



# SCARBOLO

## Winter solstice 2024

Three months ago, we left things off after a surprisingly phenomenal harvest. Now, with Fall just finished, we can say that this season too left us satisfied. Despite the anticipation of some works previously done in the Spring, and also thanks to a merciful weather, we were able to execute all that was in plans.

The pivotal theme driving the reshuffling of our work was the wish to limit, as much possible, soil compaction (at this point a harmless obsession). The granulometry and composition of our soils, clay with few rocks, adorned with the frequent phytosanitary treatments of the last two years, led to the appearance of what looked like little trails along the vine rows – as comfortable for walking as they were detrimental to the soil's vigor.

A compressed soil leads to anaerobiosis, limiting the mineralization of organic matter and hence reducing the vitality of the soil. We rather not fertilize because we believe that forcing an exogenous nutrition lays a veil of contrivance to the expression of the Terroir. Hence, having access to a whole, rich autochthonous nourishing stock is a mandatory condition for the vitality of the plants. A constipated soil, moreover, limits the drainage of the waters, exacerbating the anaerobic effect and depriving deep roots of water resources.

For years, we have been facing these criticisms with no tillage practices and cover crops, both phenomenal allies. Plus, this year's severe green pruning was a big help in favoring ventilation (and hence fewer phytosanitary risks), resulting in a less frequent need for treatments compared to previous similar vintages.

Now, we want to contrast compaction by intervening on the time factor: that is to say, extend as much as possible the "virgin" state of the vineyards and, to do that, we have revisited our work calendar between the post-harvest decompaction and the first phytosanitary treatment in Spring.

Stakes' maintenance, previously done in Spring, was the first task we completed once leaves fell, in mid-October.

To follow, we sowed the cover crops. A small note on the topic: wishing to communicate a most limpid expression of our Terroirs, the act of forcing, each year, an "alien" crop doesn't have us screaming with joy. Sure, nutritive and nematicide benefits are obvious, but we are exploring alternate ways, in which reduced yields and vigor allow us to sustain the vineyard solely with compost, a closed cycle form of nutrition that is better aligned to our vision of the ecosystem. This subject is one we are already testing in some parcels. In the meantime, for the rest of the vineyards, this year we are working two types of cover crops, an agronomic one and a melliferous one, in alternate rows.



The agronomic is the one we seeded a few weeks ago. We chose different mixes depending on the soil and the cultivar, always looking for a discreet presence of taproot plants (to favor air and water flow) and, counterintuitively, a fair presence of legumes, hoping to favor a lively vegetative growth, in function of our new canopy-folding techniques.

The interrows we have not populated now – which will be sowed in the Spring with the melliferous crops, a set of rustic, local seeds from the magredi area – have instead been decompacted.

At the beginning of December, we kicked off this year's pruning. Nothing particularly new on this front: two spurs and a fruit cane in the wide majority of cases, and a second "sacrificial" fruit cane – removed in Spring to vent excess vigor – for Tocai Friulano vines. All our plants are Guyot trained and hence, inevitably, the older vines are gradually getting too close to the neighboring ones. Starting this year, then, we put some focus on drawing spurs closer to the trunk, without compromising the plant with excessively large cuts or new spurs in poor lymph nodes. It's a delicate procedure but, done correctly, it will allow us to grant space between vines and longevity to the plants.

Making this task more difficult – and on top of being a tough nut to crack in and of itself – is the esca disease, another critical theme we are facing heads on this pruning season. On top of the textbook removal of dead wood and limitation of big cuts, this year we are putting particular attention on avoiding pruning during rainy or high humidity days (conditions that favor the spread of spores, and our bones are grateful too). The other condition facilitating the spread of fungi – warmer temperatures – seemingly are sparing us this year, in what prospects to be a cooler winter than the average of recent years. The tool galvanizing us the most, though, will be Trichoderma, a fungus capable of rapidly populating the pruned area, hence limiting the spread of esca spores. We are confident that this solution, as simple as it is logic, will be of great help.

Then, time for the removal of the cut branches. With shoots as a main ingredient of our compost, we shred and bring them to the pile, where they will transform into feed for the vines the upcoming Fall. This year, we will chip the wood along the headlands of the vineyards (instead of inside the rows), so as to reduce the risk of trunk diseases spreading (we believe that shredding along the rows facilitates the spread of spores, reason why we do not have much faith in curettage as a solution for esca). We are reflecting on how to transport branches out of the vineyard without using tractors but it is starting to feel like a chimera. Worse come to worse, we will proceed along the interrows sowed with the agronomic cover crop (sacrilege!), which will anyway have to be decompacted at winter's end (we want to avoid contemporary soil loosening in adjacent rows). In this instance, we might lose a portion of the germinating plants, but that is a cost we are willing to pay.

Moreover, this final season of the year, we have brought home about 800 trees and shrubs, destined to populate our estate. We were miraculously able to plant them all (naively starting off with only shovels and hoes, only to later inevitably become excavator gurus) and they will be of great help



with agronomic (co2 capture, evapotranspiration, root networks, house for fauna, shading, and temperature reduction) and landscape benefits (hiding the ugliness stemming from the failure of public entities' landscape planning). It will be interesting to witness the microbiological and climatic changes of the estate over the years.

Soon, we will prune the old vines from the historical Pinot Grigio vineyard for our massal selection. Access to these plants was granted by a friend winegrower in the Colli Orientali and we care to highlight how admirable both his openness to share and his care for what is, by all means, a living heritage of Friulian winegrowing were. The identification of old Pinot Grigio vines was, in fact, more challenging than we imagined. Most old vines (50+ years old) of this cultivar has been uprooted in favor of other grape varieties, leaving us with a narrower pool to choose from and all with an impoverished historic memory.

The scions we pick will find their new home in a new vineyard of roughly 0,3 hectares (also referred to as a "field", a size we find almost "divine", both for its semantic faithfulness, as well as for its humane size, plus it will allow us to make the most of trees' shading in our parcels). Part of these vines will go in the soil franc de pied, together with their sisters picked in Codis last Fall, while the rest will be grafted.

We long thought about how to make the most of this opportunity and implement a training method best suited to face the challenges posed by climate change. So, this vineyard will be planted in a "settonce" (sorry, no English translation) fashion, a method used in Ancient Rome, with bush vines arranged along the corners (and one at the center) of an imaginary hexagon, with a 1,5 meters distance between the plants. Farewell, tractor! This formula fascinates us because it allows a three-dimensional development of the vine – no need to block the lymphatic push perpendicular to the row's axis – and an equal distance among the plants which, together with the goblet-like canopy structure, favors both shading and airflow. Part of the grafted massal vines will anyway be laid down trellised, so as to witness firsthand the differences in growth, health, and vitality of the plants between the two training methods.

Back at the winery, 2024 wines are evolving in their vessels with no aid whatsoever. The only addition was a small drop of so2 at the end of fermentation, while now we are only focusing on topping the barrels. This year too, we are not relying on bâtonnages: our Terroir gifts us with wines that are naturally dense and rich; they do not need the additional weight coming from lees stirring. Moreover, our vision translates to a work where the human touch is not meant to rush the coming of age of the juice: wine ages with its own tools, which will gift no more and no less than what they are meant to.

To wrap it up, a little heads up on our upcoming vintages: at the end of January, we will bottle Areore, Salvadi, Mepari, and Viotto 2023. Mepari and Areore will go through a gentle clarification, to avoid protein flocculation in the bottle. The other two wines are magnificently stable, respectively because of vinification and cultivar characteristics. All will be available towards the beginning of



summer. We are quite satisfied and feel that, finally, after years of trials and small vinifications, we have reached our ideal dimension, both in terms of size and, most importantly, identity.

We are sharing this diary on the last day of the year. Another trip around the sun comes to an end. Maybe a chaotic one, with a few chapters still open that will only lay their last words over the next four seasons. Perhaps because of some more free time, these days we are reflecting on the greater sense of things and on how the small cogs of our daily actions reflect on the greater mechanisms of our lives. And while we at times may feel disoriented, what anchors us firmly and gives us lightness of being is the awareness that the wish to do the right thing and to be a fair person is that what drives us, knowing that, also in the most fatalistic of moments, we do have the last say on our own actions. And that should be more than enough. Hoping that you end this year with a pleasant lightness of heart, we wish you a consciously aware serene beginning of 2025.

Mandi,

Mattia, Lara, Valter, Maria Grazia, Bujar, Shkelzen, Ziri, Sahahjan, and Annalisa