

FATTORIA MONTICINO ROSSO

Emilia-Romagna is often deemed Italy's finest region for cuisine. Its products, such as Parmigiano Reggiano, Prosciutto di Parma, Aceto Balsamico di Modena, Mortadella and the infinite variations of pastas such as tortellini, garganelli, and lasagna speak volumes for this, but the wines of the region have not enjoyed the same fame. To the average person, the first wine that comes to mind from Emilia-Romagna is usually the light and slightly fizzy Lambrusco from the plains around the Po River that was so heavily advertised in the 1970's and '80's. In fact, the majority of the vineyards in Emilia-Romagna are planted in the lowlands to the north of the region at altitudes well below 100 meters (328 ft.).

What remains less known are the small successes that have been enjoyed by progressive vintners in the region's hills that lead from the plains into the Apennine Mountains. Low-yielding vines grown on slopes where the drainage is better and soil more meager create more interesting wines of greater structure and complexity, but most of these producers are small with limited production, and thus usually take the back seat to the industrial-styled wineries of the plains.

Such is the case of the Fattoria del Monticino Rosso, a family-run winery in the hills near Imola, just southeast of Bologna. Founded in 1961 by Antonio Zeoli, the original property, called "Olmo", consisted of 13 hectares (30 acres). Through the hard diligence and sacrifice of the entire Zeoli family, in 1985 they were able to expand by purchasing a second property of 24 hectares (60 acres) called "Monticino Rosso". Today, the property consists of 37 hectares (90 acres), of which 14 (35 acres) are vineyard. The rest of the property consists mostly of orchards of various fruit. More vineyards are also in the planning, which will be planted at a much higher density with reduced production per vine. Mr. Zeoli is now slowly handing the reins over to his sons Gianni and Luciano, who manage the property with a passion equal to that of their father. Gianni, the younger, is the cellar master, while Luciano handles the administrative end.

For a few years now, there has been a project underway at Monticino Rosso to increase the quality of wine focusing on the characteristics of the soil and climate where the wine is born. This quest has been facilitated by the location of the property, which allows for hillside cultivation of indigenous varieties like the Albana di Romagna (Italy's first DOCG white), Pignoletto and Sangiovese di Romagna. In 2000 another important part of this project involved moving the winery from Olmo to a new building at the Monticino Rosso farm, capable of housing the most up-to-date equipment, yet aesthetically complementing the surrounding architecture. At the center of all of this renovation is the expert guidance of Giancarlo Soverchia, one of the most significant winemakers of the Adriatic coast. Bringing in a "super-stud" like Giancarlo does not make life in the farm any easier, though. Giancarlo Soverchia insists that quality winemaking can only be achieved through dedicated participation of the ownership, and not just financially. It is thus the involvement of the entire Zeoli family that is the greatest key to the success of the Fattoria Monticino Rosso.

Right: The new winery at the Monticino Rosso farm, which was completed in the year 2000.



Left: Fattoria del Monticino Rosso, aside from grapes, also grows a variety of fruit in various orchards. Here we see a row of Persimmon, or *Cachitrees*, that produce a most succulent fruit that is not easily found in the U.S., but very popular in Italy.



Right: A glimpse of the gently sloping vineyards of the Fattoria del Monticino Rosso

