



Monthly Wine Club

January 2010

Italy is the most prolific producer of wine in Europe, surpassing even France and Spain, with a broad range of distinctive, indigenous grape varieties that give the country's wines real character. A vast array of climates, soils, regional traditions, and excellent local varieties provides a wonderful assortment of styles. With the international market showing enthusiasm for unique wines from local grapes, producers in the Marche region of Italy are working hard to improve their wines and attract new buyers. This month we are featuring two wines that exemplify the leap in quality these efforts have yielded. These producers are concentrating on quality by decreasing yields, increasing density of plantings, and implementing modern methods in the vineyards and in the winery. Although the wines from the Marche are relatively unknown, once they are tasted, they will stand on their own merit.

*2007 Az. Agricola Accadia Angelo
"Cantori"*

*Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi
Serra San Quirico, Italy*



*2007 Az. Agricola Lanari
Rosso Conero
Varano, Italy*

Le Marche is sandwiched between the Apennine Mountains and the Adriatic Sea. Situated in north-central Italy, on the Adriatic coast with an area of 3,743 miles, Le Marche has 70 miles of coastline and a population of 1,426,000. It is divided into four provinces: Ancona, Ascoli, Piceno and Macerata. The driving distance between the mountains and the beaches is approximately 1 hour. Le Marche produces a large variety of wines including 13 varieties of wine carrying the DOC (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata*) label. The following varieties are the most common, growing well on the gentle slopes of the hilly region: Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Sangiovese, Cilieggiolo, Pinot Nero, Pinot Bianco, Verdicchio, Trebbiano, Malvasia, Vernaccia Nera and Maceratino. Verdicchio is synonymous with white winemaking in Le Marche, although no one is sure how the grape came to this land. Probably, it was by the Romans, as main bearers of viticultural practices two thousand years ago. Other sources state that Verdicchio vineyards were planted by the Benedictine monks in the 8-9th centuries. The results of the latest DNA research found links with Trebbiano that grows in the northern Italian zone of Soave and on the shores of Lake Garda. There is a theory that Verdicchio arrived to the Adriatic coast thanks to Veneto farmers who escaped the plague in the 15th century. Whatever the story, today Verdicchio is the most popular and common white variety in the Marche region. Over 7,660 acres are planted to Verdicchio, unequally divided between two denominated production zones — Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi and Verdicchio di Matelica. Although some people question the necessity of two separate DOCs, the difference in climate, soil and nature makes the division justified. Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi is closely adjacent to the Adriatic coast and is under a direct influence of a temperate marine climate. There is high clay content in the whitish chalk soils. Vineyards are located on both sides of the Esino River that helps delineate the territory into the higher Right bank and the lower Left. On the contrary, Verdicchio di Matelica is situated further from the sea and is hidden in a valley, protected by hills on all sides. The microclimate features a more dramatic difference between day and night temperatures, and chalk and marine sediment dominates the soil. Azienda Agricola Accadia Angelo is a small producer located on the left bank of the Esino River, between the small villages of Sasso and Castellaro di Serra di Quirico. In 1983, Angelo Accadia purchased the property, and with the help of a local agronomist, planted most of the 10 acres with Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi DOC Classico and Rosso Piceno DOC in 1991. The wines of Angelo Accadia are rich, fragrant, sturdy and full of personality, just like the winemaker himself. A noteworthy Italian modern artist, Angelo and his wife Maria are as generous and expressive as the wines that they produce. Accadia's 2007 Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi "Cantori" comes from a

vineyard situated on hilly terrain at an elevation of 1,200 feet above sea level. This wine is made from organically grown Verdicchio grapes, where the vines struggle for nutrients and water on slopes with a 20 to 30 degree incline, facing optimal southwestern sun exposure. The yields remain relatively low, which shows in the concentration and power of the fruit on the palate. The grapes are left on the vine until they are almost over-ripe, then hand-harvested and placed in small, 20 kg cases. The utmost care is taken to harvest only the ripest fruit and therefore several passes through the vineyards are required. Fermentation takes place in temperature-controlled stainless-steel tanks at very low temperatures to maintain the fresh fruit flavors. Once fermentation was complete, the wine was bottled and aged for 3 months before release. The nose of the 2007 “Cantori” is full and rich with hints of peaches, almonds, honey and walnuts. The taste is intense and the aromas follow through on the palate. The wine exhibits beautiful balance with a wonderful integration of all of its components. Verdicchio is considered the quintessential fish wine, so try the 2007 “Cantori” with regional *Marchigiano* dishes such as *brodetto*, a fish stew which must be made with 13 species of fish, or *spaghetti al vongole*, pasta tossed with baby clams, white wine, and garlic.

The 2007 Az. Agricola “Cantori” is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.



As visitors traveling along the coast of Le Marche approach Ancona, they are greeted by the quite unexpected sight of a mountain, which seems to have burst its way through the earth's crust only to hurl itself in to the Adriatic Sea. This is the Conero: a great chunk of the Italian Apennines, standing knee-deep in the water and wrapped in a cloak of holm oak, juniper, strawberry tree, and most importantly, grape vines. With its limestone soil and constant sea breeze, its dry summers and mild winters, the Conero provides ideal grape growing terrain. In 1987, this zone was declared a protected area and the Regional Park of Conero was founded. The park encourages environmentally friendly agricultural practices, the reintroduction of indigenous varieties, and the adoption of biodynamic methods. Although the Etruscans started cultivating grapes on the hills south of Ancona thousands of years ago, it was only toward the close of the 18th century, with the introduction of vines from the Tuscan town of Montepulciano, that the ancestor of today's Rosso Conero DOC was born. The production area of Rosso Conero DOC is very limited compared to other Italian DOC areas. The zone is limited to the Conero Mount, and its surrounding hills. The wines have a unique identity exhibiting the characteristics of the soil, which is very hard and subject to drought. Rosso Conero DOC must be composed of at least 85% Montepulciano with the remaining made up of Sangiovese; it can be up to 100% Montepulciano. The name "Montepulciano" refers to a grape in this instance, but many people are confused because there's another wine with Montepulciano in the name, the Tuscan red called *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*. *Vino Nobile* comes from a town called Montepulciano, but the wine is made from a Sangiovese clone called *Prugnolo Gentile*. Rosso Conero is made from the Montepulciano grape, and this grape is found in numerous regions around Southern Italy. Abruzzo, of course, is a prominent place for Montepulciano, and the grape also plays a leading role in the Marche's two major appellations, Rosso Conero and Rosso Piceno. Azienda Agricola Lanari is located in the small village of Varano, in the Parco Naturale del Conero, just southeast of the port town of Ancona. The vineyards, overlooking the Adriatic, are in the area of the Rosso Conero DOC. Luca Lanari and his wife Paola are continuing with the same passion on the path traced by Leardo Lanari, Luca's father, to produce a great red wine through traditional methods. Just over 3 decades ago, Leardo started the winery with a small 13-acre vineyard. From those humble beginnings the winery has grown to produce award-winning wines by focusing on the quality of its grapes, and on the careful work in the cellar, helped by winemaker Giancarlo Soverchia. The 2007 Rosso Conero is a blend of 90% Montepulciano and 10% Sangiovese. The grapes come from vineyards located 400 feet above sea level with southwestern exposure. The fruit was hand-harvested and fermentation took place in stainless-steel tanks with a 10-day maceration. Once fermentation was complete, the wine was aged in French oak barrels for six months and then in bottle for six months. The 2007 Rosso Conero is a plump, flavorful wine loaded with ripe red fruit, licorice, earthiness and tobacco. This warm, generous red should continue to drink beautifully over the next few years. Joyce Goldstein recommends a Rosso Conero with a pork meatball dish from her *Enoteca* cookbook. We followed her advice and it was a delicious combination. Both the meatballs and the wine disappeared before we knew it!

The 2007 Az. Agricola Lanari Rosso Conero is \$18.99/bottle, \$205.10/case.