



# SCARBOLO

## **Autumn equinox 2023**

The earlier morning lights are turning subtle and somewhat lethargic, and the countryside starts to wake cool and misty. Autumn begins and with it we are starting, and so for every change of season going forward, to share notes and thoughts on the work in the vineyards and in the winery, as well as other significant events that gave meaning to the months past.

Summer! Fickle, warm and passionate, yet, in this 2023, quite melancholic: June and July, in fact, reminded us of decades ago, when rainfalls were more abundant and temperatures milder (respectively setting, this year, higher and lower means than the average of the past ten years). Just like a friend not seen in a long time, we welcomed this season with composed optimism, and the subtle wariness one reserves those who, after all, they don't really know that well anymore. With good reason. Despite an ordinary and tranquil start of the season, our better expectations washed away together with the rains that defined much of the period, burdening us with downy mildew, a touch of powdery mildew, and some hail, which only brushed our vineyards but unfortunately did not spare neighbouring towns west (where the biggest hailstone ever recorder in Europe was found!). We farewelled July humbly, conscious, once again, of Nature's power and its pivotal role in gifting us with those serendipitous conditions we call "a great vintage".

Thus, August arrives. With it, rains fade and average temperatures rise again, abruptly taking us, and the grapes, to the hot reality of these recent years. The sharp change in temperature, timed with the start of veraison, was responsible for some mild heat damages, which we limited with one application of kaolin. Despite this, and also thanks to some sporadic rainfalls, plants were gifted a balanced month, while the drier and warmer days allowed us to enter the vineyards and thin intensively, finally reaching harvest time with some satisfaction, however little a vintage such as this is willing to spare.

This year we kicked off an important transition in the vineyards, which we will remember as a baptism of fire. The goal of these new practices is to further reduce our impact on the countryside's ecosystem and favour, instead, a greater degree of its autonomy and resilience. In layman's terms, this translated to folding interrow cover crops instead of mowing them, in following the same approach underrow instead of mechanical mowing, and in rolling the canopy rather than trimming it. Despite the fierce vegetative growth of such a wet season and the risks correlated to its high humidity, we were quite pleasantly surprised in witnessing how insignificant the phytosanitary consequences were compared to the plots we managed in a traditional manner (to formally evaluate the impact and differences). Better yet: carriageways visibly showed minor compaction and the increased overall vitality was a pleasure to watch and listen. Over the next five years we will be able to analytically verify the impact of this new approach on the quality of



topsoil, on its microbial populations, on the vines' radical deepening, as well as on their resilience more broadly.

We already have data from the grapes, though, and differences were meaningful. Under the new conduction, we witnessed greater accumulation of sugars, confirming a more balanced photosynthetic activity of the vines and reflecting their thriving wellbeing despite the hot August days; also, better yeast assimilable nitrogen, as exemplified by the Gjats vineyard, home to our Tocai Friulano: historically affected by lower values than our other vineyards and cultivars, we happily noticed average values of 262 mg/l, compared to the 160 mg/l of the traditional portion.

To conclude our agronomical observations, we care to share our initial worries regarding this year's impact of sulfur (an antiseptic) on the vineyards' microbial populations – and consequentially on the pieds de cuve prepared in each parcel. Thankfully, our fears vanished as we witnessed the vigor the starters came to life with. A welcomed reassurance confirming the strength of the vineyards' microbial character, an element whose paramount importance to our work we can't stress enough.

Uplifting aspects aside, this season gave us more than a few headaches and worries. Yields averaged at 35 quintals per hectare (24 hectolitres circa), about half our average, because of the phytosanitary impact on our grapes and the consequential thinnings – a task as tiresome as it is demoralizing, yet, it allowed us to harvest beautiful clusters that gave meaning to all the hard work.

All our grapes, save some eventual yearly exceptions (see Refosco below) share the following practice: two to three days before harvest, we pick a couple quintals of grapes, press them manually in the vineyard, and place them in small casks that we leave in the plot of origin, where they start fermenting, giving life to the pied de cuve, which is constantly fed with must until the time of harvest, when we bring it to the winery and use it to inoculate the mass. This allows us to share a most unbiased expression of each vineyard's character and to limit yeast cross-contaminations in the winery.

On September 7th harvest began – atypically – with Tocai Friulano, usually the last white grape we pick. While this cultivar is usually entirely allocated to the field blend, among this year's many difficulties, Nature shared a few gems, including Botrytis Cinerea for Tocai. It was too good an opportunity to pass and we decided to harvest and vinify separately the portion of clusters affected by the noble rot, which is now ageing on its own in a tonneaux. This marks the start of a small and each-year-unrepeated (if any at all) parallel project, devoted to small and special vinifications uniquely speaking of their vintage.

Followed the harvest of Pipinot (our only wine released within 12 months from harvest, while the others see the light after at least three years). Its grapes macerated for the usual 24 hours before



fermenting in white. This year we introduced a change to its élevage: a third of the juice now comes of age in 20 hl casks, until the wine is released in late Spring of the following year.

Then, we picked the grapes of Pinot Grigio for the Salvadi (here, too, atypically, since it's usually the last Pinot Grigio we harvest). It macerated for the entire duration of the alcoholic fermentation. After nine days of skin contact, the wine was racked and transferred to tonneaux, where it will evolve for two years. With Salvadi too, we tried some new things: one tonneaux fermented with the stems and another one, after fermenting spontaneously (that is to say without the preparation of the pied de cuve), will macerate for some months. We will eagerly follow their progress!

Finally, it was time for Mepari and, just as every year, the apple does not fall far from the tree: beautiful, small clusters, with considerable acidity and an organoleptic character that embraces elegance rather than structure. Following the tumultuous fermentation in stainless steel, it was transferred part in 20 hl casks and part in stainless steel vats, where it is now coming of age.

To end the harvest of our white grapes was Areore, with its (field) blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon, and Tocai Friulano from two parcels, Gjats and Stradele. The yield of Chardonnay this year were low enough that not only we did not produce any single varietal wine from it (we usually make 1-2 tonneaux), but we also slightly changed the ratio of the blend to 25% Chardonnay, 40% Sauvignon, and 35% Tocai Friulano (rather than the usual 40-30-30). Grapes were pressed together after one day of cold maceration. The wine will evolve in tonneaux for one year before being transferred to stainless steel for another 12 months.

After a few days of rest from picking, on September 20th we harvested the Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso from the Braida di Chiase vineyard. We were almost caught off-guard by how rapidly the berries started losing tonicity, in a completely atypical contrast with the rusticity of this cultivar, which usually lives on the vine for much longer. We decided not to wait to harvest and hence were not able to prepare the pied de cuve; hence, this year, Refosco fermented spontaneously in the open tonneaux where it's now gently fading off its hypnotic dance of transformation to wine. We were gifted with a satisfyingly vigorous and almost instantaneous start of the fermentation and its aromas are a happy gift. For this wine too, 2023 will be a year of tests: while the majority will macerate for the usual extended period of time (until end of the year), one a portion will do so for a much briefer period, and a small part will do so on the stems. The wine will then age for at least two years in tonneaux.

Five days ago we harvested the vineyards of Merlot for what will be the last time: in a few weeks they will be uprooted. Although it's a few years already now that we do not vinify this cultivar, removing its vines is a bittersweet moment nonetheless. This grape variety has been quite important to our work, it gifted us immense satisfactions and holds a special place in our father's heart. The decision to abandon it was no emotionally easy task, yet tough choices are part of the game and Merlot has no future down the road for us. Its uprooting is not vain, though, as it will allow us to start a new project that we will start sharing in a few months.



To continue on the theme of Merlot, in July we bottled the 2020, its last vinified vintage. We wanted to end its tale properly and hence have chosen the barrels that better reflected the point of contact between Lara and me, and our father's vision. Campo del Viotto 2020 will be available starting from the end of October in limited quantities, mostly through our partners and ambassadors, while a smaller portion can be purchased directly at the winery. Should you be interested, please respond directly to this email for information.

Around the same time, Refosco Peraria 2020 will be made available, joining the white counterparts of its vintage a few months late.

Now, it's time for the last few days of work in the winery. We will finish accompanying the wines on their way to *élevage*, start the composting pile and the winter vegetable garden, as well as lay the foundations for the above-mentioned project. We will also start the vineyards' Autumn works, some for us revolutionary, and we will travel across Europe and Asia to present the latest vintages we released a few months ago.

Today is a cozy Wednesday, bees are buzzing with no frenzy and the leaves, tired from a season's work, enjoy the last tepid rays of sunshine. It's a romantic and harmonious day to celebrate the change of season.

Talk to you in December, with lots of news.

Mandi,

Mattia, Lara, Valter, Maria Grazia, Bujar, Shkelzen, Ziri, Thomas, Shazan, Annalisa, e Daniel