

Wine-making the old fashioned way: Do the emperor's old clothes still fit?

Joel Butler MW



Mas des Tourelles Roman winery, Beaucaire, France

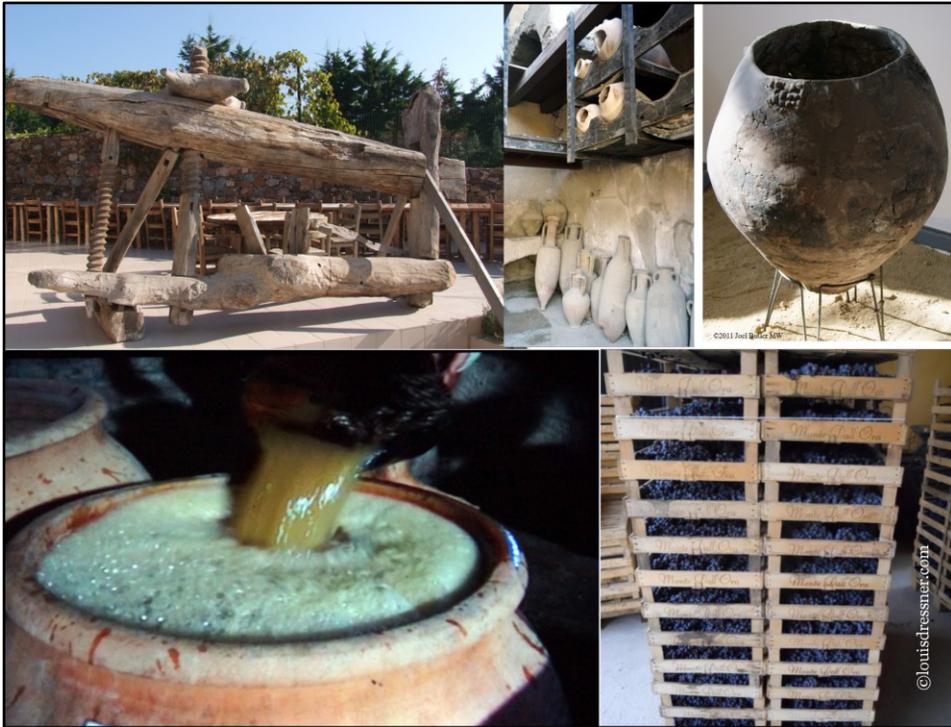


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Welcome- I can see that everyone is wide awake & ready to step back in time, figuratively anyway, to consider the question posed by the title of this presentation. Why I am doing this? Curiosity and skepticism are the drivers! Having been in this business for over 40 years, tasting 1000's of wines and seeing how people make wine globally and doing it myself on a small scale for over 2 decades, I have concluded, reasonably, there is no one way to make fine wine, but there are sure lots of ways to screw it up! While researching my book "Divine Vintage, etc" and visiting producers in the oldest wine-growing regions of the world, as well as those in Italy, France, Austria who have gone back in time to emulate their grandfathers and ancient ancestors in the quest for something genuine, unique, "of the place" or what have you, I glimpsed a vision of the past and future for fine wine. I am fascinated by many of these wines, and, after writing about the types, methods of production and places where the best ancient wines were made, became intrigued by discovering "ancient wines" being made today by people attempting to recover a lost (or perhaps better to say, forgotten) way of thinking about wine.

Most producers today subscribe to at least some use of modern science and knowledge to make their wines. Wine as we know it today would be inconceivable to most wine producers, who worked prior to World War II, let alone the 19th Century or to the ancients, especially white wines. A lot of the technology used today does tend towards overkill; that is, blurring the edges and obscuring identity. At the same time, however, one hallmark of good wine is that the quality and character should be consistent and modern winemaking practices have achieved those goals admirably. Frankly, I would like to see more people use some practices like RO more often, if only to bring back into balance wines whose styles have been compromise (for the worse, usually) due to climate change or dubious new quality paradigms.

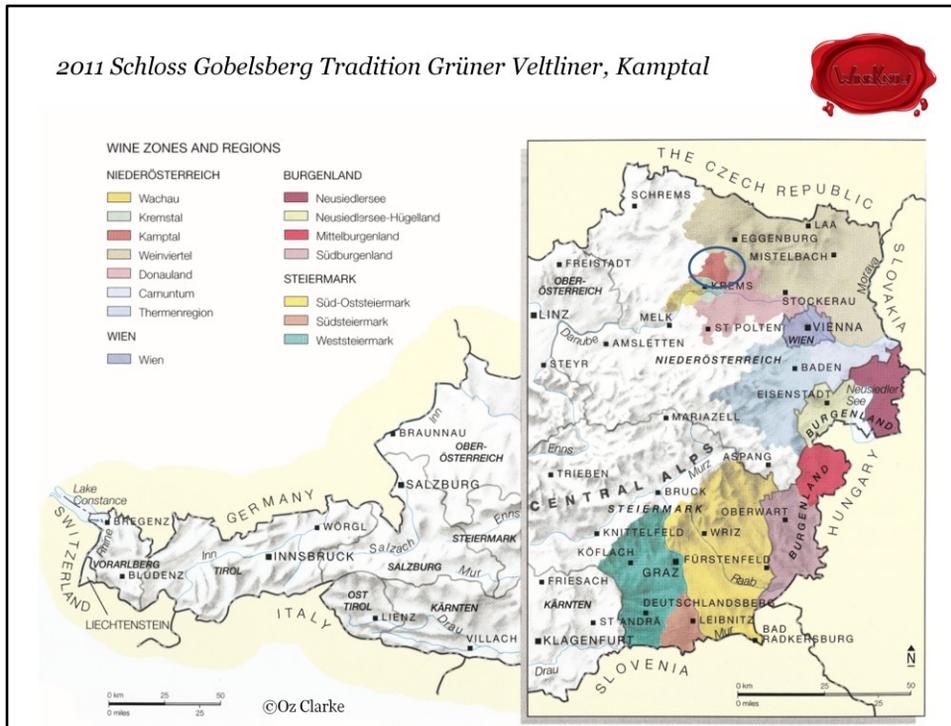
YET...I am equally skeptical of the trend today towards 'minimal' winemaking— "natural" wine being a subset. That great wine is made today without the use of



Likewise, would using indigenous yeasts “just because they are mine” that create either off character or allow for serious other disturbances to the wine to happen which ruin it, all in the name of “fidelity to the vision”? I don’t think this is exactly analogous to Picasso’ s radical new concepts. But for producers making wine the old-fashioned way without being aware of the serious problems that can arise, ignoring knowledge of how to control them (or knowing but not caring), they seems to think nothing of it, in order to be ‘faithful’ to a dogmatic view of what is “natural” or “honest”. In this case, I would say it is legitimately bad art! Better yet, let’s admit that fine wine, however made, is not “art”. Rather --the result of taking natural ingredients, which can become unhealthy (alcohol) and using one’s talents and knowledge to create something which can be enjoyably consumed, broadening your sense of appreciation, taste, knowledge and pleasure. Good art does all of those things, too, but you don’t ingest it! Wine, like good food, doesn’t tolerate mistakes; burn a steak, use wilted vegetables, or sour milk and no amount of righteous devotion to your culinary vision will be accepted by the consumer!

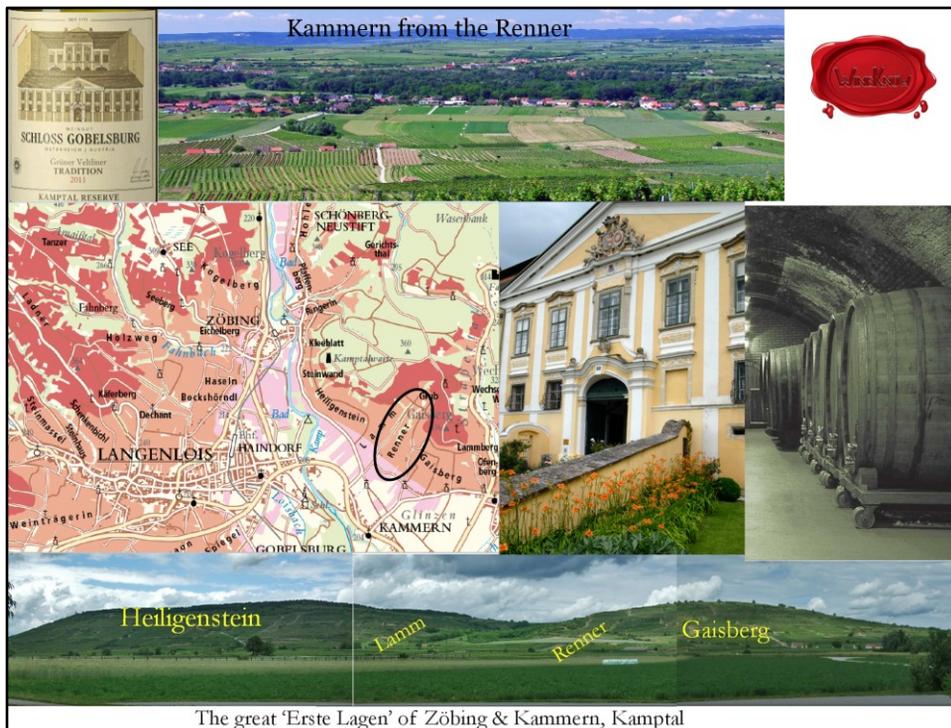
What we want to do today, and I am thankful to my friend and winemaker Chad Stock of Minimus Wines in the Willamette Valley for joining me here, is journey back in time and see just how well (or not) ancient or traditional (pre-modern) notions of wine-making contribute to quality wines today. All of the wines here are made according to millennia-old technologies; some vineyard driven, such as *passito*, but more in the cellar, however. Qvevri, amphorae, old large barrels, concrete “eggs”, vertical presses, organically grown grapes, indigenous yeasts, little or no SO2, non fining/filtration, no enzymes. These are all aspects we can consider. There are others, no doubt, that will occur to you as well while tasting..

2011 Schloss Gobelsberg Tradition Grüner Veltliner, Kamptal



Let's begin in Austria, ancient Rome's *Pannonia* with wine made not in an ancient manner, but departing from 19th Century non- technological concepts-common virtually everywhere prior to 1900

While not using ancient production techniques, Much of what Michael Moosbrugger is doing at Gobelsberg reflects a conscious effort to step back far enough in time the stamp of man is minimized



The great 'Erste Lagen' of Zöbing & Kammern, Kamptal

TRADITION Kamptal Reserve Grüner Veltliner Schloss Gobelsburg; SCHLOSS GOBELSBURG is the oldest winery in the Danube region with a documented history back to 1171. Since January 1996 the Château and winery is managed by family Michael Moosbrugger. The vineyards from the 35 ha estate are located on the slopes and terraces of the oldest vineyard sites around Langenlois.

Why do this? "I had many long talks with the senior abbot, Fr. Bertrand," said Micky, "who had been responsible for the wines of Schloss Gobelsburg in the "old days". Then came the strong wish to resurrect the character of the wines that had dominated these cellars for centuries."

The production is not 'ancient' but it is very 'natural & traditional' One aspect to further this return to the past relies on 'Dynamic Cellar Concept' for Gobelsburg. The key point here is to have flexible cellar operation where – to put it simplistically – wines are no longer pumped from one location to the other, but transported in 'barrels on wheels' from one section of the cellar to the other.

The containers used to mature wines also help shape the character of these wines. Timber from Manhartsberg (a region north of Langenlois) is used for the large and small oak casks. Of course, this wood has a different character than oak from Allier or America

Primarily the Renner vineyard (Kammern), Loess sand, guyot training Vine age +-50 years. monks of the Zwettl Monastery, who had managed the winery themselves until 1995, used organic fertiliser, abstained from employing herbicides, and endeavoured to reduce the use of plant protectants.

The grapes were harvested in November, then pressed softly with only a few twists (as with a tree press), filled without degumming into a large Manhartsberg oak cask (25 hectoliters), and then spontaneously fermented without cooling. Following fermentation, the wine was racked three times until it was almost completely pure.

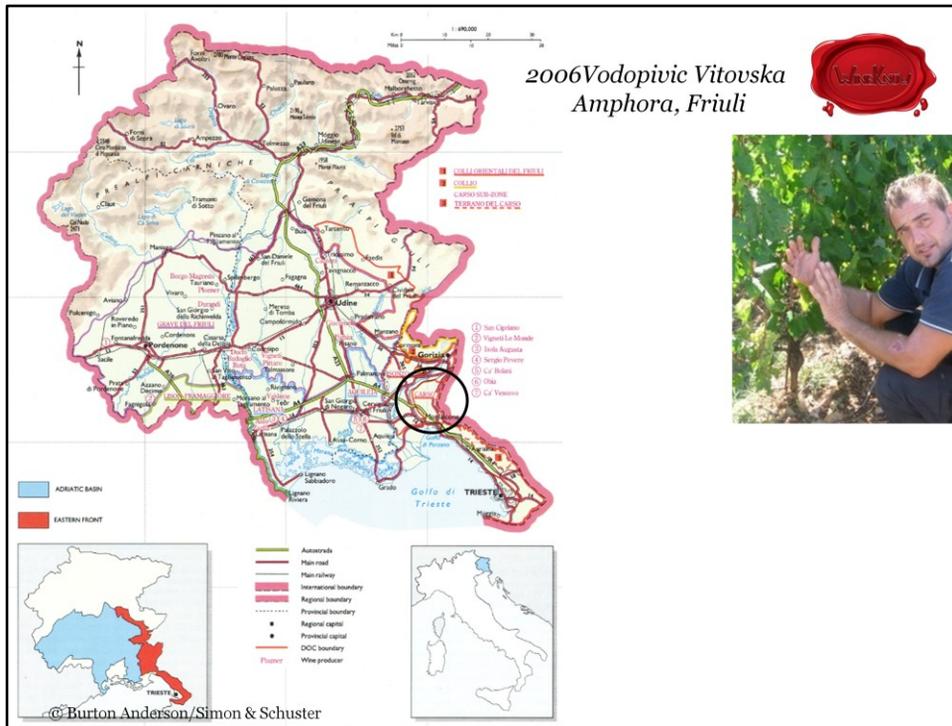


It seems only fair that we should begin our look at truly old-fashioned wine with a Georgian qvevri wine. Here is the 2010 Pheasant's Tears Rkatsiteli from the Kakheti district of eastern Georgia, the heartland of Georgia's wine culture, probably its most ancient and definitely the one place that has continued qvevri production in a meaningful way for thousands of years. First off, *Qvevri are not* the same as amphorae. The Romans and Greeks adopted the qvevri form much later, but called them (Latin) *dolia*. Two major differences: *qvevri are* always buried underground and are pretty large, while *dolia* often were smaller, and not always buried in the ground. Second, Amphorae in the usual sense of the word refers more to transport ceramic vessels, generally containing no more than 15-20 gallons.

John Wurdeman is an enthusiastic American painter, musician from Santa Fe, who went to Georgia years ago, and settled in Sighnaghi, a cultural capital of the area where he met his wife (a great singer), decided to stay, became entranced by the age-old cellars and wine traditions of the area and got in the game himself several years ago. The estate name comes from an old Georgian saying: "If something is really good, then even pheasants cry tears?"

The vineyards around the village and area are at about 450m. He makes red and white qvevri wines, learning the techniques and traditions from among others, the monks of the 11th C. Alaverdi Monastery who have been instrumental in keeping alive the methods and traditions.

For this wine, grown on limestone-clay near Tibani. Qvevri production is very hands-off, as the jars are placed up to their necks underground in the cellars in the earth. All spontaneous ferments, all MLF after primary while the clay is still warm. He leaves this on the skins for 6 months in the concrete/earth sealed jars. Once opened the wine is racked out and bottled, with a very low SO₂ level added. One of the unique aspects of qvevri fermentation/aging Wurdeman says is that the 'polymerization of phenolics is happening in the clay parallel to the micro-oxygenation spontaneously.'



Let's now look at one of the most unique and upcoming areas for very traditional wine production, Friuli which under the Romans was part of the province of Illyricum. As you all know this is an area with a number of people now making Biody wines, and beginning with Gravner in the mid-1980's, wine in amphora. Paolo & Valter Vodopivec are part of this group today, but less well known perhaps, beginning in 1994. Their family is of Slovenian origin, and the Carso terroir extends across the border.

CULTIVATED AREA: 4.5 hectares TOPOGRAPHY: Rocky Plains
 SOIL TYPE: Red soil on top of bedrock(limestone karst)

VARIETIES CULTIVATED: 100% Vitovska—(a natural cross ; Malvasia Bianca Lunga x Prosecco) resistant to winter frost and droughts. Most widely planted variety in Trieste region & neighboring slovenia. Vodopivec is only one (so far?) to make it in amphora.

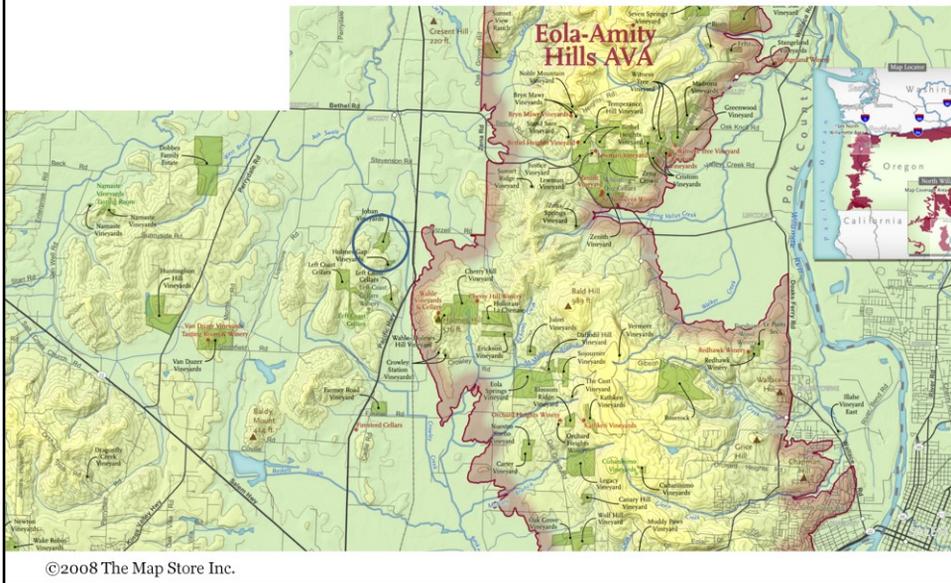
DESCRIPTION OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY:

In a mere decade, Brothers Paolo and Valter Vodopivec have earned an enviable international reputation for their distinct expressions of Vitovska, a variety produced by only a handful of producers in the rugged Carso area of Friuli. A blacksmith by trade, the Vodopivec's great-grandfather cultivated a few hectares of vineyards and produced a small amount of wine. Paolo and Valter, while in their early twenties, decided to pursue a dream of honoring this legacy by producing wine on a larger scale and produced 1000 bottles from the 1997 vintage. With the 1998 vintage, they employed whole berry fermentation, prolonged maceration, bottled the wine unfiltered and shared it with the public. Inspired by the results, they chose to dedicate their production exclusively to Vitovska, replanted the vineyards in albarello, drastically increased density, and reduced yields to miniscule levels. No pesticides or chemicals are used, instead varying "bird houses" have been constructed to surround the vines, depending on the location, allowing only a certain bird to nest and control insects and parasites. Paolo felt sure that Georgian amphorae would be superior (to the spanish-made that Gravner was using at the time) and so away they went. That's when **the local Georgian mafia who, it seems, have a bit of a reputation for holding foreigners at gunpoint, held the clay pots for ransom.**

Paolo paid them off and beat it, precious amphorae in tow. And now, happily, he's quite pleased with his resultant wines.

Beginning with the 2005 vintage, an increasing portion of their production was produced in amphorae. T

2013 Minimus #8 A.D. Beckham MMXIII,
Willamette Valley, OR



We are now going to turn to the New World- Oregon of all places!



Minimus Wines in Rickreall OR is the brainchild of Chad Stock, also the winemaker for Johan Vineyards, where much of the Minimus fruit derives, including this wine.

“We are conducting a series of experiments designed to challenge the formal education of Enology. The results will be numbered when released & only produced once. The direction of the project is constantly evolving as new discoveries and inspiring ideas come to our attention. We are uncertain of how or when the experiments may end. The one thing we are certain of thus far in our career is that nothing is absolute.” ... “Sometimes an experiment is based on a single idea and other times an experiment is multilayered and evolving. Either way each experiment is planned in advance with a specific intent. We also choose to make the wines blind. By that we mean to say we never analytically measure anything during the process from picking to bottling. Harvesting decisions are based on flavors and the wines are bottled when they taste finished. Just before bottling we write down what we think the numbers might be in our ledger. These numbers are the five scientific values you will find on the lower left side of the label. A sample of the wine is then sent to a laboratory to get the exact numbers. The difference is compared between our guess and the actual numbers to help calibrate our palates. We are not saying that we can develop a palate so precise it can measure concentrations”

Minimus #8 is a truly old-fashioned wine! Gruner Veltliner skin fermented for 77 days in an American made Clay Amphora, then pressed back to the Amphora and aged an additional 40 days before bottling.

2011 COS Pithos Bianco, Vittoria, Sicilia
2012 COS Pithos Rosso, Vittoria, Sicilia



We now turn our attention back to an ancient wine-growing area, southeast Sicily, where during the Greek period the wines from the areas around the city-state of Gela were highly thought of, and under the Romans, the wine called *Mesopotamian* from nearer Agrigento up the coast was highly praised as well.



Azienda Agricola COS was founded by Giambattista (Titta) Cilia, Giusto Occhipinti and Cirino (Rino) Strano, three friends who wanted to recreate the work of their ancestors. The acronym (Cilia-Occhipinti-Strano) not only represents the company's name, but also the beginning of a remarkable partnership. In 1980, the trio became the youngest winemakers in Italy when they bought Joseph Cilia's old family winery, and completed their studies between 1983 and 1985.

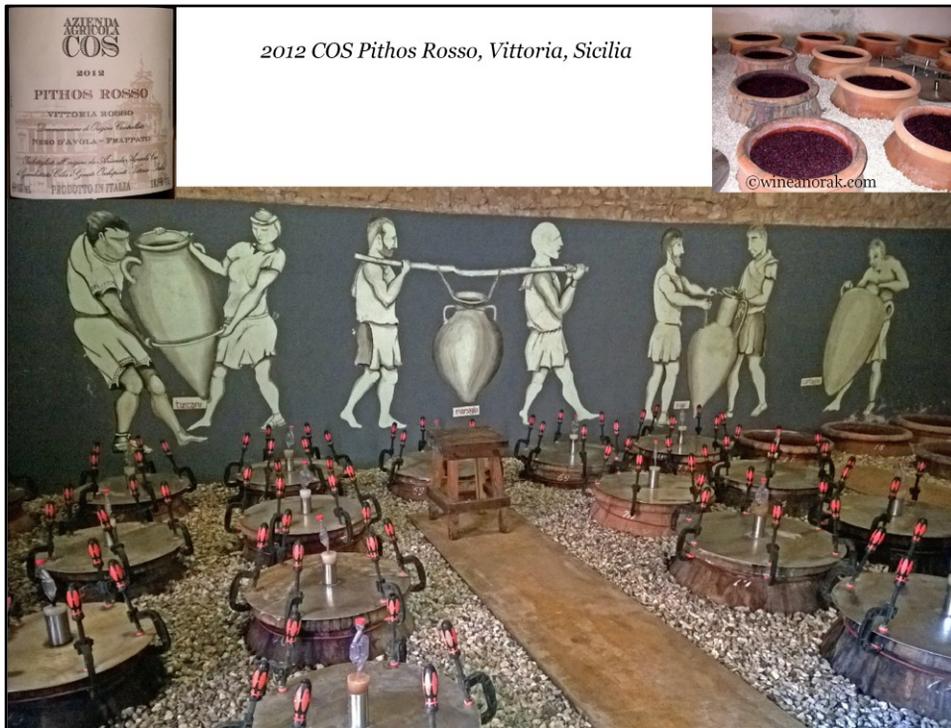
Strano eventually decided to remain in medicine, sold his shares to his sister, who subsequently in 1995 sold her shares to Giusto and Titta, who manage the properties now. In 1980, the trio became the youngest winemakers in Italy when they bought Joseph Cilia's old family winery.

In their quest to interpret the unique terroir of Vittoria, the estate decided to adopt the principles of biodynamic culture. This would help them find and maintain a harmonious balance with nature, as well as craft wines that are as representative as possible of their time and place.

Fascinated by ancient cellar practices, COS decided to work with amphoras, clay jars that were used by the ancient Greeks. The first shipment came from Spain in September 2000, and thus, Pithos was born and a new COS identity was created. The Pithos cuvée is fermented and aged solely in the amphoras which allow the grapes to express themselves naturally in their evolution towards becoming wine. In 2003 -2005 they finished construction of the new winery /estate and in 2007 did the first harvest in new cellar, switching out the old wood casks for 150 amphorae.

Pithos Bianco is all carricante, grown at 230m with terra-rossa limestone (fossilized) ; avg vine age 20 yrs, 5000 vines/ht– 400L terracotta amphorae; aged 7-8 mo.

When I was there 3 months in May Giusto told me that at that point the amphora wines (both) had been on skins for 8 months, and they would probably rack tomorrow (6 May). Giusto says they don't add SO2 until bottling, and then very little (22-26ppm)



Zone of production: locality Bastonaca, Vittoria, Southeastern Sicily.

Grapes: Frappato 40%; Nero d'Avola 60%.

Altimetry: 230 meters s.l.m.

Typology of the soil: medium consistency, comes from sub-Appennine sands, of pliocenica origin and with limestone and silicius nature from fresh and compact clay layers and from tufa limestone.

System of breeding: little tree and spurred cord with the fruits at cm. 50 above the ground.

Average age of the vines in production: 22 years.

Yield for hectare in grape: 40 ql.

Age of grape harvest: end Sptember - October.

Fermentation equipment: Terracotta amphorae with a capacity of 400 and 250 liters.

Temperature of fermentation: free to carry out itself, it has not exceeded the 30°.

Duration of maceration and alcolic fermentation: 7 months.

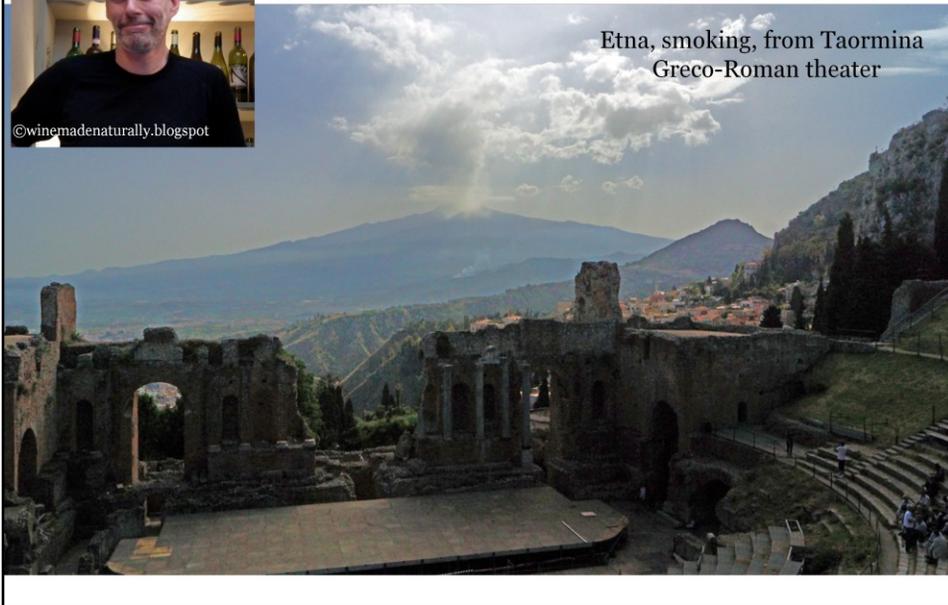
Wine-making participations: only manual pumping over. Only 22ppm SO₂ added Pithos like all our products, is a wine absolutely lacking in external substances.

Does the Emperor still wear clothes?

•2012 Cornelissen Munjebel Rosso CS (Chiusa Spagnola Contrada), Etna, Sicilia



Etna, smoking, from Taormina
Greco-Roman theater

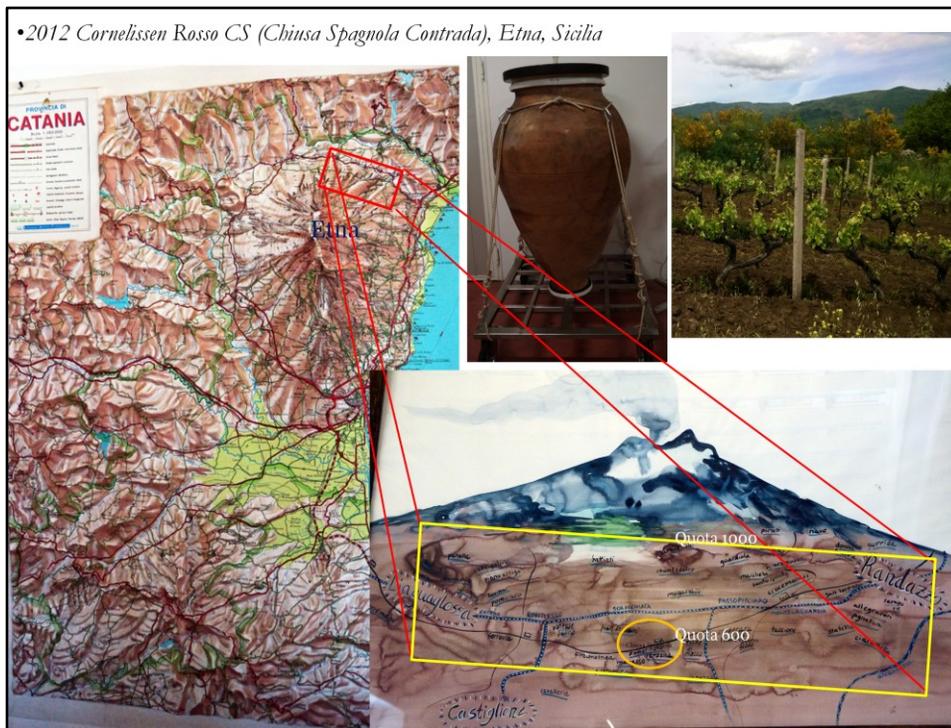


While we are in ancient sicily, it seems appropriate to turn attention to one of the most interesting of today's proponents of old-fashioned winemaking, Belgian Frank Cornelissen and his property on Mt Etna's northern slopes, where virtually all of the best vineyards are located (at least red)

Frank came to his wine-growing from being a wine seller. And, like so many others recently, became intrigued with the unique quality of wine/landscape/history of Etna. He now has 15 ht total, w/12 ht in vines (alberello old and new) along with olive trees and fruit, mixed plantings. The vines are un-grafted from cuttings off the old plants. His approach, of all of the people I have talked with, is closest to an ancient winegrower— even biodynamic practices are eschewed, but agriculture uses all natural “additives” (buckwheat to enhance organic material in poor soils. No tilling, “Our goal...avoiding all possible interventions on the land we cultivate, including any treatments, whether chemical, **organic**, or biodynamic, as these are all a mere reflection of the inability of man to accept nature as she is and will be...Unfortunately there will always be the exceptional vintages where treatments with copper sulphate and sulphur are necessary to avoid vines from dying.”

Low yields/plant (less than 1 lb/vine are typical) and late harvesting are typical (but not unusual for anyone on Etna given the cooler climate and altitude. The goal is to make “liquid rock”

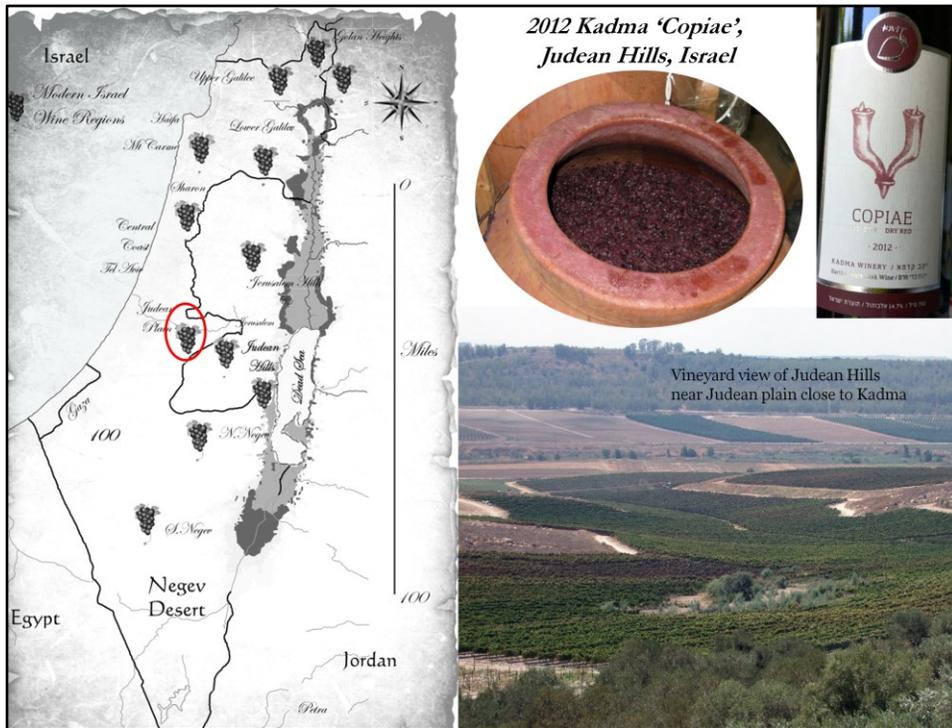
Climate change affecting Etna; used to be one month of snow on Etna, now one week. Ungrafted vines have lower pH than grafted in general. With more extreme climate now at Etna, we may need to be “flexible. Where terroir is a strong factor, the variety is only a vehicle. So if I must change variety to express Etna terroir, or go higher on the mountain than DOC now allows, well...!”



The only way to make “natural” wine, Frank maintains, is to have a very clean cellar (now a new one); he uses antibactericides and cleans vats etc with pure alcohol. There is no stainless steel or oak in the cellar- steel conducts electro-chemical charge + ions (not good) and wood...well wood is not clean! So all the top wines ferment in neutral tubs made of fiberglass and teflon, no SO₂ at any time. Top wines then go into the 400 L amphora buried in the cellar in volcanic rock. After aging the wines are bottled with stabilization, no racking or sulphur. The consequences of this process (or lack of it) does raise issues, however, in my mind. One of the reasons we are tasting this wine now is that it is from Sicily as well, but also that it follows a similarly made wine, though several critical differences.

This wine from Contrada Chiusa Spagnola (subsection of Zottorino) around 600 m is from a warmer site, and from 80-100 year old vines +/-, and is the first year of production. Like all of his 2012 wines, (a warm rich year at Etna) this has 15% plus alc. I first tasted this wine from the amphora in April 2013, where it was still in MLF, and reduced, but with a fine full violet-ruby color, and firm tannins.

Does the emperor still have his clothes on!??



2012 Kadma 'Copiae',
Judean Hills, Israel

Vineyard view of Judean Hills
near Judean plain close to Kadma

Kadma Winery is the only winery in Israel that uses large earthenware vessels as part of the wine production process. The winery combines ancient wine making techniques with modern technology, and revives some of the winemaking methods that were used in this area in the ancient world. The winery is located in Kfar Uriah, a place where vineyards were grown and wine was made in ancient times, and started in 2011 under the direction of Lina Slutzkin, who spent most of her career in IT, then decided to do something with the family farm at Kfer Uriya near the western edge of the Judean Hills west of Jerusalem. She took courses in enology, and the rest of her family is strongly involved too.

The winery was started following a thorough research of various sites in the world in cooperation with professor Amos Hadas, the author of "The Vine and the Wine in Archeology of the Land of Israel" and with the consultation of Dr. Arkadi Papikian, one of the leading winemakers in Israel.

We planted the first part of our estate vineyard (5 dunams = 0.5 hectare of Cabernet Sauvignon) in 2010, so we are now preparing for the bottling of the first wines that were made from our vines. Until last year all of our wines were made from grapes we purchased from different growers. This week we are planting 7 more dunams. Three will be planted with Syrah, and four with Petite Verdot.



All the wines are fermented and soaked in 500L earthenware casks that were brought from Georgia, where the ancient techniques of their production have been preserved by local craftsmen for generations. Lina was born in Georgia, her heritage is Georgian. The clay pots are handmade and then fired in an open fireplace. While still hot the inside of the pots is covered with beeswax which is absorbed into the pores. The wax acts as sealant without creating separation between liquid and clay. The wax has natural antiseptic properties that protect the wine from microbial infection, reducing the need for the usage of chemical compounds. The shape of these earthenware casks also influences the fermentation processes. All sediments fall to the bottom of the conical pots, so that the contact surface between the wine and the lees is significantly smaller than that in modern flat bottom stainless steel tanks. This decreases the leeching of unwanted flavor and aroma compounds to the wine. Now have 20 earthenware casks with a total volume of 10,000 liters.

According to Georgian tradition, the jugs should be buried up to the neck in the ground and kept this way, aging for many years. Qvevri not buried as in Georgia. We instead keep them standing in a temperature controlled room in order to have better control of both the fermentation and MLF processes. The hot climate here means that the temperatures are too high in the top level of the ground where the Kvevri are traditionally buried in Georgia. Amos Hadas taught us that in this area in the ancient times they were not buried either. This approach (burying) also raises certain sanitation issues as well as making it impossible to control temperatures during fermentation stages. In Kadma winery we stand the pots in cool rooms. This allows us to better control the sanitation and temperatures of the must and wine.

All of our red wines go through cold maceration of 4-5 days in the qvevri. The alcoholic and the malolactic fermentations both take place in the Kvevri as well, when at the end of the primary fermentation, we let the wines sit for a warm maceration of



Alexander Winery is a family estate started by Yoram Shalom and named after his father, who came from Tunisia to Israel and made wine there (as did his ancestors). Shalom started the winery and making wine in 1996, and then in 1998 to this Moshav in northern Sharon, where he built a new winery to make wine from primarily northern Galilee high altitude vineyards like this wine. The domain extends over 15 plus acres with the vineyards at Kerem ben Zimra (photo) at 750-875m. The soil is a brown black Mediterranean clay soil of basaltic origin in the southern vineyard here, while that of the western block reveals overlaying hard chalk and dolomite rocks is a stony, well drained, red brown Mediterranean clay soil, of varying depth and stoniness. Vines are 10-25 years old. Since 2006 the wines are kosher

WHY this wine? There are two ancient or traditional means of making wine from dried grapes: In the sun on mats, which is typical of the hotter Mediterranean countries and southerly latitudes, or as in a temperate area (like Valpolicella or Lombardy) inside in a cool, well ventilated spot. During the Roman era, when first mention of this style of wine was made in Verona (Rheticum), it is likely that the grapes were taken inside as they are today, since trying to sun-dry them in the open would be potentially hazardous, weather-wise. Thus- this wine, made however in a southerly location where sun-drying could be done, represents for me an intriguing combination of technique and terroir which is fairly unique. In ancient Judea, however, wine made from dried grapes was certainly available and often made. Here, we have an updated ancient wine-style that Yoram makes combining the more modern international varieties common to Israel and certainly accepted winemaking practices with an ancient technique for concentrating the must and aging in wood barrels for a very long time; quite traditional. The vineyards are in areas that have seen viticulture for at least 3 millennia and probably longer, given archaeological evidence of limestone wine press sites in N. Galilee as well as remains of wine made with dried grapes made not far away



We conclude our journey by returning to Greece, the island of Santorini, which is unique for having an isolated position in the Aegean, a unique climate, no phylloxera (immune soils) and perhaps the oldest vines on the planet, likely derived from original vine stock dating back 3500-4000 years. The neolithic to Bronze Age town of Akrotiri's ruins have revealed wine-related artifacts, predating the gigantic eruption of 1600 BCE. The explosion left behind a mixture of volcanic ash, pumice stone and pieces of solidified lava and sand, which together make up the soil of Santorini, known as "aspa". The soil has little to no organic matter, but is rich in essential minerals, except potassium, creating wines with a naturally low pH level and high acidity. Santorini Vinsanto, especially aged versions like this from the most noted producer of them on the island, Argvros, carries on the ancient winemaking tradition and style.

Sun-drying is one of the oldest most traditional ways to begin the winemaking process, and has been used for millennia on Santorini and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Unlike some raisined wines, Vinsanto is not fortified here. But due to long aging in larger barrels (500l) as a tradition here, this kind of wine represents an old-fashioned approach, though made with full awareness of modern scientific knowledge.

Unlike Tuscan Vin Santo, many of which are aged in a (late traditional) mode in small casks hermetically sealed by clay, or even concrete for many years, Santorini's unique version is handled periodically.

Argvros winery was founded in 1903 by Georgios Argvros, and is now run by his great grandson, Matthew Argvros. The original 5 ht in Episkopi Gonia on the SW side of the island has now expanded to 35 ht. Assyrtiko is of course the principal grape for



Yiannis Argkyros, Matthew's father who tragically died in 2011, was the person who really pioneered making long aged Vinsanto starting in the 70's. From old vines with very low yields, the grapes are picked mature, but not over-ripe or dessicated, generally in mid-late August and Sun drying for 12-14 days. While the wine ferments as far as it can before being put into large casks, the wine is not adjusted or treated. The ferment stops of its own accord. Effectively, during aging, the barrels are periodically (perhaps once a year) refreshed, so the vintage date represents the great majority of the wine (95%), but not all, given the addition of younger vintages to "freshen" the wine. In this way, Vinsanto generally is less full of VA, less "rancio" and oxidized than its Tuscan brethren, and therefore retains a stronger sense of minerality and place, to my mind. Ageing in French oak barrels for 11 years time; bottle ageing for 1 year. While the ancient Therans didn't use oak barrels, only pithoi, the sun-drying process has changed little over the centuries. Argkyros has modern science to help make sure their goals are not compromised since making this kind of wine is fraught with difficulty, as well as being very expensive.

Alcohol: 13.5% vol.

Total acidity: 6g/l Sugar: 220 g/l