

## LE POGGETTE

In the region of Umbria, between the tiny, charming town of Montecastrilli and the much larger and industrial city of Terni, deep into the foothill of the Apennine Mountains, there is a theater-shaped valley that is nestled into the surrounding hills and perfectly protected from the cold winds that constantly descend from the mountains to the north. In this restricted microclimate the growing season begins as much as three weeks earlier than it does in the surrounding hills. In the 1960's the Lanzetta family bought the le Poggette farm, whose land lies entirely in this valley, moving from the neighboring region of Abruzzi. Sensing that they had a unique climate, Montepulciano vines from their homeland were planted amidst the numerous acres of grain and sunflower fields. In Abruzzi, the Montepulciano vine, when tended to properly, makes some of Italy's finest red wines, but the DOC zone runs from the Adriatic coast up into the lower elevations of the Apennine foothills. It is not thought of as a grape that could do well at higher elevations, away from the sea, with a few exceptions like this tiny zone where the Tenuta le Poggette lies.

Along with their unique Montepulciano (named after the nearby "Torre Maggiore" mountain), they also produce a Colli Amerini DOC from Sangiovese with a small percentage of Canaiolo and Montepulciano. Their pure (white) Grechetto IGT and (red) Canaiolo IGT wines illustrate the potential of so many Italian varietals once considered inferior, if the yield per vine is kept low, and vineyards planted densely with carefully chosen clones.

Franco Santucci, Vice-Mayor of Montecastrilli, and Commissioner of Agriculture to the area, also finds the time to be the cellar master at le Poggette. As if this weren't enough to distinguish le Poggette, their gifted consulting enologist Claudio Gori is perfecting a process called "premacerazione al freddo" (cold pre-maceration) or simply PMF. This innovative technique involves using liquid CO<sub>2</sub> to freeze the grapes at -90° before crushing. This breaks down any of the more bitter and astringent tannins leaving only the sweeter ones. Mr. Gori began experimenting with this process as part of his work to perfect local Italian grape varietals so that they don't require the inclusion of "foreign" grapes to make them more palatable for the international market. What better place than le Poggette, between the starkly industrial Terni and the quaint and rustic Montecastrilli, is there for such a modern process to preserve Italian traditions.



Franco Santucci, property manager, with his daughter and property owner Stefano Lanzetta



On the day these photos were taken, we arrived at le Poggette with cool December air, but a warming sun and hardly any wind. We were immediately whisked into a van and taken up to this perch on top of the opposite slope to see the panorama of the property, and when we got out of the van a cold biting wind nearly froze our noses! This is the microclimate of Le Poggette: The Apennines in the background, above, channel these cold winds southward, yet their farm is well-protected from these by the ridge on which they are perched.

