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Climate

A warm winter, followed by a somewhat early spring, led a slightly precocious bud burst. Regular springtime weather together with a rather cool summer with occasional rain favored a long growing season without stress on the vines. An August heat wave, tempered by breezes off the sea, then assisted in recovering ripening time. The September climate was ideal, fine weather, low humidity, and temperature swings from daytime heat to useful evening and nighttime coolness. In a few words: 2011 was difficult in terms of the picking and of the selection of the grapes on the sorting tables, but very satisfying in terms of the results obtained.

Vinification

Grapes were selected from the 100 acres (40 hectares) of proprietary Merlot vineyards. After hand picking and a careful selection in the cellars, the grapes were fermented in temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks approximately 25 days. Fermentation temperatures were based on the ripeness of the grapes, some at lower temperatures to conserve aromatic freshness, others around 86° Fahrenheit (30° centigrade) to extract more substance and structure. The results, a series of different styles of Merlot, were then aged separately in small oak barrels. The wines went through a malolactic fermentation in oak (30% new) before the end of the year. After eight months of aging in French oak, the finest lots were blended and then given an additional four months of aging in barrel before bottling. The aging in bottle before release lasted a further ten months.

Historical Data

The Guado al Tasso estate is located in the small, but prestigious, Bolgheri appellation on the coast Tuscany's Upper Maremma, some 60 miles (100 kilometers) to the southwest of the city of Florence. This appellation has a relatively short history (it was created in 1994) but can boast a worldwide fame as a reference point wine on the international scene. The estate covers an area of about 320 hectares (790 acres) planted to vines, in a splendid plain surrounded by hills known as "the Bolgheri amphitheater" for its particular geographical conformation. The Guado al Tasso vineyards consist principally of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Vermentino grapes; this last cultivated with both white and red varieties. There is also a small presence of Grenache, Petit Verdot, Viognier and Sémillon. They enjoy a mild climate due to the nearby presence of the Mediterranean Sea, constant breezes mitigate summer heat, and the rigors of winter clear the sky and maintain a high degree of solar light and radiation. Cont'Ugo is produced exclusively from Merlot grapes in order to interpret the territory of Bolgheri from a new perspective. The vineyards, situated at an altitude between 150 and 200 feet (45-60 meters) above sea level on clayey-loam soils prevalently of alluvial origin, gave Cont'Ugo great depth and complexity while conserving the fragrance and richness of fruit which are typical of Merlot.



Tasting Notes

The wine shows aromas of cherries, wild cherries, and raspberries along with notes of the aromatic herbs of Mediterranean brush land. On the palate, it is savory, balanced, and resonant. This is an interpretation of the land and climate of Bolgheri through the use solely of Merlot grapes from the 2011 vintage. Fragrance and abundant youthful fruitiness are its characterizing elements. It is a profound wine, complex, extremely pleasurable and vibrant.

Awards

Antonio Galloni 93/100 USA