

## A Walk on the Wild Side: A New Look at Lambrusco with Alan Tardi, CSW

### The Lineup

When it comes to wine, you can talk all you want but the real proof is in the pudding — or, rather, the wine on your palate.

Initially, I thought about showcasing each of the seven main Lambrusco appellations and the twelve members of the Lambrusco grape family. But that would have taken an entire day. So, I decided to focus on the three most important and prestigious varieties — Sorbara, Salamino and Grasparossa, each of which has its own well-defined character, its own dedicated appellation and its own specific home turf — to better get to know them and see how they show with different production protocols.

We begin with an example of each of the three principal varieties made in one of the three basic methods of sparkling wine production.

First up is **Cleto Chiarli's** Lambrusco di Sorbara “del Fondatore” which is made via the ancestral method. It is an homage to the founder of the winery in 1860 who began making wine decades earlier to serve to patrons of his osteria. In fact, many wine producers in the area began making wine to sell in their restaurants which underlines the close connection between Lambrusco and the local cuisine of the area.

Next is a Lambrusco Salamino di Santa Croce by artisan producer **Luciano Saetti**, who employs the Traditional Method and disgorges every bottle by hand. He also hand-applies their custom embroidered fabric labels to the bottles. (By the way, Saetti is one of the very few producers that makes a still Lambrusco.)

The Lambrusco di Grasparosso DOC, produced in small quantities by another artisan winery named **Fattoria Morretto**, uses the Martinotti Method (aka Charmat) with compelling results.

Having familiarized ourselves with the principal Lambrusco varieties and methods of production we move into other specialized treatments that have a notable impact on the final product.

Gianluca Bergianti, proprietor of **Terrevive** winery, follows a strict biodynamic regimen with minimal intervention, growing cereals, vegetables and herbs interspersed with vines, carefully utilizing the biodynamic treatments, and performing tasks in sync with the lunar cycle. The wine we will taste is made from an ancient local clone of Salamino vinified as *rosato*. Grape must is added, the wine bottled, and undergoes a second fermentation. The lees remain in the bottle giving the wine a lively yeastiness.

From here on we add a whole other dimension to the mix: Time. (Remember that with any sparkling wine — except those made by carbonation — the amount of time the wine spends in contact with the lees has an enormous impact on its character.)

From **Paltrinieri** (founded 1926) we will sample a reserve Lambrusco di Sorbara made from a single prestigious vineyard that spends 12 months on the lees in an autoclave before bottling.

Next, from **Zanasi**, we taste an elegant extra-brut *rosato* made from a blend of Sorbara and Grasperosso that undergoes second fermentation in bottle and spends 24 months on the lees before disgorgement.

After that is another Traditional Method wine made from 100% Sorbara with 36 months on the lees produced by **Silvia Zucchi**, a young woman (and new mother!) who has created her own special line of Lambruscos alongside the traditional wines produced by her family's winery founded in 1950. (While some of Silvia's wines are available in the US, this one is not and was sent by Silvia especially for this tasting!)

The last wine in the lineup is an extraordinary Lambrusco Sorbara by **Lini 910** that undergoes at least 5 years on the lees before disgorgement (ours actually spent about 14!) sending humble Lambrusco into a whole other stratosphere.

With that, our wine tasting is complete but there is one other special product we need to try.

We conclude the session with a taste of authentic *Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale di Modena*, which is a world apart from the ubiquitous balsamic vinegar you can find in your local supermarket. This rare artisanal product is made exclusively from the cooked must of Lambrusco (and other approved grape varieties) that then undergoes a maturation process of at least 10 years in a series of wooden barrels.

The one we will taste is made by an historic *acetaia* of Modena called **Giuseppe Giusti** that originally began producing this unique condiment to sell in their *salumeria*. The company was officially recognized as a bonafide purveyor of Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena in 1605 and they continue this tradition today, utilizing the same time-honored procedures and centuries-old barrels.

In fact, many Lambrusco producers also make traditional balsamic vinegar from grape must, completing an ancient and exclusively regional triangle of authentic wine, typical food, and (traditional) balsamic vinegar.

This is guaranteed to be an eye, mind, and palette-opening experience! I look forward to seeing you at Conference. But if you can't make it, I hope you can try some of these stellar products at home.

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**Alan Tardi, CSW will be presenting this session—A Walk on the Wild Side: a New Look at Lambrusco—as part of SWE's 46th Annual Conference, to be held in Coachella Valley (Indian Wells, CA) on Wednesday, August 10th and Thursday, August 11th.**