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## Umani Ronchi The interpretations of Verdicchio

*The Bernetti family's viticultural project, which also extends into the Conero area and neighboring Abruzzo, maintains a strong bond with the white-wine symbol of Le Marche, offering three versions > The fresh mouthfeel of Casal di Serra, the finesse of Vecchie Vigne and the complexity of the Plenio as told by those who produce them*

Among the Italian whites that have come the furthest in the world there is certainly Verdicchio, a wine-grape variety celebrated for its chameleon-like personality. The history of Umani Ronchi began over half a century ago in Cupramontana, right in the cradle of this ancient Le Marche variety, among the Castelli di Jesi appellation, which boasts the Doc (with the specific Classico and Classico Superiore) and the Docc (for the Riserva). «Today the total vineyard area of the winery is equal to 210 hectares that slope down from the hills to the sea along the Adriatic coast», explains Michele Bernetti, owner together with his father Massimo. “Over the years we have invested heavily in the Conero appellation and we have done so in Abruzzo region too, but we remain strongly linked to the

Verdicchio hills, where Umani Ronchi was founded in 1957”. The vineyards are located in five among best suited municipalities: Cupramontana, Montecarotto, Serra de ‘Conti, Maiolati Spontini and San Paolo di Jesi. The company produces three selections of Verdicchio: the Casal di Serra Classico Superiore, the Vecchie Vigne Classico Superiore and the Plenio Classico Riserva. “It is an extremely versatile grape and capable of describing its territory, through different sensory characteristics and nuances based on the type of soil and microclimate”. Hence the desire of Umani Ronchi to give three different interpretations, which are the result of a long stylistic research as well as a precious work of zoning and experimentation in the vineyards. Casal di Serra Verdicchio

dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore is what Michele Bernetti defines as “the father”: «The first harvest dates back to 1983, when Verdicchio was sold almost entirely in amphorae, the characteristic bottle developed by Cantina Fazi Battaglia and that then became the symbol of Verdicchio in the world ». Sales abroad had exploded and commercial success showed no signs of diminishing, but most companies were focusing more on quantity rather than quality. “Casal di Serra was born from the desire to offer a product of excellence, from a selection of the best grapes from our Montecarotto estate. In the nineties, we have expanded the “vineyards” for this wine to other three vocated plots on the two opposite banks of the Esino Valley, in the hilly area ranging from 200 to



OPENING the Cupramontana vineyard from which Plenio Riserva is born  
 ABOVE the three Verdicchio selections from the historic Marche winery and the owner Michele Bernetti

330 meters “. The plants are between 8 and 30 years old, with clayey and moderately calcareous soils trained with the Guyot system.

Between the nineties and the new millennium, the Bernetti family wanted to renew the vines of Montecarotto estate (dating back to the seventies), but keeping 7 hectares (out of the nearly 20 in total) located in the highest part of the hill. That’s where since 2001, the Verdicchio Vecchie Vigne Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore has been made. «We started a “personalized management” of the vineyard, which continues nowadays. The particular position, combined with the age of the vines and their training system with the double-arched cane, requires a particular and customized pruning “.

This leads to our Plenio, produced since 1995 with grapes from a plot near Cupramontana, acquired in the early nineties. The altitude, around 400 meters, favors the temperature excursions, while the soils are finer and less compact than those of Montecarotto, with white clays and stones. “It is always the last area of the Verdicchio hills to be harvested and even in the wettest years or, on the con-

trary, particularly drought, it does not give us problems thanks to a very developed root system”.

The winemaking choices also contribute to give a specific personality to the three Verdicchio Umani Ronchi selections.

In the case of Casal di Serra, currently available with the 2020 vintage, after a soft pressing, the free-run juice is quickly cooled and then statically decanted. “A short stay on the lees favors and optimizes the extraction of the varietal character”, explains Michele Bernetti. The fermentation, in steel tanks at a temperature between 16 and 18 ° C, continues for 10-15 days. The malolactic fermentation is not carried out and the aging is in steel tanks in contact with its own yeasts for at least 5 months. “Casal di Serra is the emblem of Verdicchio’s freshness and drinkability, with an important acidity. The fruit is very present and crunchy, the salinity always in the background. It really expresses the inseparable bond that this vine has with the territory ».

About our Vecchie Vigne (available with the 2019 vintage) the terroir is expressed with a greater finesse, structure and pro-

mise of longevity, well linked to a longer aging. «We are talking about an over fifty-year-old vineyard with a great vegetative and productive balance that allows us to harvest perfectly ripe grapes. Also in this case the vinification takes place in steel, without malolactic fermentation, then the wine stays in contact with the yeasts for at least 10 months in the historic concrete tanks before resting further 6 months in the bottle. “Vecchie Vigne sets aside the youthful floral and fruity notes of Casal di Serra to open up to a mineral elegance, with a light flavor. On the palate, the acidity integrates perfectly with the structure “.

Last but not least, the Plenio Riserva. «For this category the appellation imposes a minimum aging period of 18 months, of which at least 6 are in the bottle. “Back in the days, the refinement took place in barrique, today we use 30-40% of large barrels, while the rest is equally divided between concrete and steel tanks. As the name suggests, Plenio is a Verdicchio of great richness and complexity, but we did not want to give up finesse, which is enriched with intriguing spicy notes ».