



THE
ATHENÆUM
PALL MALL LONDON

SARDINIAN WINE LUNCHEON

to be held on

Wednesday 3rd June 2026 at 12:30pm

The Wines and Cuisine of Sardinia

Presenters: Dr Jonathan Punt - Professor Neil Pearce

Chaired by: Professor Frank Larkin



Su Nuraxi di Barumini – 17th to 13th centuries BCE

A UNESCO World Heritage Site

MENU & WINES

Aperitivo

Focacietta Rossa

[Light *focaccia* with seasoned tomato sauce]

**Contini 1898 , DOC Vernaccia di Oristano Riserva, 1997,
ABV 18%**

100% Vernaccia di Oristano

Primo Piatto

Insalata di Trote

Pane carasau (Carta da Musica)

[Grilled trout infused in lemon extra virgin olive oil, oregano
confit new potatoes, whipped *bottarga di muggine*]

**Sella & Mosca, “Catore”, DOC Alghero Torbato, 2023,
ABV 14%**

100% Torbato

**Siddùra, “Spèra”, Vermentino di Gallura DOCG, 2024,
ABV 13%**

100% Vermentino

Secondo Piatto

Pollo al guazzetto

[Braised chicken with herbs, fregola, grilled courgettes and artichokes]

**Tenute Dettori, *Badde Nigolosu “CHIMBANTA”*, Romangia
IGT, 2021, ABV 14.5%**

100% Monica

**Santadi, “*Terre Brune*”, Carignano Del Sulcis Superiore
DOC, 2020, ABV 15%**

95% Carignano: 5% Bovaleddu

**Podere Guardia Grande, “*L’Alghe*”, Alghero Cagliari DOC,
2024, ABV 13.5%**

100% Cagnulari

**Alberto Loi Cardedu, “*Sa Mola*”, Jerzu, Cannonau di
Sardegna DOC, 2021, ABV 14%**

100% Cannonau

Dolce

Dolce di Ricotta

[Whipped ricotta, *Mirto*, mixed red fruits and Sardinian pastry]

Zedda Piras, “*Mirto Di Sardegna*”, NV, ABV 32%

Coffee, Tea, Chocolates

WINE IN SARDINIA

Sardinia is part of Italy - but only just. It has been heavily influenced by four hundred years of Catalan rule, as well as being governed by Carthage, ancient Rome, and also by the Byzantines and Arabs. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that two of its most significant grape varieties – *Cannonau* (*Garnacha*) and *Carignano* (*Carignan/Bovale Grande*) are of Spanish origin.

The wild landscapes of Sardinia are largely given over to the grazing of sheep, and Sardinia in fact exports more wine corks than it does wine. The vineyards are mostly in small areas in crags and valleys in the island's western half. However, the long-term isolation of Sardinia, and its wine industry, means that there are a large number of indigenous grape varieties that are only just beginning to be studied. Research in 2012 found that there are 250 grape varieties grown on the island of which only 24 have been registered. Among the most well-known are *Vermentino*, *Nuragus*, *Cannonau*, *Carignano* and *Vernaccia di Oristano* (distinct from Tuscany's *Vernaccia*). More generally, there are four different types of wine - dry, sweet, a liquoroso dry wine, and a liquoroso sweet wine.

The climate is scorchingly hot and parchingly dry, but with cool Mistral winds sweeping down from the Rhône valley, as well as the moderating effects of the Mediterranean. The DOCs are also not particularly informative. The production zones for *Vermentino* and *Cannonau* cover the entire surface of the island. As a result, most producers have ignored the DOCs and prefer the lowly IGT which involves less bureaucracy.

Most vineyards are small, and wines have for the most part been made by government-sponsored cooperatives with

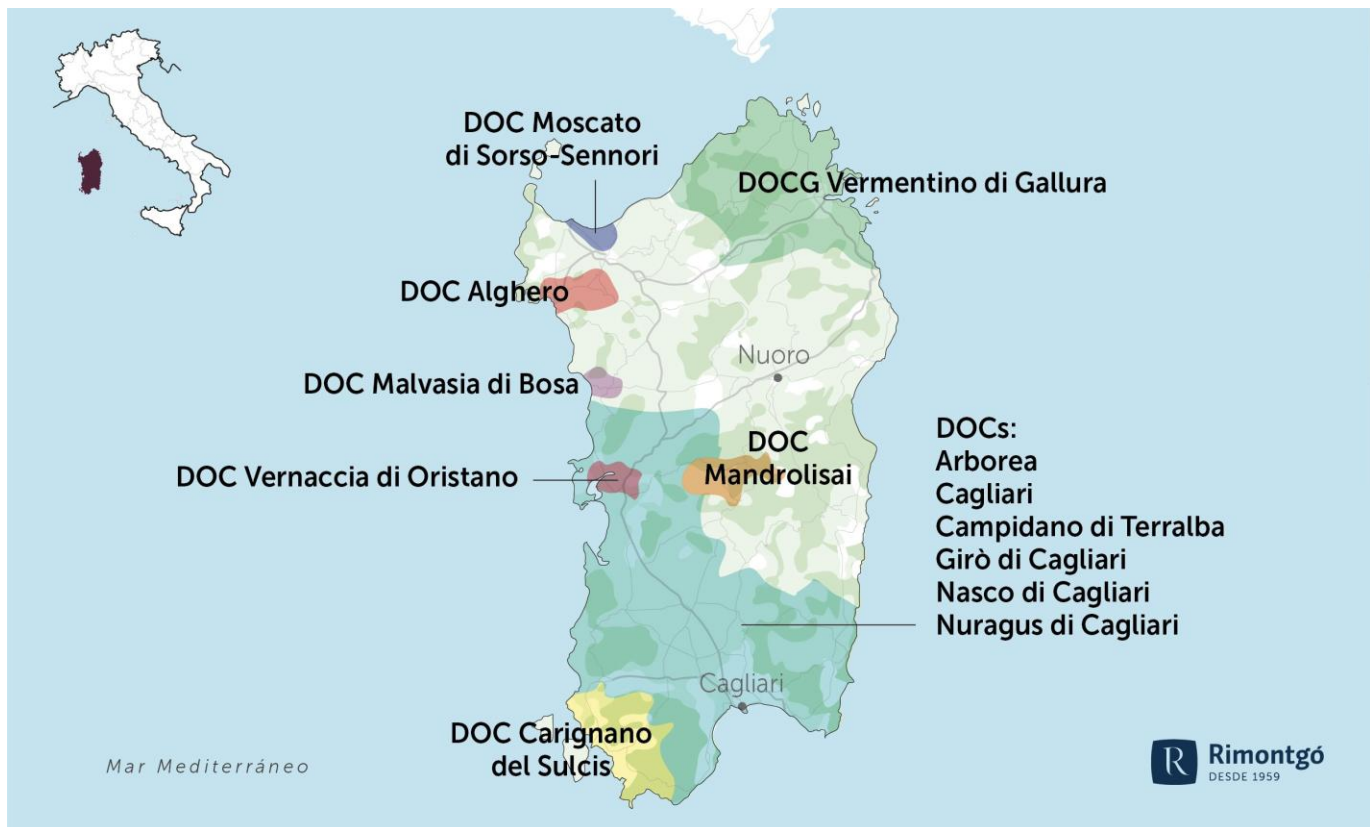
varying quality. However, like the rest of Italy, in recent decades there have been major improvements and moves towards cleaner and higher quality wines. Many of these come from ungrafted vines - Sardinia was not spared phylloxera, but was only lightly affected. There has also been a move from low-yielding bush vines (*alberello*) to high yielding wire-trained vines.

Vermentino is perhaps regarded as Sardinia's gift to the wine world - known on the Ligurian coast as *Pigato*, in Piemonte as *Favorita*, and in Southern France as *Rolle*. *Vermentino di Gallura* was the island's first DOCG. *Vernaccia di Oristano* is also producing quality wines in a wide variety of styles. More generally, like the rest of Italy, the quality of Sardinian wine continues to improve, with increased development of little-known indigenous grape varieties.

WINE REGIONS OF SARDINIA



SARDINIA: QUALITY WINE CLASSIFICATIONS



Wines shown at the Luncheon

Regions & Classification

Grapes

White

DOC Vernaccia di Oristano

Vernaccia di Oristano Riserva

DOC Alghero

Torbato

DOCG Vermentino di Gallura

Vermentino

Red

IGT Romangia

Monica

DOC Carignano Del Sulcis Superiore

Carignano, Bovaleddu

DOC Alghero Cagliari

Cagnulari

DOC Cannonau di Sardegna

Cannonau

FEATURED GRAPES

Vernaccia di Oristano



Vernaccia di Oristano

Vernaccia di Oristano is first mentioned in a legal book, the “*Breve di Villa di Chiesa*” preserved in the Archivio Storico Comunale in the town of Iglesias in South-Western Sardinia. Dated to 1327, there are noteworthy rules as to separation of barrels of wines according to single named varieties including “*varnaccia ... greco ... vermiglio ... [and] brusco bianco*”, the latter being a wine of non-Sardinian origin. *Vernaccia di Oristano* has been attributed to a Phoenician import dated to 800 BCE via the Western port of Tharros. Alternative proposals have been either a Spanish origin, on account of the grape having the synonym *Granaccia*, or even a local domesticated

version, as implied by etymological derivation from the Latin “*vernaculus*” [ie: domestic, native].

Vernaccia di Oristano is virtually confined to Valle del Tirso, Province of Oristano, on the central West coast of Sardinia. Vinification may be in dry, sweet or fortified (*liquoroso*) styles, all with regulated minimum ageing requirements in oak or chestnut barrels traditionally employing a *solera* system, as with fine sherries: accordingly, the majority of the wines are blends of different years. The local microclimate and yeast may result in a thin development of *flor*, with a distinct effect on the flavours that can be appreciated in the resultant wines. As in **Contini 1898, DOC Vernaccia di Oristano Riserva**, [*vide infra*].



Barrel aging at Contini 1898

Torbato



Torbato

Torbato may have come to Sardinia from Catalan Spain in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. *Torbato* is genetically identical to *Malvoisie du Roussillon* which was recorded in Limoux, Southern France, in 1804, where it is now rarely cultivated, and it is also related to the Portuguese varietal *Arinto*. Currently the varietal is found mainly in the region of Alghero on the North-West coast of Sardinia where it is championed by the cantina of *Sella & Mosca*. Cultivation is difficult on account of late ripening and thin-skinned berries which are prone to fanleaf virus and powdery mildew. The vines prefer calcareous clay soils and a warm, dry climate, notably the marine-derived, chalk-rich *terre blanche* soils around Alghero, as revealed in **Sella & Mosca, “Catore”, DOC Alghero Torbato**, [*vide infra*].



Sella & Mosca vineyard

Vermentino



Vermentino

Vermentino is the most important white varietal in Sardinia, possibly having arrived there from Spain between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The varietal buds early, making it vulnerable to Spring frosts and it is mid ripening. It relishes proximity to the sea notably in the North-West of Sardinia where the granitic and sandy soils contribute to refreshing minerality and acidity from whence arises the DOCG accolade awarded in 1996, the first and sole Sardinian wine given this highest classification.. The popularity of Sardinian *Vermentino* was well-recognised on the Italian mainland, notably favourably in Genoa in the nineteenth century, since when Sardinian plantings have risen to 17% of the island's vines. The finest examples display aromatic, citrus, white flower flavours, as expressed in **Siddùra**, "**Spèra**", **Vermentino di Gallura DOCG**, [*vide infra*].

Monica



Monica

In Sardinia there is a confusing multiplicity of varieties taking the name *Monica*, mostly having dark berries. How viticulture and viniculture of *Monica Nera* arose in Sardinia is unknown: alternative suggestions include cultivation in the eleventh century by Camaldolese monks, [viz “*monaci*”], and Spanish origins under Aragonese rule from 1323 to 1720. Typically all the varieties display large leaves, and large bunches of loosely packed blue-black berries of various shapes. *Monica Nera* is grown throughout Sardinia and may be vinified to produce a range of dry, sweet, fortified, or sparkling styles of wine. Unblended wines are produced in addition to cuvées blended with *Cannonau*, [aka *Garnacha*], and *Bovale Sardo*, [aka *Graciano*]. Unblended *Monica Nera* may be produced throughout the island as DOC Monica di Sardegna whereas DOC Monica di Cagliari may only emanate from Cagliari and Oristano. If yields are kept low, flavours of red berry fruits tinged with herbs, tobacco and tar provide an easy-drinking, lighter table wine such as **Tenute Dettori**, **Badde Nigolosu** “**CHIMBANTA**”, **Romangia IGT**, [vide *infra*].

Carignano



Carignano

Carignano, a Traditional variety in Sardinia, most probably originated in Spain, being introduced into the island when it was under Aragonese rule from 1323 to 1720. The absence of the white colour mutations that are found in Spain (*Cariñena Blanca*) and France (*Carignano Gris*) make it improbable that the varietal arose in Sardinia. The late budding and late ripening nature of *Carignano* benefit from the hot, dry Sardinian climate. Shallow sandy or clay/sandy soils and a marine environment complete the perfect setting, most notably achieved in the South-West of the island. High acidity and tannins can usefully benefit from oak ageing that softens structure and draws out complexity. The effect can be full-bodied, soft, almost creamy textured wines displaying ripe black fruits, spices and earthy tones that contrast most favourably with those less impressive offerings derived from the same grape in France and Spain, as manifested in **Santadi**, “**Terre Brune**”, **Carignano Del Sulcis Superiore DOC**, [*vide infra*].

Bovaleddu



Bovaleddu

Bovaleddu (aka *Bovale Sardo*) is another varietal that, as with *Carignano*, probably also owes its introduction to Sardinia to four centuries of Aragonese enfeoffment, [*vide supra*], thereby also being regarded as a Traditional variety. There is a substantial resource of old vines in Sardinian soil providing for replanting by massal selection. The majority of the 784 hectares planted with *Bovaleddu* lie in the South-West of the island around Cagliari and the adjacent regions of Terralba and Campidano, where it is suited to the clay and limestone soils and cooler microclimate. Its characteristics of mid to late budding, late ripening, and difficult growth result in low yields justifying its local appellation of “*Baovabi Mascu*”, [“*Male Bovale*”]. The grapes contain very substantial pigment that requires hard work to extract, and the juice is acidic with tannins that can be brutal. Accordingly, it is mostly blended for its colour, acidity and perfume as found in **Santadi**, “**Terre Brune**”, **Carignano Del Sulcis Superiore DOC**, [*vide infra*], where it comprises just 5% of the blend.

Cagnulari



Cagnulari

There is dispute as to whether *Cagnulari* and *Bovaleddu* are identical. Whereas investigations have demonstrated that the two varieties do have shared alleles; numerous points of morphology; and are both late ripening, there are material differences in the form of their bunches, the shape of their berries and their leaves: the latter being rounder in *Cagnulari* which generally have three lobes as opposed to the five displayed by *Bovaleddu*, [vide supra]. There is a view that the two varieties are closely related and that *Cagnulari* is a biotype of *Bovaleddu* that arose through centuries of adaption to its Sardinian habitat. The variety is yet another Aragonese import. It suffered such reduction in plantings in the twentieth century, due to extreme sensitivity to rot, that necessitated its rescue from extinction. It is grown around the North-Western city of Sassari and although principally blended, its red berry, fruit and floral perfumes can be found in 100% *Cagnulari* cuvées such as **Podere Guardia Grande, “L’Alghe”, Alghero Cagliari DOC, 2024**, [vide infra].

Cannonau



Cannonau

Cannonau's many synonyms, [eg *Garnacha Tinta* in Ribero del Duero; *Garnaxa* in Catalyuna; *Grenache* in France], are just one reflection of the varietal's World status which will not only persist, but will probably grow, by way of its ability to cope with the globally spreading dry, hot climates. For 70 years *Cannonau* has been the most common, and the most important, varietal grown in Sardinia; it now amounts to 29% of the total. Regrettably, its popularity has not always been matched by quality on account of DOC legislation resulting in various styles of vinification. Blending with International varietals is as unnecessary as it is to be deprecated. Whereas *Cannonau* may be grown throughout Sardinia, the finest examples are found in the Eastern province of Nuoro and the Central hills of Barbagia. When young the flavours are fresh, red, floral and herby: with age, spicy and nutty tints emerge as manifested in **Alberto Loi Cardedu, "Sa Mola", Jerzu, Cannonau di Sardegna DOC, 2021**, [*vide infra*].

**Contini 1898, DOC Vernaccia di Oristano Riserva,
1997, ABV 18%**



Contini 1898 vineyards

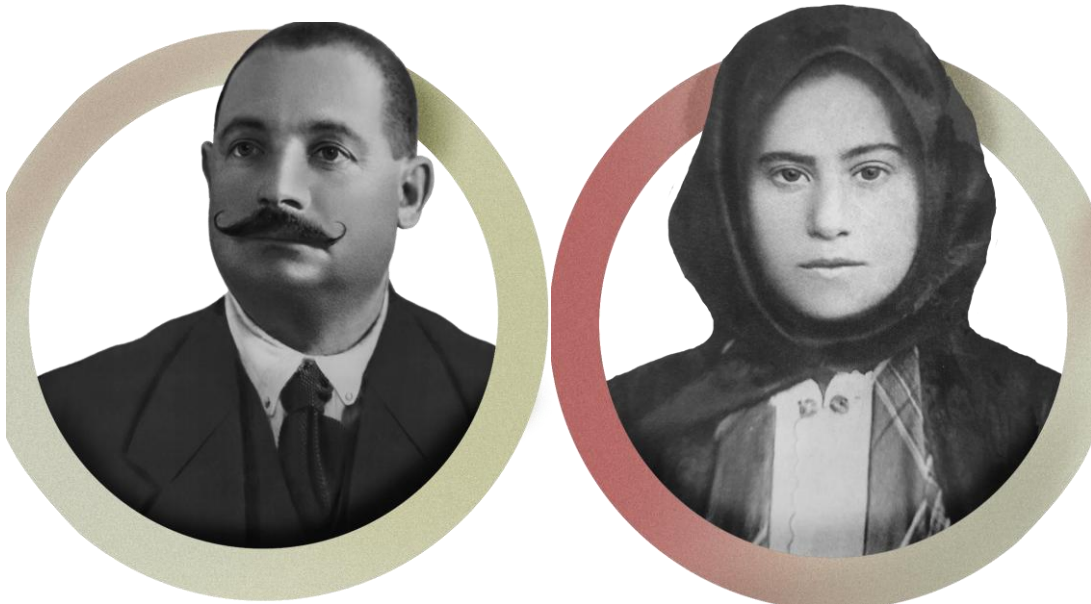
Grape: 100% *Vernaccia di Oristano*.

Soil: Alluvial, sandy, slightly clayey soil of the Lower Tirso Valley in the Sinis Area of Oristano on the mid-West coast a few metres above sea level. Typically Mediterranean with mild winters, limited rainfall and very hot, windy summers.

Oenologist: Piero Cella.

Viticulture: Head-training and espalier with Guyot and spurred cordon. Harvested in mid-October producing yield of 3,000 - 4,000 kg/hectare.

- Viniculture:** A traditional white winemaking process with soft pressing and fermentation at a controlled temperature.
- Maturation:** In oak and chestnut casks for at least 15 years. Kept drained to allow the development of the characteristic *flor* yeast veil.
- Character:** Gold yellow with amber reflections. Full and persistent on the nose, with hints of toasted hazelnuts and almond blossom. Dry, warm and full-bodied on the palate. Excellent structure with lingering finish tinged with almonds.
- Food pairing:** As an aperitif. Cured mullet roe and aged cheeses. Sweet biscuits.
- Ageing potential:** In excess of 25 years.



Salvatore Contini, and his wife Anna Maria Dessi
Founders - Contini 1898

**Sella & Mosca, “Catore”, DOC Alghero Torbato,
2023, ABV 14%**



Sella & Mosca Wine Estate – founded 1899

- Grape:** 100% *Torbato*.
- Soil:** Flat land in North-Western site with sea breezes. Medium-textured soil: clay, sand and limestone with rich iron content.
- Oenologist:** Giovanni Pinna.
- Viticulture:** Spurred cordon. 4,000 vines/hectare. Manual harvest in early October, producing yield of 9,500kg/hectare.
- Viniculture:** Gentle destemming and crushing followed by 24 hours of cold maceration; soft pressing; fermentation in stainless steel at a controlled temperature of 18°C; a small part fermented with the skins for about 100 days; a small part of the must is fermented

in new barriques. No malolactic fermentation.

Maturation: Several months in bottle.

Character: Full flavoured with typical hints of Mediterranean scrub, strawflower, pear and chamomile. Flint minerality with light savoury background and complex mouth texture.

Food pairing: Cured or grilled fish.

Ageing potential: 3 to 5 years' cellar life.



Sella & Mosca – Alghero vigneto

Website <http://www.sellaemosca.com>

**Siddùra, “Spèra”, Vermentino di Gallura DOCG,
2024, ABV 13%**



Siddùra – vigneto

Grape:	100% <i>Vermentino</i> .
Soil:	Sandy soil derived from granite. North-Eastern valley site at 300 metres ASL; surrounded by shrubs and exposed to sea breezes.
Oenologist:	Dr Dino Dini.
Viticulture:	Manual harvest between September and October with careful selection of the healthiest and most attractive bunches.
Viniculture:	Soft pressing preceding short maceration and controlled alcoholic fermentation, in stainless steel tanks.

Maturation: The must ages for a few months in contact with its fine lees and is then refined in bottle for at least one month before being put on the market.

Character: Striking straw yellow colour with green hints reflected in its name - “*Spèra*”, [beam of light]. On the nose there are intense notes of pear, quince, yellow citrus fruits and aromatic herbs. Full-bodied with complex savoury tones on the palate with additional hints of honey.

Food pairing: Poached or baked fish; scallop dishes.

Ageing potential: Probably up to 5 years.

Recognition: Voted best Italian *Vermentino* in 2024; “*Spèra*” has been in receipt of more than 100 International Wine Awards.



Siddùra - founded 2008: the tasting room

Website

<https://siddura.com>

**Tenute Dettori, *Badde Nigolosu* “CHIMBANTA”,
Romangia IGT, 2021, ABV 14.5%**



Tenute Dettori - Badde Nigolosu cru vineyards

Grape: 100% *Monica*.

Soil: North-West Sardinia at 250 to 300 metres ASL in the hills of Sennori. At the intersection of different geologic eras ranging throughout the Miocene and the Holocene providing both volcanic and sedimentary formations:

- creamy-white marl and limestone with loam-clay texture, well-drained and with good aggregation;
- sandstones and conglomerates;
- reddish, iron-rich soils, offspring of trachytic breakdown.

The Romangia benefits from reflected sunlight and breezes from the Sea of Sardinia.

Oenologist: Alessandro Dettori.

Viticulture: Uncontaminated 20 hectares of scrubland surrounded by dry-stone walls and shared with a wide variety of wild flora and fauna. Vines are trained in the low-lying *alberello* bush system. The vineyards contain only ancient native clones of the Romangia terroir. Replanting is by massal selection.



***Alberello* system - “sa sardisca”, [Sardinian style]**

Viniculture: Purpose built, totally underground brick cellar. Grapes, must and the wine are all gravity fed through the system. Fermentation in concrete tanks.

Maturation: Ageing in concrete tanks.

Character: On the nose, it expresses hints of myrtle, Mediterranean scrub, dried flowers, ripe red fruit and green cabbage. In the mouth, it displays depth, elegance and substantial length.

Food pairing: Traditional Sardinian meat courses such as *porceddu*.

Ageing potential: Probably 5 to 8 years.



Paolo and Alessandro Dettori – vignaioli, Tenute Dettori

Website <https://www.tenutedettori.it/>

**Santadi, “*Terre Brune*”, Carignano Del Sulcis
Superiore DOC, 2020, ABV 15%**



Santadi - vineyards, sand, and sea of Porto Pino

- Grapes:** 95% *Carignano*: 5% *Bovaleddu*. Mainly old vines.
- Soil:** Relatively loose and medium-textured, sandy and calcareous soils. Facing the sea in the South-West of the island.
- Oenologist:** Giacomo Tachis.
- Viticulture:** Vines mostly ungrafted, and trained in the *alberello* system.
- Viniculture:** Alcoholic fermentation in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks for 15 days, with frequent pumping over.
- Maturation:** From early December, the wine begins the ageing process in fine-grained French oak barriques for around 18 months. Ageing continues in the bottle for approximately 12 months.

- Character:** Intense red colour with granite reflections. Complex on the nose with flavours of plum, bilberry, bay, ginger, tobacco and chocolate. On the palate, it is soft and smooth with rich fruits and spices with elegant tannins.
- Food pairing:** Wild vegetables; slow-cooked red meats; grilled tuna belly; aged cheeses.
- Ageing potential:** 10 to 20 years.



“Terre Brune” - Guida Top 100 Migliori Vini Italiani 2024

winemag.it

Website <http://www.cantinadisantadi.it>

**Podere Guardia Grande, “L’Alghe”, Alghero Cagliari
DOC, 2024, ABV 13.5%**



***Podere Guardia Grande - vineyards, and Alghero coastline
between Capo Caccia and the Bay of Porto Conte***

Grape: 100% *Cagnulari*.

Soil: North-Western maritime region.
Sandy loam and clay of alluvial origin
with dry, pebbly soil, scattered with
quartzite stones. Unspoilt terrain of
Mediterranean scrub, old oak trees,
and myrtle bushes. Just 45 metres
ASL.

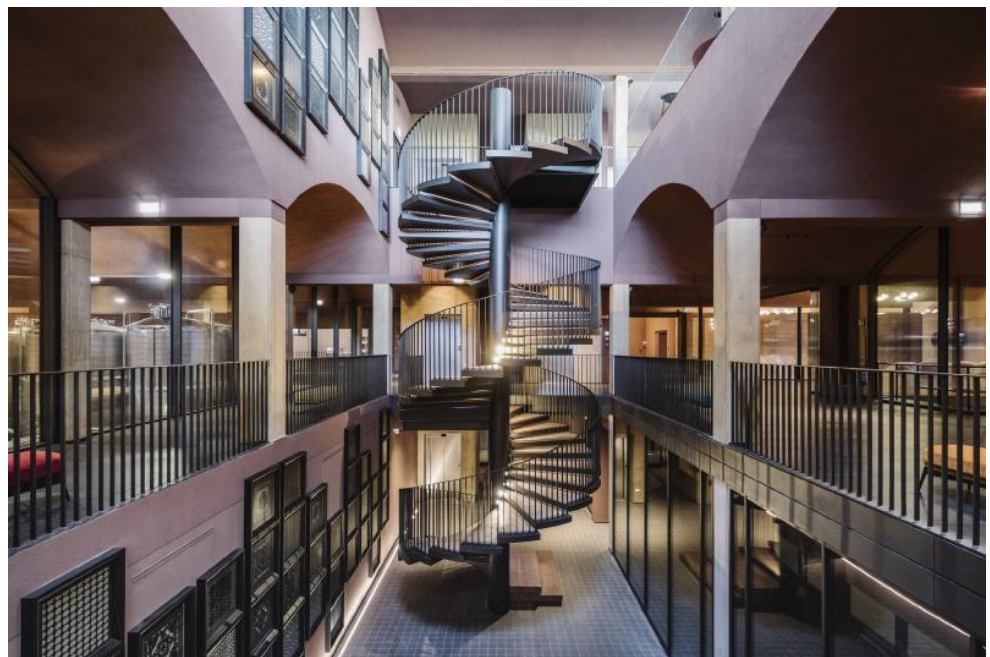
Oenologist: Not disclosed.

Viticulture: 3,850 vines/hectare trained in Single
Guyot system.



Guyot training.

- Viniculture:** Hand-picked grapes harvested early September, producing yield of 6,000 kg/hectare.
- Maturation:** Aged in small oak barrels.
- Character:** Ruby red in colour. The nose has notes of small red fruits, blackberries, liqueur cherries, mace, cinnamon, violets and eucalyptus. The mouthfeel is full and smooth. On the palate it is juicy and refreshing with savoury flavours leading on to spiced red berries. Good length with ripe tannins.
- Food pairing:** Charcuterie; tomato-based pasta dishes; ragù, lamb other red meats.
- Ageing potential:** 5 to 10 years.



Cantina Podere Guardia Grande

Casciu Rango Architetti: Architetto Cédric Dasesson

Website

<https://www.podereguardiagrande.it>

Alberto Loi Cardedu, “Sa Mola”, Jerzu, Cannonau di Sardegna DOC, 2021, ABV 14%



Alberto Loi Cardedu - Cardedu vineyards

Grape:	100% <i>Cannonau</i> .
Soil:	Crumbling granite and sandy schist. Situated in Ogliastro in the East Central countryside region of Cardedu.
Oenologist:	Sergio Loi.
Viticulture:	Vines of average age 20 years. High-density, low-espalier vine training. Integrated farming. Pruned to reduce yields.
Viniculture:	Initial period in Slavonian oak barrels for up to 14 months.
Maturation:	Four months in French oak followed by eight to ten months in bottle.
Character:	Ruby red colour. Bouquet of ripe red fruit, morello cherry, black pepper, and aromatic herbs, and floral hints, developing into liquorice, leather, and cocoa with ageing.

On the palate it is dry, warm, fragrant, with excellent length culminating in a distinctly mineral and earthy finish.

Food pairing: Game, pork, aged cheeses.

Ageing potential: 10 to 15 years.



Sergio Loi 4th generation traditional Sardinian enologo.

Website

[Vitivinicola Alberto Loi - Cardedu](http://www.vitivinicolaalberto.loi.it)

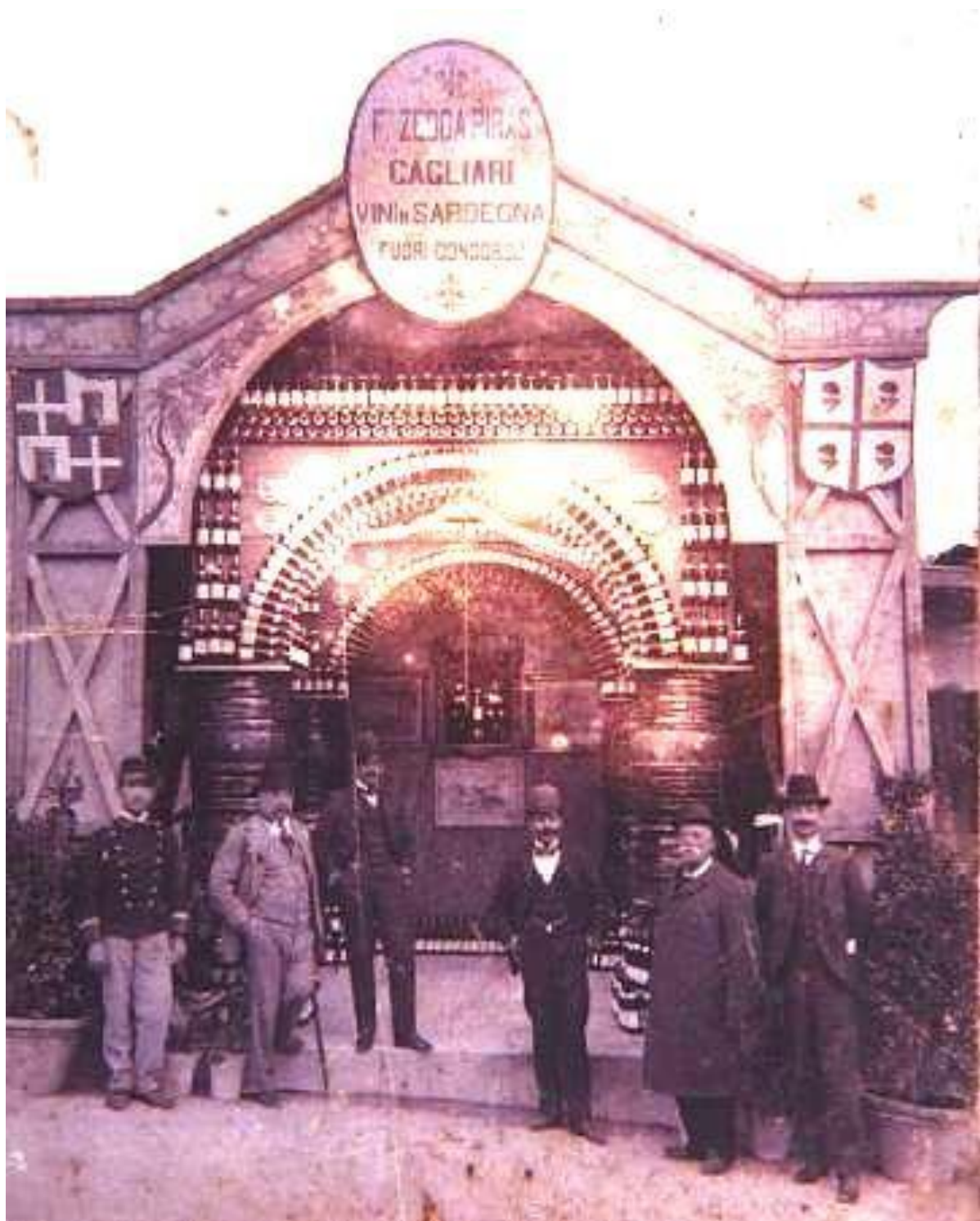
Zedda Piras, “*Mirto Di Sardegna*”, NV, ABV 32%



Myrtus communis

Zedda Piras “*Mirto Di Sardegna*” is a traditional Sardinian liqueur made with the berries and the leaves of Mediterranean common myrtle, [*Myrtus communis*]: an evergreen shrub with glossy aromatic foliage, white flowers and purple-black berries. The exact recipe is not disclosed, but small myrtle berries that grow wild across the island’s shrubland are the main ingredient. The finest berries and a blend of select herbs and spices are macerated in alcohol: the macerate is distilled in small batches, sweetened, filtered and bottled.

The Zedda Piras company can trace its origins to 1854 when Francesco Zedda started his wine business in Cagliari, taking the company name by joining the family name, Zedda, with that of his mother’s family, Peras. The original trade was confined to wines, notably dessert wines, but in 1903 Francesco Zedda’s son, Antonio, branched out into distillery. In 2002 the company was incorporated into the Campari Group.



Zedda Piras: founded in Cagliari in 1854

Website

<https://www.camparigroup.com/>

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