



SCARBOLO

Autumn equinox 2026: To slump at noon thought-sick and pale

Following a deceptively placid 2025, the scorching heat was back this summer. Compared to the same period of 2024, the season just ended was even more taxing: 25 days above 35 degrees (17 back then) and a mere 37 millimetres of rain from the start of the season to the first day of harvest (115 previously).

High temperatures and well-spaced Spring rains resulted in a relentless vegetative push, which we constantly chased with our work in the field. Sure, the decision not to clean the flower caps, stemming from the wish to respect more faithfully the vines' path within a less anthropomorphised system, proved fortuitous because all the leaves along the fruiting zone were preserved. The vines and the grapes still suffered, though, with signs of sunburn on the clusters not shaded by the folded shoots (particularly in the Pinot Grigio vineyards) and yellowed or withered leaves in most parcels, regardless of variety.

A remark is worth noting - water stress, although undeniable, was relatively contained, and most of the damage came from sunburns instead. Just looking at the fruit made the evidence clear: scorched clusters showed necrosis only along the side exposed to the sun, while those from dehydrated vines were limp and soft throughout. In its own way, this was encouraging, confirming the high-water retention capacity of the soils our vineyards call home. A "consolation prize" we hold dear.

For the record, and thanks to my father's insistence, this year we exceptionally watered the Pinot Grigio vineyards, just once and at the beginning of August. I was very torn about proceeding: taking a step back on a choice so influential on the vintage's expression really did not sit well with me. In hindsight, though, I would do it again, and sooner (balance, by then, was already compromised). Giving the vines room to breathe and sparing them crippling stress is a responsibility, and risking signing their sentence is a burden I could not bear. Emergency irrigation, yes, without a doubt.

Harvest began on August 15th (never so early) and carried on, rather calmly, until September 8th. The despondency that was lingering the days before picking, as we imagined the grapes' suffering, is a vivid memory. That being said, despite a less-than-ideal vintage, as harvest progressed we were reassured: fruit tasted pleasant, revealing tamed sugars (a courtesy of the canopy folding), acidities above expectations, and sparing us "cooked" notes. Granted: as per Lara's observations, malic acids are relatively low and phenolic accumulation has generally been suboptimal, but this reflects the season and we trust the juices' ability to find their own balance as they come of age.

Since last harvest, we had planned to extend the use of stems to all wines. In analogy to the human body, I see this component as the skeleton: a structural element, able to bear the load of everything



else. Enologically, this mostly discarded part gives, depending on the vinification, a plenitude of benefits, ranging from the contribution of varietal tannins, to the protection of acids, to musts less prone to reduction, to juices that are in general more delicate and “ethereal”.

Harvest began with Pipinot, which, since last year, has been vinified entirely following the traditional canons of Pinot Grigio ramato, macerating until cap rise (4-5 days this year given low YANs). While most of the mass was destemmed, roughly 10% remained whole cluster, donating a brushstroke of tension and gracefulness.

This 2026 we ran many trials. For Pipinot, one mass (around 10 quintals) was processed entirely whole clusters. Phenomenal!.. Until it went into reduction just a few days after it was racked into the aging tonneau. The approach still fascinates us greatly and we believe the gentle wetting of the cap (instead of punch-downs) and this year’s low YANs are to blame, so next year we will try again, strong of this lesson.

The second wine we worked was, unprecedentedly, Salvadi. Normally, it sits among the last to be picked, but this year the clusters at Codis were ready earlier. Although stems have been present here since the 2023 vintage, this year we increased the dose, leaving almost a fifth of the mass whole cluster. The formula is by now consolidated and the wine satisfies us very much.

The trial of Salvadi will perhaps (I hope!) be the most significant for our project. As you know, our *raison d’être* is to communicate a fine, artisanal expression of Grave, with particular attention to Pinot Grigio. As of today, our two crus speak of two plots with very different characters, but the choice of vinifying each in its own way (in white and in maceration) withholds purity from the expression of their respective territories. Therefore, starting this year we decided to subtract a portion of Pozzut from Mepari and dedicate it to a new expression of Pinot Grigio in maceration. Harvest, vinification, and aging are identical to Salvadi. The differences from our historical macerated wine are already evident: a livelier aromatic expression, marked by floral characters, and a finer, more elegant tannin.

The next vineyard picked was Pozzut, home of Mepari (and, from this year, of the wine just mentioned). More than ever, this vintage benefited from whole-cluster pressing. Given the high night temperatures, and despite the grape intake method, this year’s white Pinot Grigio will carry a slightly deeper colour.

Right after, we picked the grapes for Areore. Following the success of the 2025 trial, the entire mass was processed whole cluster and, as always, the grapes were pressed together and the wine co-fermented. Tocai surprised us this year since, despite the weather, the vines held up the vintage with a straight back, and the fruit ripened so placidly that, had we vinified it on its own, we would have waited another 5-7 days. The beauty of this wine, though, is precisely the balance through compensation among the three cultivars, different every vintage. This year, structure came from the more advanced ripeness of Chardonnay and Sauvignon.



Here, the trial was a maceration until cap rise and the reasoning is one of extraction: while whole-cluster pressing allows Tocai to avoid reduction, at the same time it brings a more abstract phenolic character than we want. Hence, the idea of working these 10 quintals differently. The expression, now, has a character new to us, marked by fascinating, balsamically herbaceous notes.

With joy we announce that, after two years of absence, the episodic wine is back. We have two candidates, and of course only one will be chosen for the bottle. With the first, our never-ending fascination with Tocai Friulano led us to try a macerated mass, entirely with stems, until cap rise: an ode to traditional farmers' vinifications. Here too, the balsamic vein whispers back, reconfirming how versatile and multifaceted this cultivar is. The other candidate is an offshoot of our persistent obsession with finding an "eureka" form for Refosco. Eager to play more freely with this cultivar, we decided to try a combined fermentation: half Pinot Grigio mass and half Refosco mass. Whole clusters in an open tonneau, light crushing, and the entire fermentation on skins.

Then, Refosco on its own. As has been our practice for two vintages now, semi-carbonic for the whole mass. This year we wet the cap with meticulous gentleness, thus leaving a larger portion in pure carbonic conditions. Moreover, here too, the trials: one mass racked off earlier, upon reaching 12 Babo degrees, and the other vinifying whole clusters while submerged in a direct-press portion. The masses of Refosco are perhaps the only ones that gave us real headaches in fermentation this year, due to the sudden drop in temperatures after harvest and the consequent slowing of fermentations. A bit of volatile developed under these conditions, but, nonetheless, these masses too finally completed their journey.

In conclusion, the harvest was more satisfying than we had imagined at the beginning. We are curious to follow its development, both to understand how this strange vintage will translate into the wines, once mature, and to witness how the different trials will reveal their characters. Now, onward with the autumn works!

"The worst farmer's wine is still better than the best industrial wine." (Luigi Veronelli)

Mandi,

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