

CONTE LEOPARDI DITTAJUTI

As the Apennine range wends its way down the Italian peninsula, it swerves to the east about halfway down (at the calf of the leg), and through the entire region of the Marche, or *le Marche*, as it is called in Italy, they run quite close to the coast. As a result, there is not a lot of flat land in the region, but the mountains only rise to significant heights further inland, along the border with Umbria. Most of the region is characterized by wide, open, rolling hills and quite beautiful countryside. These hills are penetrated by rivers, most of which run from west to east, that allow the warmer maritime climate inland to temper the mountain airs. It is the only area along the Adriatic coast that has hills running right to the sea, which can create some spectacular, secluded beaches. When one considers the dry climate and limestone-rich soil that accompany this terrain, it is somewhat surprising that only in the last ten years have the wines of le Marche begun to gather critical acclaim.

The Cònero promontory punctuates the coastline of le Marche just to the south of the city of Ancona and dominates the landscape. At 584 meters, it is the highest peak along the Adriatic coast until the Gargano promontory in Apulia. The hills to the south and west of the Cònero provide the most ideal climate for growing the Montepulciano grape in the Marche region, and the wine produced here, Rosso Cònero, takes its name from the promontory.

The Conte Leopardi Dittajuti winery is located due south of the Monte Cònero. There are two parts to the property. The winery and some vineyards are located in the town of Numana, while the most important vineyard, "Vigneto del Coppo" is north in nearby Sirolo. Presently run by Count Piervittorio Leopardi, the property has been handed down from father to son through countless generations. In fact, the earliest references to the winery date back to around 450 AD. The ancient family crest of the Leopardi family is featured prominently on the labels of all of Leopardi Dittajuti's wines. In spite of this remarkable patrimony, the wines of this property never met their full potential until the arrival of Piervittorio in the early 1990's. He took the reins from his father just as the Rosso Cònero appellation was beginning to gain acclaim, and was determined that his winery would also get their share. Going was tough at first, but the recent arrival of Riccardo Cotarella gave the winery an immediate push towards quality. Today, from 35 hectares of vineyards, the Leopardi Dittajuti winery produces nontraditional Sauvignon Blanc white wines and traditional Rosso Cònero red wines. The maritime climate and calcareous soils make their vineyards in ideal site for the Sauvignon Blanc grape, and the wines have a distinctive mineral quality with characteristics more reminiscent of white Bordeaux than the Sauvignon Blanc of the Loire. The red wines of Leopardi Dittajuti show what diversity the Montepulciano grape is capable of. The fresh and soft "Fructus" is vastly different from the intense and powerful "Pigmento", yet the mineral characteristic found in the whites is also evident throughout all of the reds.

Piervittorio Leopardi's unrelenting quest for quality, outstanding vineyards and the "hands-on" approach enologist Riccardo Cotarella is a combination that indicates a promising future for this outstanding property.



Left: A view of the newer, more densely planted part of the "Vigneto del Coppo"

Below, Left: Piervittorio Leopardi Dittajuti.

Below, Right: The "Vigneto del Coppo" at sunset. Not the most informative picture, just a pretty shot!

