of musical dynasty founded by his great great grandfather, who was maestro di cappella at the cathedral. In 1899 he bought a villa in Torre del Lago (near Lucca). *Il Trittico* (including *Gianni*

Schicchi) and *Turandot* were his last compositions. He died in Brussels in 1924 while he was still composing *Turandot*. His body now rests in a chapel at Torre del Lago.

The quartet from ***Rigoletto*** Act III (Verdi)

Giuseppe Verdi (1813 – 1901) dominated the Italian opera scene in the middle and late 19th century. He was born near Busseto on the fringes of Tuscany to a provincial family of moderate means, receiving a musical education with the help of a local patron. In his early operas he demonstrated a sympathy with the movement for the unification of Italy, and became a hero of the Risorgimento. Reaching full musical maturity in the 1850s with works such as *Rigoletto*, he achieved international fame. In his later years, he composed less, but finished his career with four stupendous masterpieces: *Don Carlos*; *Aida*; *Otello* and *Falstaff*.

Accompanist: Richard Hills; Conductor: Brian Henry; Notes: David Thomas

Performers:

Serena Kay (Soprano), was a Choral Scholar at London University before winning a scholarship to study opera School at the Royal College of Music. She has performed principal roles with ENO, WNO, Opera North and English Touring Opera and has appeared as soloist in concert with the Philharmonia, RPO and BBC Concert orchestras. Her operatic career has taken her to varied and interesting places, such as Kenya where she sang Cenerentola in a game reserve to an invited audience and many wild and interesting uninvited ones!

Natasha Day, (Soprano), trained at the ENO 'Opera Works' course and the RCM's International Opera School. Recent engagements have included *Violetta* (ROH Reimagined and Devon Opera); *Tosca* (Opera Brava); *Woglinde* (BPO); and Verdi's *Requiem* with the Brandenburg Festival Orchestra at Eton College. She won First Prize at the Złote Głosy Competition in Warsaw, Second Prize at The Filharmonia Czestochowska

Competition and The Most Promising Singer Award at the Emmy Destinn Competition in Prague.

Anando Mukerjee, (Tenor), studied in the UK with the legendary Nicolai Gedda. An Italianate spinto tenor specialising in Bel-canto, Romantic and Verismo opera along with oratorio and art-song from the Baroque to the Modern eras. He has appeared at the Kennedy Center, the National Centre for the Performing Arts (Bombay) & Wigmore Hall. He was a finalist in the 2012 Wagner Society Bayreuth Bursary Competition and has been regularly featured on the BBC & All-India Radio. He is at present an Organist in the Church of England. He sang Cavaradossi in the Athenaeum production of *Tosca*.

Alexander Learmonth, (Baritone and Member), was introduced to the Club as Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 2016, our first opera, and has sung in each of our subsequent productions: Scarpia, Guglielmo and the title roles in *Don Giovanni* and *Gianni Schicchi*. He has performed and recorded with some of the country's leading choirs, including The Tallis Scholars and The Cambridge Singers, and taken roles with Pop-Up Opera (Don Alfonso, Belcore), Opera In A Box (Macbeth, Germont) and Windsor & Eton Opera (Conte di Luna). He has also sung for Lynda Snell on *The Archers*. In his spare time, he practises as a KC.

Richard Hills, (Pianist and Member), is one of the very few musicians to have bridged the divide between the classical and theatre organ worlds. He gained organ scholarships at Exeter College Oxford, Portsmouth Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. He is presently organist at St Mary's, Bourne St. Richard's career in the theatre organ world has been equally prestigious, winning numerous prizes and awards. He was named 'Organist of the Year' in 2010 by the American Theatre Organ Society. He has appeared many times as a soloist on TV and Radio in programmes as diverse as BBC's *Choral Evensong* and *Friday Night is Music Night*, and he made his solo debut at the BBC Proms in 2013.

Brian Henry, (Conductor)

Menu

A tasting selection of extra virgin olive oils (2023) from Fèlsina : Leccino, Pendolino, Moraiolo, Correggiolo; from Intini in Puglia: Alberobello, and from Titone in Sicilia: Marsala.



Fèlsina Berardenga Chianti Classico DOCG 2020, 13.5% ABV

Crostini Toscani

Paté di fegato di pollo con marsala, capperi e acciughe
Chicken liver paté with marsala, capers and anchovies



Fèlsina Maestro Raro IGT 2019, 14% ABV

Pappardelle fresche all'uovo con ragù di cinghiale
Fresh egg pappardelle with wild boar ragu

Cinghiale cotto lentamente marinato con rosmarino, alloro e ginepro in
una ricca salsa di pomodoro
Slow cooked wild boar marinated with rosemary, bay and juniper in a rich
tomato sauce



Fèlsina Rancia Chianti Classico Riserva DOCG 2015, 14% ABV

Filetto di manzo arrosto con rosmarino e salvia, patate arrosto, fagioli
cannellini e funghi selvatici
Roasted beef fillet with rosemary and sage, roasted potatoes, cannellini
beans and wild mushrooms



Fèlsina Vin Santo del Chianti Classico DOC 2015, 14% ABV

Crostata di fichi e frangipane servita con mascarpone al miele
Fig frangipane tart served with honeyed mascarpone

Giuseppe Mazzocolin – A Vignette

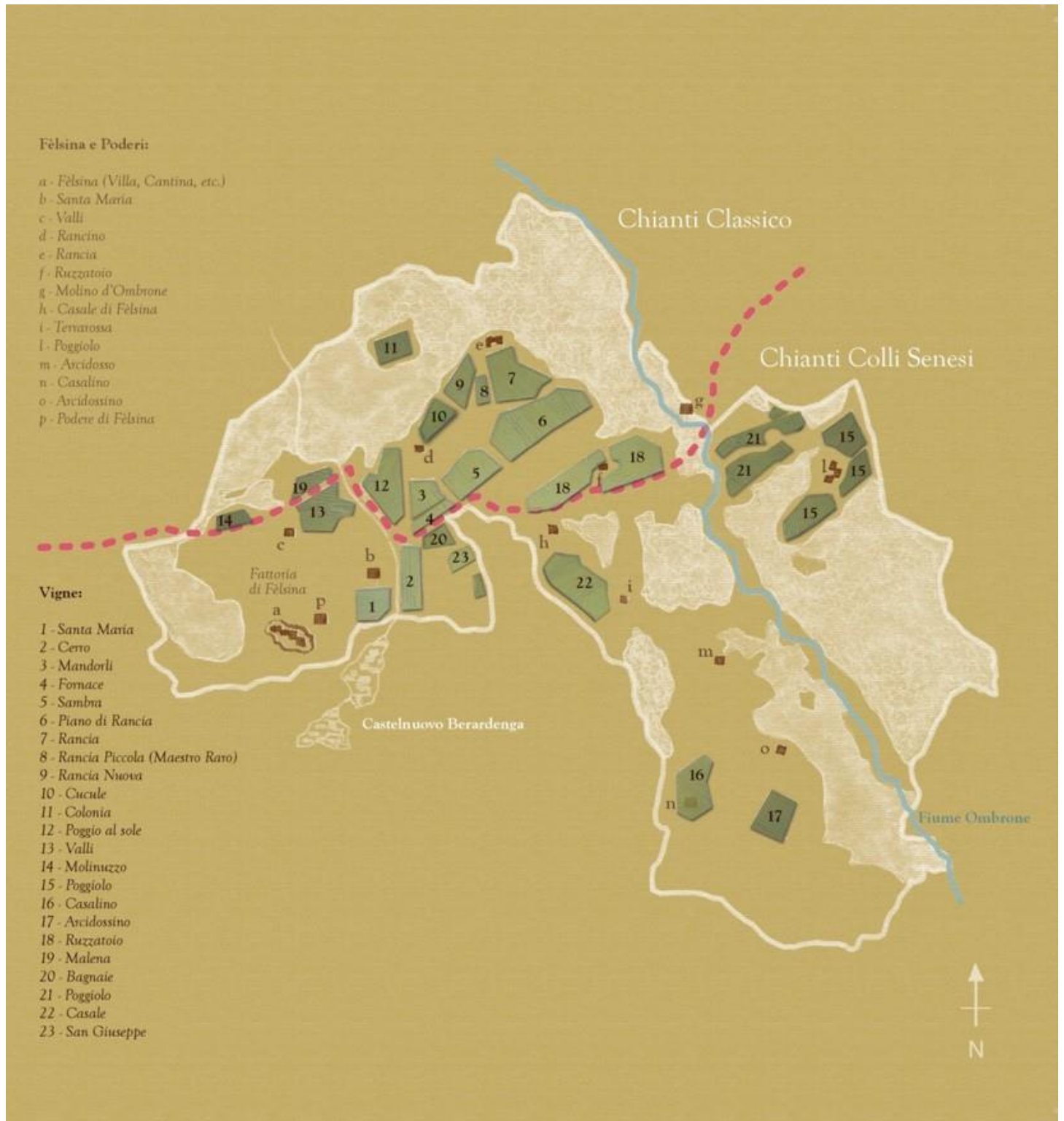
Giuseppe Mazzocolin was not weaned in the world of wine but wed into it. He married Gloria Poggiali, whose father Domenico founded and ran Fèlsina. Giuseppe is originally a stranger to Tuscany. His origins lie in the Veneto, where he was born and raised and became a teacher of Italian literature. It was when teaching took him to Florence that he met Gloria, and his life took an unexpected turn. Despite initial apprehension, he swapped books for boots and adapted quickly and enthusiastically to life in the vineyard.



It was not long before Sangiovese was running through his veins, in large part thanks to the lifelong professional and personal rapport forged with Fèlsina's famed oenologist, Franco Bernabei. Together they conceived and delivered Fèlsina's three legendary "crus" (Rancia, Fontalloro and Maestro Raro) and transformed Fèlsina into one of the most pre-eminent and recognisable vinous names; not just in Tuscany, but nationally and even globally. Giuseppe will tell you that this process arose from meticulous attention to detail in both the vineyard and the cellar, which remains the governing ethos for the new generation now at the tiller. Despite the success and acclaim, though, Giuseppe has never allowed wine to overshadow his innate interest in culture and music. Still less has it ever trumped his primary and evangelical passion; for the intelligent and ecological cultivation and pressing of extra virgin olive oil, high in quality and low in quantity. The various elements of this evening's programme perfectly represent his polymath character.

Mark Shaw KC

An introduction to Fèlsina Wines



Fèlsina is located on the south-east edge of the Chianti Classico appellation, between the last spurs of the Chianti hills and the beginning of the Ombrone valley. The entire Fèlsina estate covers 600 hectares, of which 72ha are planted with vines. From a geological viewpoint, Fèlsina is a “frontier land” nestled between the Chianti Classico and Crete Senesi areas, in the direction of Montalcino. Rocky calcareous soil, with a preponderance

of laminated marl, are common characteristics in Chianti, along with layers of sandstone with silt and clay, with marine sediments rich in minerals. These effects yield characteristics, which are specific expressions of the terrain and Fèlsina's wines. The Fèlsina Estate is characterised by particular micro-climates and specific terroirs. Its Sangiovese (or Sangiovetto, the original Tuscan word) was initiated in 1983 with a programme of massal selection (a term used to describe the practice of replanting new vineyards with cuttings from exceptional old vines). From the selection of vineyards in the 1970s and 1980s, thorough investigations were conducted to identify the most suitable parent plants and grafting and replanting took place in the various vineyards in the 1990s and 2000s.

The family describe themselves as 'farmers' intent on creating a sustainable environment for growing grapes over the long-term using a mixture of biodynamic and modern techniques in the vineyard. To contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, wild herbs and plants such as alfalfa, sorghum, millet, sunflower, field beans are planted in and around the vineyards. Nevertheless, they are also pioneers, endeavouring to cultivate many different Sangiovese clones and rootstocks, creating a wide diversity of nuances and possibilities for their wines.

Fèlsina's activities are centred not only on wine and but also on the production of olive oil. Since 2002 they have undertaken the project "Oil according to Veronelli"¹ seeking to match the olive variety to its *terroir*. The three production areas: Fèlsina, Pagliarese and Boschi produce four olive varieties – Pendolino, Leccino, Moraiolo and Raggiolo (Correggiolo). Each oil reflects the characteristics of its olive variety, assuring traceability throughout the production chain, from cultivation through processing, accompanied by constant testing and tasting.

¹ Olive oil, like wine, should be appreciated in terms of its specificity, its type, its *terroir* and its production processes. The writer, Luigi Veronelli, is reputed to have said that a fish should swim three times: in water, in oil, and in wine.

Fèlsina Spumante Brut Metodo Classico Sboccatura Tardiva 10 Anni, 12% ABV

‘Sboccatura Tardiva’ means late disgorged. In sparkling wine production, disgorging is the process by which excess yeast or ‘yeast lees’ are removed from the bottle, topping up with ‘liqueur d’expédition’, before the cork is inserted. In late disgorged sparkling wine, disgorgement is delayed letting the wine develop mature tertiary flavours. This unique Fèlsina Spumante wine has been in contact with its lees for ten years, keeping intact its notable characteristics of minerality and freshness.

General Characteristics

Grape Variety: 60% Sangiovese, 20% Pinot Noir, 20% Chardonnay

Growing area: Northeast of Siena, in the commune of Castelnuovo Berardenga, on the southern border of the Chianti Classico denomination.

Harvest: Manual in small cases

Vinification

After careful selection, the grapes are softly pressed. The must obtained is cold raked, decanted and fermented at a controlled temperature. Bottling takes place in spring, adding sugars and selected yeasts to start the second fermentation. After 10 years of ageing in the bottle, the disgorgement takes place, topping up with ‘liqueur d’expédition’. Bottled - April 2011.

Sugar Level at Disgorgement - No Sugar Added.

Sensory Profile

Straw yellow with golden reflections, brilliant, very fine and persistent ‘perlage’ (mousse). The nose is intense, fresh and complex. Floral and dried fruit notes stand out, with aromas reminiscent of pastries and croissants. Ample and persistent on the palate, with a flavoursome and well-balanced mineral vein which denotes excellent acidity, accompanied by a long and sustained finish with notes of candied fruit.

Fèlsina Berardenga Chianti Classico DOCG 2020, 13.5% ABV

Chianti Classico is the mainstay of the Estate's production. The vineyards are located in Castelnuovo Berardenga, in the south-eastern part of the Chianti Classico appellation, to the south-east of Siena. Almost exclusively with a south-western exposure, they sprawl across ventilated slopes at an altitude ranging from 320-420 meters above sea level. Geologically, the terrains are mixed: in the higher parts the soil is predominantly rock quartz and calcareous alberese² mixed with alluvial pebbles. Strataform sandstone and loam (soil composed mostly of sand, silt, and a smaller amount of clay) characterize the vineyards on the edge of the Colli Senesi in the direction of the Crete Senesi.



Castelnuovo Berardenga

General Characteristics

Denomination: Chianti Classico Docg

Grape variety: 100% Sangiovese

Growing area: South-east of Siena, in the commune of Castelnuovo Berardenga, on the southern border of the Chianti Classico zone

² Alberese limestone, among the five most common soils, dates back to the Eocene period, namely more than 50 million years old. It is a stoney soil, rich in calcium carbonate and clay and poor in organic substances.

Vineyard density: About 5,400 vines per hectare

Harvest: Staggered due to different altitudes of the vineyards, within the first three weeks of October

Vineyard age: Replanting took place between 1990 and the early 2000s

Vinification

After the quality-selected clusters are de-stemmed and pressed, the must is fermented and macerated in stainless steel for 12-15 days at 28°C to 30°C, with programmed punch-downs and daily pump-overs. In March-April, the wine goes into medium-size Slavonian oak barrels (said to have mellowing effect on the taste and texture), and a small percentage into twice and thrice used oak barrels. After 12 months of maturation, the final blend is assembled, bottled, and aged a minimum of 3 months. First vintage 1967.

Sensory Profile

Ruby red with deep intensity and hue. Fruity, fine and elegant aromas dominated by wild berries, along with array of spicy notes. Fruity on the palate with good tannins and a lingering finish.

Fèlsina Maestro Raro IGT 2019, 14% ABV

The grapes come from the vineyards Rancia Piccola and Poggiolo.

General Characteristics

Denomination: Indicazione Geografica Tipica Toscana.

Grape Variety: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon.

Growing area: Rancia Piccola and Poggiolo.

Vineyard density: about 5,400 vines per hectare.

Harvest: hand-picked.

Vineyard age: replanting took place in the late 1980s

Vinification

After the quality-selected clusters are de-stemmed and pressed, the must is fermented and macerated in stainless steel for 16-20 days at 28°C to 30°C, with programmed punch-downs and daily pump-overs. In March-April, the wine is matured in new French oak barrels for 18-20 months and bottle aged for a minimum of 8-10 months. First vintage 1987.

Sensory Profile

Deep red with shades of purple and violet. Aromas of berries, tobacco, leather and black tea, without any particular herbal or grassy notes. Consistent, warm and harmonious on the palate. Good elegance and persistence with ample finish.

Fèlsina Rancia Chianti Classico Riserva DOCG 2015, 14% ABV

The Rancia vineyard takes its name from the historic Rancia farmhouse, once a Benedictine monastery. Located in Castelnuovo Berardenga at elevations ranging between 400 to 420 metres it has a fine southwest-facing exposure. The more recent plantings utilize genetic material from massal selections³ gathered from the old Rancia vineyard. The soil is composed of limestone-derived alberese and galestro marl (rocky, schistous clay soil which delays ripening and adds acidity to wine).



Rancia, Castelnuovo Berardenga

³ Planting new vineyards or replacing dead vines with rootstocks taken from old vineyards planted before clonal planting became widespread, thus preserving the clonal variation of these older vineyards, resulting in new vineyards with significant clonal variation.

General Characteristics

Denomination: Chianti Classico Riserva Docg

Varietal: 100% Sangiovese

Growing area: Poggio and Rancia area

Vineyard density: about 5,400 vines per hectare

Harvest: Exclusively hand harvested, generally starting in the first weeks of October

Vineyard age: replanting took place in the early 2000s

Vinification

After the quality-selected clusters are de-stemmed and pressed, the must is fermented and macerated in stainless steel for 16-20 days at 28°C to 30°C, with programmed punch-downs and daily pump-overs. In March-April, the wine matures in new French oak barrels. After 18-20 months, the wine is assembled, bottled, and aged for a minimum of 6-8 months. First vintage was 1983.

Sensory Profile

Ruby red appearance with rich, intense tones. Spicy nose with floral notes and hints of wild red and black berry, accompanied by mineral impressions and light toasted notes. Spice re-appears on the palate, which displays firm but supple tannins, and the finale is vigorous and taut. Overall, the wine is compelling for its flavour-rich mid-palate and supporting acidity.

Fèlsina Vin Santo del Chianti Classico DOC 2015, 14% ABV

The ancient tradition of 'Vin Santo di Fèlsina' is embodied in the passage of the 'mother' - the yeast remaining from earlier vintages - from the previous year's casks to the next. The process has been modernized through careful grape selection, attention to the drying process and meticulous care in vinification and ageing. Adding Sangiovese to the Trebbiano and Malvasia has created a special "Vin Santo di Fèlsina" signature style.

General Characteristics

Denomination: Vin Santo del Chianti Classico Doc

Varietal: Trebbiano, Malvasia and Sangiovese

Growing area: Vineyard Valli and vineyard Il Poggiolo, located in the commune of Castelnuovo Berardenga, northeast of Siena, on the southern border of the Chianti Classico denomination

Vineyard density: about 5,400 vines per hectare

Harvest: hand-picked

Vineyard age: replanting took place in the early 2000s

Vinification

After rigorous selection, the clusters are subjected to a natural drying process on mats until January-February of the following year. They are then de-stemmed and pressed, and the must is transferred to sealed 100 litre oak casks containing the 'mother', a thick substance remaining from previous vintages. After seven years in the 'vinsantaia' loft area, the wine is bottle aged for a minimum of six months.

Sensory Profile

Golden yellow, with coppery highlights. Peach, apricot, pineapple and tropical dried fruit aromas. Consistency on the palate, softness and elegance, structured by the oak barrels. Wine with great balance, favourable acidity and a well-harmonized residual sugar. Long in the mouth.

Dr Victoria Preston, adapted from material supplied by Fèlsina Winery.

Members and Guests

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