SCARBOLO

Winter solstice 2025: Slow Ride

We are closing the year with a “condensed” chapter since, because of climatic conditions, we have decided to postpone the bulk of the works to the coming months.

Let’s start with this year’s “special” wine. Which we are once again forgoing. After Memari 2022 and Viotto 2023, the third editions of the unrepeated vinification was meant to be a co-fermentation of all the St. Martin’s grapes. The combination of high temperatures and humidity over the period that led to the fateful November 11th caused the decay of the fruit, robbing us of the chance to vinify. Fingers crossed for 2026.

As mentioned in the past, Autumn is the only time of the year when we provide nutritional support to the plants. This year too we distributed poultry manure, although limiting ourselves, for the second year in a row, only to the vines showing signs of stress and to the replacements. The remaining plants were left unfertilised. It’s too early to claim victory but we are confident that, despite the high planting density, by insisting with low yields (roughly 40 quintals per hectare) and leveraging the peculiarities of our Territory (fertility, soil texture, and water availability) we can reach - in the long run - a condition in which vines require only a sporadic nutritional support and one in which a closed loop source, through our vermicompost, can be enough. Should we succeed, it would result in an additional element of authenticity and expressive clarity to our wines.

With the same objective in mind, this year we will not be sowing cover crops. It’s a choice that makes the above mentioned path even more demanding, but one that we deem coherent. The use of allochtonous species, in fact, doesn’t valorise the Territory, results in an excessive mineralization of the soil (by working it for sowing), and fixes nutrients in a way that we deem as far-fetched. We want to rely on indigenous instruments, hoping to transmit to the vine - and by extension to the wines - a more genuine and characteristic nutritional profile. While the autochthonous herbaceous cover is able to grant structure to the soil, we know it doesn’t offer the same nitrogen-fixating and nematocidal functions as cover crops. This being said, we are confident that the microbial population and entomofauna capable of establishing in a less anthropomorphised environment may prove fruitful allies, at least in part.

Concerning mechanical operations, the sole intervention was the decompaction of the rows subject to the passage of the inter-row sprayer during phytosanitary treatments, one out of three.

On November 27 we started pruning, with some changes detailed below. As anticipated, though, we decided to halt the work for a few weeks. In fact, although we leave meaningful sacrificial wood to all cuts, the average temperature and humidities of recent winters are ideal conditions for the spread of the Esca disease while simultaneously being unsuitable for the application of

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Trichoderma, which requires temperatures of at least 10°C to effectively colonise pruning wounds. Postponing pruning to the second part of winter, drier and with rising temperatures, seemed like the most appropriate choice.

Regarding the changes, the most radical first: when vines allow it, with vigorous and well placed spurs, we are experimenting a transition from Guyot to a variant of the “candelabro”, leaving three or four spurs rather than two spurs and a fruit cane. The sap flow is more efficient and cuts, occurring exclusively on one year wood, are less traumatic for the plant. Moreover, not having to bend and tie the fruiting canes gives us valuable time and operational flexibility, enabling further postponement of pruning. We still have to confirm the risks associated with basal bud dormancy and spur elongation in our medium fertility conditions. Time will be the judge.

We adopted a new approach in the portions managed under Guyot as well. Rather than prune long and then shorten to the desired bud amount during the bending and tying operation, this year we immediately cut to the final load (4-7 gems). This way, the plant wastes less lymph at bleeding and pushes the opening of central buds with greater strength, without us having to resort to node constriction. The greater pace of execution allows us, again, to postpone the pruning cuts to a period more favourable for Trichoderma. It’s a compromise: we partially renounce to the vegetative delay allowed by late topping, but we reduce Esca-associated risks, which we today deem as more tangible. As per the effects of tardy pruning on harvest time and on phenolic ripeness, the past vintage has confirmed our view that this topic is often over-emphasised.

Finally, regarding cane removal: in an effort to forgo an additional mechanical passage between the rows, we are removing pruning cuts from the vineyards by hand, taking them to the headlands where they are then shredded and later carried to the composting pile. This practice, which further reduces the compacting action of the tractor, is currently only viable in the smaller plots. In Bicinins and in part of Pozzut and of Codis we will hence keep on distributing canes along alternated rows and shred them in place.

In closing, an update on the 2025 wines’ progress. And let us anticipate a touch of lively enthusiasm. Each new vintage feels as one we can grasp more fully, but the passage from 2024 to this harvest was, to us, the most evident leap forward. The new canopy management, the anticipated harvesting window, and some variations in grape handling at the winery all gave life to wines that, four months after picking, are gifting us with great satisfaction. Analytically, we got what we were looking for: 12,5% alcohol circa, pH and acidities slightly above the historical average, and full yet delicate organoleptic profiles. This last trait gave us the chills in the first weeks after harvest: in-becoming wines were more silent and subtle than what we were used to. Giving Nature its time, however, they are now beginning to reveal exactly what we were seeking in terms of elegance, complexity, and drinkability. Think of a much finer, chiselled 2023. Worth mentioning is Pipinot. While the first three vintages were “pleasantly playful” expressions, we felt that it remained a too light-hearted wine to properly introduce the rest of our work. The passage to vinifying the entirety of the mass by cap lift

made the difference. It remains a less multifaceted expression compared to the others but it finally plays in the same league and it's able to sing its expression even when trying it right after Refosco. In this sense, we imagine it as a baby Salvadi: its most correct dimension, and the right way to open up to the rest of our work.

"*Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*" (T.S. Eliot)

Mandi,

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