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TENUTA DI TRINORO

An Original Siennese Wine

Fifty or so kilometers from the coast, and an equal distance south of Sienna, up in the hills near where Tuscany meets Lazio and Umbria, Andrea Franchetti is making some delicious and very original wines. Driving round the estate – and you certainly need a very efficient four-wheel-drive vehicle – reminded me a bit of similar expeditions at Mas de Daumas Gassac. I was in amid the forest. Nature has been preserved. The meagre limestone rock and clay soils have never been adulterated with chemicals, herbicides or artificial fertilizer. The wine is original, and it can be very good indeed.

The vineyards surround a manor house which has seen better days. On your way up you pass a zoo of different farm animals fenced off into individual reserves: goats, sheep, pigs, ducks and chickens. From the terrace the views are magnificent. You are 600 metres above sea level, facing south-west. The climate is continental. Baking hot during the day, cool at night.

Andrea Franchetti first planted vines here in his family property in 1992. Not Sangiovese, but mainly Cabernet Franc (70%), plus the other usual Bordelais varieties. Of these he suggests the Petit Verdot is best. In as much as I am capable of judging young wine at three months old (the 2000 pure Petit Verdot in February 2001) I would guess that he is right.

The harvest is late here. In October rather than in September, because of the altitude. Franchetti used to produce two wines, but the Palazzi (45% Merlot and 55% Cabernet Franc) has been discontinued. Corney & Barrow (0207 251 4051) are the agents. Prices are “on application” as quantities are scarce. Expect to pay £40-plus per bottle. The wines, as I say, are both individual and delicious: a complete surprise to those used more to the boring Merlots produced on the coast in the Maremma (Masseto and its clones).

THE TASTING

I sampled the following in London in November 2001.

PALAZZI, 1999

Medium colour. Soft and ripe but not a wine of great strength or depth. Not much oak on the nose. More on the palate. Good acidity. Ripe and well-made. But something a bit rustic underneath. Ready soon. Good plus.

2003-2008

PALAZZI, 1998

2004-2010

Good fullish, vigorous colour. Rich and plummy and oaky. A little bit too much oak on the palate. Ripe and succulent but a little astringent. It seems a little forced to me. It may relax. Certainly very good.

TENUTA DI TRINORO, 2000

2004-2015

Fullish colour. Lovely nose. Blackberry, blackcurrant, oak and *garrigue*. Medium-full body. Good tannins. Really quite refined. Not a bit Italian. Particularly fine.

TENUTA DI TRINORO, 1999

2002-2012

Medium to medium-full colour. Soft nose. Not the greatest of depth. Better on the palate. Medium-full body. Gently oaky, balanced and well-mannered. Long and stylish. Very good indeed. Ready next year.

TENUTA DI TRINORO, 1998

Now-2010

Full colour. Rich, classy nose. Rather more to it than the 1999 but not as much definition as the 2000. The oak dominates a bit. Just about ready. Lacks just a little bit of personality at the end. Very good.

TENUTA DI TRINORO, 1997

Now-2015

Fullish colour. Ripe, soft, succulent nose. Medium-full body. Rather more Italian in style. But a lot of depth and interest. Very good grip. Complex, long and stylish. Just about ready. It will keep very well. Fine plus.

PS: Peter Sisseck, Andrea Franchetti and Peter Vinding-Diers are jointly developing a vineyard high up on the north side of Mount Etna in Sicily. Watch this space for further details.

