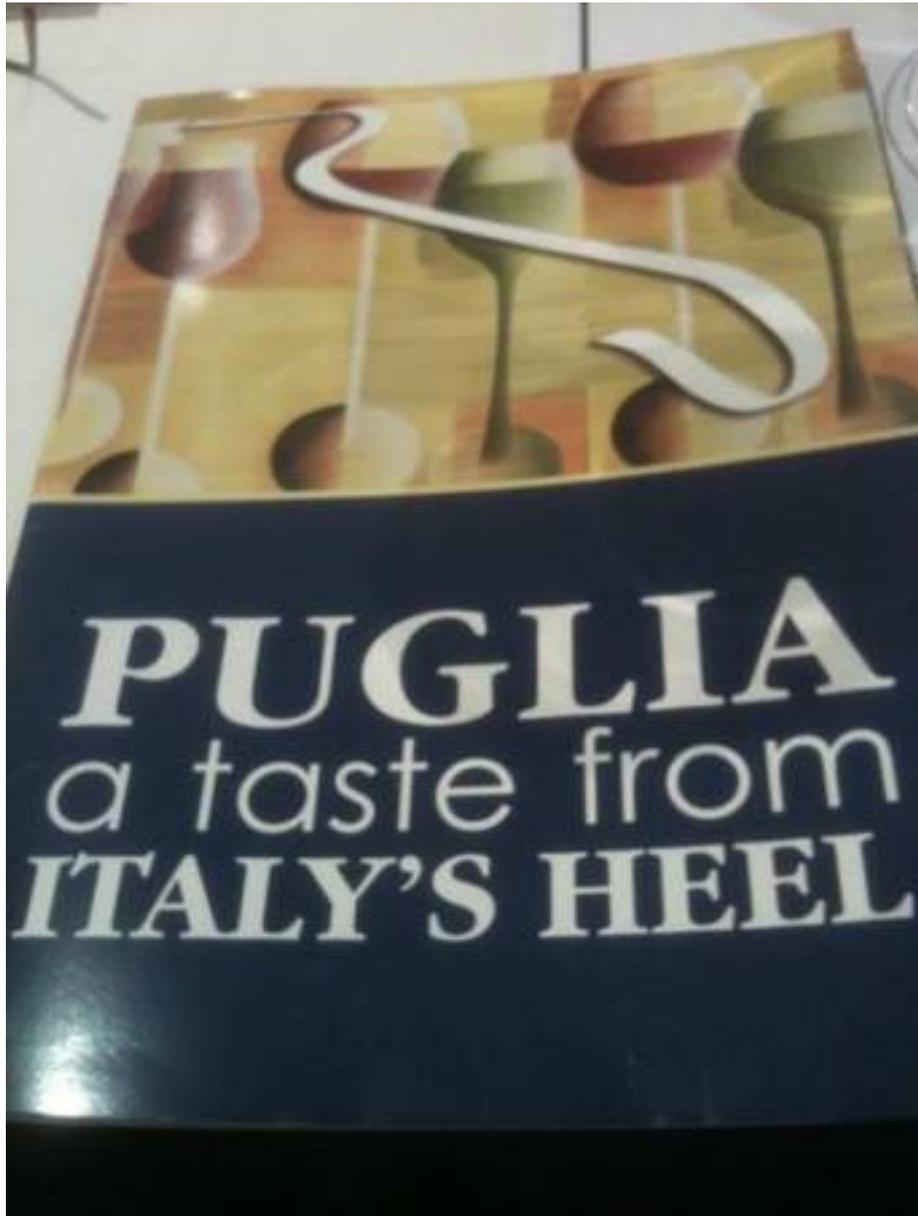


The Wines of Puglia

Charles Scicolone (July 16, 2011)



A Taste from Italy's Heel

I have always enjoyed the wine and food of Puglia since my first visit there over 30 years ago. It was then that I first tasted Primitivo, Salice Salentino, and orrechiette with broccoli rabe among other



great local dishes. A number of years later I became the wine director for I Trulli in Manhattan. The restaurant specialized in the wine and food of Puglia and our list featured the largest number of wines from Puglia in America. Most of the food on the menu was from that region, too.

A few weeks ago I received an invitation (no it was not for a trip to Puglia, though last November I was invited on a press trip by Franco Ziliani to Puglia for the [Radici Wine Experience](#) [2]. It was a great trip and I hope to go back to Puglia soon.) It was for a seminar and lunch of the wines of Puglia at Park Ave Spring Restaurant. I was looking forward to tasting the current vintages and comparing them to the ones I tried last year. How could one refuse an event with the title "Puglia: a Taste from Italy's Heel?"

The moderator of the panel was Anthony Giglio. The panel included four producers whose wines were being presented: Beniamino D'Agostino, owner of [Cantina Botromagano](#) [3] (a privately owned Cantina Sociale), Alberto Longo, the owner of [Masseria Celentano-Alberto Longo](#) [4], Donato Antonio Giuliani, the winemaker at [Cantina Teanum](#) [5], and Antonio Gargano, President and CEO of Casaltrinita (Cantina Coop). Anthony said that all of the wines in the tasting were \$20 or less and represented very good value. After tasting the wines I had to agree with him.

Anthony then spoke about the region of Puglia and the grapes that are in the wine that we would taste:

Greco -- Its origin is Greece and it was first cultivated in Calabria and then in Campania and Puglia.

Fiano-- It was known to Pliny the Elder (d79 AD). Bees, api where attracted to its sweet clusters so it was known as apiano which later became Fiano,

Moscato-- It is Greek in origin and is widely present in the Mediterranean basin. It might be related to the Greek Anathelicon Moschaton and the Roman Apianei.

Malvasia Bianca --Most likely from the Morea area of Greece.

Aglianico -- It may be Greek, or from ancient Phoenicia, or more precisely, [Euboes](#) [6]. It is used to make Taurasi in Campania and Aglianico del Vulture in Basilicata and is also found in Puglia.

Nero di Troia (Uva di Troia) -- May have come from Asia Minor or is native to the commune of Troia (Foggia) in Puglia.

Primitivo -- DNA testing indicates that it came from Croatia and is related to the Zinfandel grape. It may have been introduced by Benedictine monks into the hilly area of Gioia del Colle in Puglia.

Montepulciano -- The origin of this grape variety is not really known, though it is the second-most commonly grown indigenous grape planted in Italy (Sangiovese is #1).

In response to a question on how the wines were aged, all of the panelists agreed that the use of all new oak was not good because the wine would lose its identity. They use a combination of new oak (barriques--225 liter barrels), second and third passage, tonneaux (500 liter oak barrels) and stainless steel to age the wine, depending on the producer.

Mr. Giuliani, in response to another question about the alcohol in the wine said that high alcohol is not a problem in the northern part of Puglia. If I understood him correctly he said that there is always a wind that blows across the land and unlike other places, it is cooler inland than it is by the sea. This would not be true of the Salento area in the south of Puglia which is much hotter. All of his wines were 13.5% alcohol. I was sitting at the same table with Mr. Giuliano at lunch and we spoke some more about his wines.

Wines at the tasting

Gravina DOP 2010 60% Greco and 40% Malvasia. [Cantina Botromagano](#) [7]. Beniamino said sometimes they add a little Fiano and Bianco di Alessano. Production area is the countryside



surrounding the town of Gravina. There are between 1,215 and 1,416 vines per acre and they are spur-pruned cordon. The harvest takes place in late September and the wine is fermented in stainless steel at controlled temperatures for 15 days. The wine does not undergo malolactic fermentation and is aged for four months in stainless steel tanks. When I was in Puglia in November of last year, I had tasted the 2009. Looking back at my notes, they were almost the same. It is a fruity fresh wine--almost like biting into a green apple with a slight touch of tropical fruit. They are the only producers of Gravina. \$12

I have known Beniamino D' Agostino for a number of years and I visited Cantina Botromagno in November and spent time talking to him. He is very knowledgeable and informative.

La Preta 2010 70% Moscato and 30% Sauvignon Blanc [Masseria Celentano of Alberto Longo](#) [4]. The Production area is the Settentrional Apulia. There are 5,600 vines per hectare and the training system is spur-pruned cordon. Harvesting takes place at the end of August and the beginning of September. The grapes are gently de-stemmed and pressed and alcoholic fermentation takes place in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks. The wine is kept on the lees for 3 months. The wine was smoky and had fruity aromas. On the palate it was dry with hints of herbs surrounded by the fruit of the Moscato with a great finish and aftertaste. It was an unusual combination but it worked! \$18

I first met and tasted the wines of Alberto Longo at Keste Pizza and Vino

in NYC after Vino 2010 and was very impressed with his wines. From speaking with him, I found that not only does he have a great passion for the wines of Puglia but also for the food and the land itself.

Vascello Salento Rosso IGT 2009 100% Primitivo Masseria Celentano- Alberto Longo -- The production area is the municipal district of Manduria-Taranto. There are 5,600 plants per hectare and the training system is spur-pruned cordon. The harvest is late August to the beginning of September. There is stainless fermentation with prolonged contact with the skins. After malolactic fermentation, the wine is aged in French oak barrels and tonneaux (500 liters) for about 18 months. This is a fruity Primitivo with a touch of dry prunes and it works very well with food. \$20

Otre Aglianico Puglia IGT 2006 100% Aglianico [Cantina Teanum](#) [5]. The name of the winery comes the ancient Roman city of Teanum Apulum, which today is the city of San Paolo di Civitate. This ancient city was so important for the Romans that the whole region is called "Puglia" from "Apulum". The Apulia region is the area of production. There are 5,000 vines per hectare and the training is espalier trees. The harvest takes place from the 4th to 18th of September. 27 days of prolonged maceration of the wines on the skins in stainless steel tanks. Maturing and aging in French oak, stainless steel tanks and in the bottle. This is a fruit forward wine with fresh fruit aromas and flavors and a nice finish and aftertaste. \$15

Alta Nero di Troia IGT 2008 100% Nero di Troia Cantina Teanum. Production area is San Severo. There are 5,000 plants per hectare and the training is espalier trees. The harvest takes place in the middle of September. There is a 20 day prolonged maceration of the wine on the skins in stainless steel tanks. Maturing and aging in stainless steel tanks, French oak and bottle. This was the lightest and of the three Nero di Troias that we tasted. It had fresh fruit flavors and aromas and a hint of violets with a very pleasant finish and aftertaste. This wine is 13.5% alcohol but one did not feel it. \$10

Negro di Troia Puglia IGT 2008 100% Nero di Troia. [Casaltrinita](#) [8]. Production area: Trinitapoli. There are 4400 vines per hectare trained in guyot and 2,500 in vine trellis. The harvest takes place the first 10 days in November. The grapes are fermented in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks with long skin contact. The malolactic fermentation is carried out in November. The wine is aged in French oak barrels for about 5 months and aged in bottle for six months before release. This was a little heavier in style, with more intense fruit flavors and aromas but in no sense a heavy wine. \$14

Coppamalva Puglia IGT 2008 70% Nero di Troia and 30% Cabernet Casaltrinita.

The Troia grapes are harvested in the first ten days of November and the Cabernet in the second half of September. The grapes are fermented in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks. The must remains in long contact with the skins. This wine had nice fruit but the Cabernet in the blend dominated. \$13

Pier delle Vigna Rosso Murgia IGT 2006 60% Aglianico and 40% Montepulciano Cantine Botromagno. The production area is the border area between Matera and Gravina. The vine training system of the Montepulciano is spur-pruned guyot and for the Aglianico, it is alberello-self supporting bush trained vines. There are about 4,000 plants per hectare and the harvest is in late October. The wine spends 24 months in new French Allier 225 liters oak barrels (barriques) 50% new and 50% once used. It is aged in bottle for a year and then released. I tasted this wine's same vintage when I was in Puglia and again my tasting notes are similar. This is a more modern style wine

with aromas and flavors of red and black berries, pepper and a hint of tobacco.

Wines with Lunch

Greco Puglia IGT 2010 100% Greco Casaltrinita 2,500 vines per hectare and trained with the apulian vine trellis and guyot. The harvest takes place in the first ten days of September. The grapes are gently de stemmed and pressed. The alcoholic fermentation is carried out in stainless steel tanks; I do not think that malolatic fermentation took place. The wine was kept on the fine lees for three months.

The wine has aromas and flavors of citrus fruit and a touch of almond the same way I described it when I tasted it in Puglia.

Otre Primitivo Puglia IGT 2008 100% Primitivo Cantine Teanum

The grape harvest took place between the 15th and 16th of October. 27 days of prolonged maceration of the wine on the skins in stainless tanks. Maturing and aging in French oak and stainless steel and in the bottle. This is a full bodied wine with hits of dried fruit.

Querciagrande Puglia IGT 2009 100% Nero di Troia Masseria Celentano-Alberto Longo Production zone: Settentrional Apulia. There are 5,600 vines per hectare and the training is spur-pruned cordon. The harvest takes place in the beginning of September. Fermentation is in stainless steel with prolonged skin contact. After malolaiic fermentation the wine is aged in French oak barriques and tonneaux for about 18 months. Of the three wines made from Nero di Troia, this was the biggest and a little more modern in style.

Gravisano Malvasia Passita Murgia Bianco IGT 2005 100% Malvasia lunga. Cantine Botromagno. Production area is the best vineyard in Gravina and Spinazzola. There are 4,500 vines per hectare and the training system is Guyot. The harvest is in mid-October. The grapes are sun-dried on reed mats. The wine spends 30 days in New French Allier 225-liter oak barrels (barriques) at 16°C and in stainless steel tanks for 12 months. This is a traditional wine in the area and it was once made with the ancient Gravisano grape that long ago became extinct. Nice way to end the lunch with a dessert wine that was not too sweet with hints of toasted almonds apricots and honey.

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- [4] <http://www.albertolongo.it>
- [5] <http://www.teanum.com>



[6] <http://www.dobianchi.com>

[7] <http://www.botromagno.it>

[8] <http://www.casaltrinita.it>