

Super Tuscan Trinoro Now Comes in White



© Vini Franchetti | *A tiny part of Tuscany is very reminiscent of the Médoc.*

If Super Tuscans are based on Bordeaux's red grapes, why not try a Semillon, too?

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos and Tenuta di Trinoro owner Andrea Franchetti share a common business philosophy. Both men are willing to embrace, and indeed learn from failure.

"To invent you have to experiment... most large organizations embrace the idea of invention, but are not willing to suffer the string of failed experiments necessary to get there," noted Bezos, in a letter to Amazon's shareholders.

And, like Bezos, Franchetti regards failure and invention as inseparable twins.

"At [Tenuta di Trinoro](#), we've experimented with several ultimately unsuccessful white varieties," says Franchetti. "In my time I've grown and made [Furmint](#) and [Harslevelu](#), [Muscat Ottonei](#) and [Picolit](#). All the results were bad and so the vines were ripped up."

Yet the estate's first commercial white is here to stay, according to di Trinoro's owner.

[Tenuta di Trinoro Bianco](#) is a 100-percent [Semillon](#) wine that, for many years, was silently quaffed by the Yves Saint Laurent lookalike – a product of a South Carolina textile fortune on his mother's side and good breeding. He used to own a restaurant in Rome and has lived in NYC, distributing Italian wines to an eager clientele. He founded Tenuta di Trinoro in 1992 and has since become a major champion of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot in the [Tuscan](#) region. Planting Bordeaux white varieties was the next logical step.

"I first planted Semillon in 2001– the terroir is a patch of sand in Trinoro. I made a thousand bottles every year and started drinking the wines after their 10th year in bottle. They are beautiful wines," he says.

Released in July, the volumes (2017 is the first commercial vintage) will remain tiny. Bordeaux vine stocks are grown on a tiny, sandy soil parcel at an elevation of 630 meters (2066 feet) with a very tight, 1 x 1 meter layout. The wine is fermented in barrels but aged in glass demijohns on its lees until bottling.

"The reason I made Semillon was simple – I had this sand patch just like the [Médoc](#)," explains Franchetti.

"Semillon has been made in Tuscany in the [Montecarlo](#) appellation forever. So we do have an established pedigree. I should add that the quantities we made are a bit of a joke – hardly enough to satisfy the market. But I'm afraid there is no more sand at Trinoro, so expansion is impossible."

However, the inaugural commercial vintage was born in a very challenging growing year, Franchetti freely admits.

"Even a unique environmental niche such as the [Val d'Orcia](#) had to confront, like the rest of Italy, three months of intense summer heat in 2017, made more severe by a lack of groundwater reserves, the result of the previous relatively dry winter," he says.

The estate is located near Sarteano, at the entrance to the Val d'Orcia, in southeast Tuscany. There are currently 16 vineyard parcels, totaling some 25 hectares (62 acres), planted at elevations of 450-650 meters. Tenuta di Trinoro is the flagship, [Bordeaux-style cuvée](#) that Franchetti pours first; [Le Cupole](#), a younger and more accessible wine from the estate vineyards and the [Palazzi](#), which ceased production for 10 years.

"The 2009 vintage convinced me to resurrect Palazzi," notes Franchetti, sitting opposite me on a terrace adjoining the winery. It's a tranquil, hazy July morning in the bucolic vineyards of southern Tuscany, the perfect setting in which to sample his range of wines. Of course, my first instinct is to leap towards the newest edition, however, Franchetti issues a stark warning.

"The wine is useless if drunk before five years and peaks at 10."

But I can vouch for the impressive quality inherent to the Bianco di Trinoro, even in its awkward stages of youth.

2017 Bianco di Trinoro Beautifully perfumed and open, despite Franchetti's warning. Light golden colour, aromas of sweet apple, citrus, honeysuckle and patisserie balanced by a delectable acidity. Bright, fresh and structured, I'd love to retaste in a few years.

2008 Bianco di Trinoro Never commercially released, Franchetti was spot on when he said that his Semillon peaks at 10 years. A beautiful, deep golden color lights up the glass, bursting with aromas of nectarine, honey, butter and pineapple. It plays that wonderful trick of convincing blind tasters that the grape has been subject to long aging in barrique – the texture is very creamy and buttery, with a rich, round mid palate balanced by impeccable freshness. Powerful, elegant and persuasive.

2017 Tenuta di Trinoro A masterclass in how to manage high alcohol. Cabernet Franc takes a deciding role in the blend – 69 percent, assisted by 23 percent Merlot and 8 percent Cabernet Sauvignon. Reminiscent of a super-ripe Cheval Blanc and purple-black color, the density is astounding. A soft, ample mouthfeel gives way to flavors of dark fruit, plum, blueberry and the noticeable scent of Provencal garrigue. Has a long life ahead of it, at least based on this tasting.

2009 Tenuta di Trinoro A real privilege as my host doesn't have much left; 42 percent Merlot, 42 percent Cabernet Franc, 12 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, and 4 percent Petit Verdot makes up the 2009. "In 2009, though very nourished, each of our varietals was slow to ripen. The rains waited long enough to let us pick them; that always makes a great vintage," says Franchetti. I concur – powerful intensity on the nose is matched by a mighty tannic structure. Rich and deep, the hints of eucalyptus and Chinese five spice round off the palate nicely. Impressive length too.

2016 Palazzi Palazzi is based on a single-vineyard Merlot plot that Franchetti named Strada Vecchia, aged for eight months in new French oak barrels and 11 months in cement tanks. It is the antithesis of subtle – aromas of baked almond tart, blueberries, and red fruit fill the glass; so this is what happens when you pick late and also reduce yields in a balmy climate. A wine of immense fruit and power. Very weighty, dense and extracted. Yet the fact that the 2016 is, on the whole, so fresh is very impressive.