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TENUTA  
DELLE  
TERRE NERE

## 2023 vintage news

Reality check after a troubled year.

The 2022/2023 winter was mild, temperatures rarely below freezing point. Very limited snow at vineyard altitudes. Rainfall, from January through March decidedly below average. Understandably, budding occurred roughly 10 days before its time.

Spring was cool. Its outstanding feature, however, was the opulence of its rainfall: 400 millimetres was never recorded or heard of. Flowering was overwhelmed by this perfect storm, and though we acted quickly and repeatedly, we were hit by an attack of downy mildew of such virulence as had never been seen on Etna and elsewhere. With us much of South-Central Italy up to and including Tuscany; in a minor way not sparing parts of Southern France as well as Bordeaux. Many properties lost their entire crop. Remarkably, the Eastern, seaward, part of the appellation, usually much more rainy than the Northern or Southern ranges, was almost entirely spared: rainfall there was less than half of what it was here in the North. The Southern Etna D.O.C. lost roughly 30-35%. The Northern slopes lost well over 60%.

The extended Spring rains were followed by a record breaking summer drought: from July through September we only had 60 mm of rain, less than half of what we had in 2022, which was already considered a drought year.

We thus passed from spring floods to a water stressed summer. Even our old vines suffered under these conditions, possibly weakened by the downy mildew attack. Under severe pressure the vines underwent a delay of all physiological ripening phases. Veraison, for instance, was a good two weeks late and uneven.

The very few and light September rainfalls and a perfectly balmy October seemed incapable of re-establishing a timely, or more precisely, an even ripening. Yet, slowly but surely, ripening came to pass, an uneasy one, fortunately favoured by extraordinarily dry weather. At Tenuta delle Terre Nere, in quest of the perfect possible

**Etna Rosso** - Our harvest loss was 40% to 70% depending on the specific parcel (i.e. Feudo di Mezzo lost 70%, Calderara 40%) averaging a total loss of roughly 50%. The ripening, as previously mentioned, in some cases was uneven. Oddly enough, given the warm and dry summer, the excellent autumn weather conditions and the very small production, sugar levels, starting high, ended up below average. The health of the grapes was, for the same reasons, impeccable. Another effect of the prolonged drought, however, was to yield grapes with very thick skins and very little juice. This caused us to be very careful and gentle in our macerations in order to avoid over-extraction.

All in all too confusing a vintage to properly judge this early in the game. This time, more than ever, given the relatively high malic acid content of the grapes at harvest time, I feel the need to wait until after malolactic before giving an educated opinion of the 2023 reds.

Instinctively, I feel we can expect wines as paradoxical as were the seasons. Wines with finesse, depth and weight, yet rich in tannins as well as tight and perhaps unyielding and a bit ungainly when young. Dionisian character rather than Apollonian balance.

**Etna Bianco** - Surely due to their early flowering and setting before the heavy rains hit, our Carricante suffered far less than the our Nerello Mascalese.

Given the uniquely topsy-turvy nature of the vintage, I would find it rather preposterous for anyone to try to explain the outstanding quality of our white wines. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the warm, sometimes hot, and very dry summer - usually not conducive to fine whites - we produced if not the finest, surely among the finest whites ever. Perfect alcohol levels sustaining bright acidities, the depth, balance, palate feel and identity of the crus are splendid. The substance of our Etna Bianco is wonderfully savoury and its palate equally generous and sleek.

**Etna Rosato** – Unfortunately, for the lovers of our Etna Rosato, this year the overall production of this wine will be down 90%. Aside from the above mentioned problematics, this was not the ideal vintage for Rosé, so we opted to produce a bit more Etna Rosso. The quantities are so small that we have opted to sell the wine only in Italy.

### Strategic update – prices & investments

As is common knowledge by now, recent inflation has powerfully affected the price of bottles, corks, labels, capsules, barrels, etc. upwards of 20%. Moreover, here on Etna, given this year's dramatic crash in production, the price of grapes has shot up 60-70% and it's unlikely that it will decrease in the future. If to the above one adds a harvest

a diluted one. The coming year we shall raise our prices between 10-12%, and the same, or close to it, we shall do the following one. This, (according to my not too reliable accounting) should allow us to ride the storm. If we find we have been overly optimistic, or if a similar vintage - God forbid! - reoccurs, we shall reckon with it in good time. **I trust you shall find this strategy reasonable.**

### New Projects

I do wish to add that in no way has this difficult vintage dampened our spirits. In no way have we, thus, diminished our investments. In fact, we are about to complete the doubling of our existing solar panels, which should enable us to become wholly driven by renewable energy, or very close to it.

We have also just completed our new aging facility entirely devoted to our Etna Rosso, (the beautiful display of barrels sadly half empty)



*Our brand-new aging facility for the Etna Rosso DOC*

Moreover, between January 2023 and by the upcoming January 2024 we will have planted:

- 0,5 hectares of Nerello Mascalese in Calderara Sottana;



- 0,4 hectares of Nerello Mascalese in Santo Spirito;
- 0,5 hectares of Nerello Mascalese in Guardiola.
- We have also acquired a two year lease on a 1,3 hectar property of young vines in San Lorenzo;
- last but not least, next year we plan to plant another 0,5 hectares of Nerello Mascalese in Guardiola and 0,7 hectares of Carricante in Rovittello.



*0.5 hectares of Nerello Mascalese in Calderara Sottana*





*Preparing to plant Nerello Mascalese in Moganazzi*



*New planting of Carricante in Moganazzi*

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adversities with a fine compass and a steady course.

Let's then enjoy this coming 2022 red vintage with its classic Etna display of flavours, joy and harmony.

Best wishes from us all for a prosperous Christmas and New Year!

Thank you always.

*Marco de Grazia*



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