



## October 2009

Recently, a friend sent me a New York Times article where I read the following: “Jonathan Nossiter — filmmaker of *Mondovino*, former sommelier at various New York restaurants, and son of the foreign correspondent Bernard Nossiter likes wines that are low in alcohol and high in ‘wild, exhilarating acidity’; wines that are light and aromatic; ‘skanky’ wines that are ‘unpredictable’ and ‘ornery’; wines that ‘provoke an emotion’; wines ‘fully expressive of a place and its history.’” Isn’t it fantastic that wine can provoke such deep and opinionated convictions? We, as seekers of organoleptic enlightenment, have an opportunity to refine our preferences for what we like and dislike every time we taste a wine. Our two wines this month will most likely stimulate your mind as well as your palate. They are wines Italians refer to as *vini in purezza* (wines made from a single grape varietal.) They beautifully reflect the characteristics of the grapes they are made from as well as their terroir—the ineffable way that soil, light, topography and microclimate endow a wine with its uniqueness.



Liguria is a long strip of land that stretches like an arch over the Tyrrhenian Sea, enclosed by the Apennines and Maritime Alps. It is situated along Italy's western border with France, following the Mediterranean coastline south and east to its border with Tuscany. To the north and east, coastal mountains separate Liguria from Piedmonte and Emilia-Romagna. Its 211-mile coast, better known as the Italian Riviera, is a continuous line of long beaches and cliffs that form coves. Liguria is separated into two "Rivieras", the Riviera di Ponente to the east, and the Riviera di Levante to the west, with the Ligurian capital of Genoa separating the two. In the past, the Riviera di Ponente was the more famous side, with celebrated resort towns like San Remo, however writers, artists and tourists alike have discovered the jewels of the Riviera di Levante such as Portofino and the Cinque Terre. The unique geography of mountains and sea has produced a climate and landscape that you would expect much further south in Italy. Palm trees, citrus fruits and olives share the terraced growing space with Liguria's famous flower industry and more common northern species, like chestnuts. There are some 14,820 acres of land under vines, only a fraction of which produces wines with DOC status, or wines that aspire to more than local recognition. Most of the commercial production is seated along the Ponente coast in the southwest. Rossese di Dolceacqua, with its soft fruit and appealing texture, remains the most popular of the wines, although Pigato and Vermentino are now yielding whites worthy of notice. Liguria's DOC zones are Cinqueterre, Colli di Luni (which borders upon Tuscany), Pornassio, Riviera Ligure di Ponente and Rossese die Dolceacqua. Vio Giobatta's ancestors have been growing grapes for other wine producers in the Albenga hinterland for as long as anyone can remember, but in 2000 he decided to build his own estate in his native village, Bastia d'Albenga, and make his own wine. The difference here, though, was he decided to make his production totally organic, without the use of pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers. The 35-acre estate also produces olive oil and a number of different herbs that are also sold commercially. Ligurian wine, and Pigato in particular, is pretty rare in American wine shops. Pigato is an intriguing grape, and once you've tasted it you won't mistake it for something else. The grape has a blotchy, speckled appearance and produces wines that are aromatic and have a distinctive, salty tang to them, reminiscent of the seaside. The grapes for BioVio's "MaRene" Pigato di Albenga come from their estate vineyards in Bastia d'Albenga, situated at 328 feet above sea

**2008 BioVio**  
***"MaRenè" Pigato di Albenga***  
***Riviera Ligure di Ponente D.O.C.***  
***Bastia d'Albenga, Italy***  
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**2004 Az. Agr. Querceto di Castellina**  
***"Podalirio" I.G.T.***  
***Castellina in Chianti, Italy***

level. Fermentation took place in stainless-steel and the wine was aged for 6 months without the use of oak. The 2008 Pigato is dry with good body, excellent persistence and pleasant aromas of peaches, minerals and bitter honey. It has bright acidity to cleanse the palate, but the finish is long with delicious lingering fruit flavors and an intriguing salty and bitter aftertaste. The food of Liguria is representative of the area's unique climate and uses many ingredients that are more common to Southern-Italian cuisine. Liguria is located closer to France than it is to Naples, but the abundant use of garlic, olive oil instead of butter or lard, and tomatoes are all reminiscent of cooking from the south. Pigato is great with seafood (that's the classic pairing that everyone will mention,) but don't underestimate how good it is with vegetable soups and pesto.

**The 2008 BioVio "MaRenè" Pigato di Albenga is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.**



The Chianti region is made up of an extensive hilly area located in the center of Tuscany, between the major cities of Florence and Siena, bordered on the east by the Chianti Mountains and to the west by the Elsa River. One of the most famous wine regions in Italy, the landscape of the Chianti is characterized by a continuous alternation between gentle rolling hills covered in vines and olive trees, and verdant valleys. Within the Chianti region there are numerous ancient hamlets, churches and abbeys, castles and fortresses, farmhouses and villas. Inhabited since ancient times by the Etruscans, the area was also controlled by the Romans prior to medieval times, when it was the scene of heavy fighting between the rival cities of Florence and Siena. The Chianti wine region consists of eight municipalities: San Casciano Val di Pesa, Tavarnelle Val di Pesa, Barberino Val d'Elsa, and Greve in Chianti, which all are located in the Province of Florence. The other municipalities of Castellina in Chianti, Radda in Chianti, Gaiole in Chianti and Castelnuovo Berardenga rest in the province of Siena. The territory of these eight municipalities more or less covers the production area for the Chianti Classico, which was created by ministerial decree back in 1932. The bottles of this prestigious wine region are distinguished by the ever-present trademark of the black rooster, which in ancient times was the military symbol of the Chianti League. Situated in the locality of the same name near Castellina in Chianti, Querceto is set amongst woods and vines in the typical countryside of the Chianti wine growing area. Castellina in Chianti sits on ridge that enjoys splendid views in all directions. The defiant 15th century medieval walls and fortified town give an indication of the violent past of this area during the wars between Florence and Siena. The Di Battista family purchased Querceto di Castellina, an elegant country villa, in 1945. It was a country estate, a place to escape the heat of the city, and though they did make wine, what they or the tenant farmers didn't drink personally was sold in bulk. The farmers abandoned the land in the 1970s, and the family rented out the vineyards. In 1981, Jacopo di Battista's father, who was an architect, restructured the villa, while they rented the vineyards to Ruffino. In 1998, Jacopo Di Battista decided to oversee production personally, and enlisted the assistance of Gioia Cresti, a young enologist whose wines were attracting considerable attention. They now have 28 acres of vineyards, mostly of Sangiovese planted to high densities (2,500 vines per acre), and though their potential production is 70,000 bottles, they produce about 40,000 and sell the rest. The excellent layout of the vineyards, the microclimatic conditions, and the low yields allow the wines to express the complexity and elegance that characterize the land of Querceto. Their top wine is their "super-Tuscan" Podalirio IGT Merlot, a wine they make with the best of the small amount of Merlot they have. It is fermented in steel and aged in barriques for 18 months, followed by another year in bottle prior to release. The bouquet of the 2004 Podalirio is fantastic, with intense cassis supported by greenish spice that evolves into (lightly) grilled bell pepper with thyme, and some savory accents as well, laced with minerality. As it opens, oak, which was initially apparent, integrates nicely. On the palate it's powerful, with fairly intense berry fruit supported by cedar, savory cassis, and acidity that flows into a bitter savory finish. My initial impression was that it was fairly oaky, but it opens well, and the fruit emerges, driving the oak into the background, where it plays a nice supporting role. The wine is quite pleasant, in what is ultimately an approachable, fruit-driven food-friendly drink. Try this wine with rigatoni pasta served with slices of filet mignon, sage, red wine, porcini mushrooms and shallots in a light tomato sauce, or a grilled T-bone steak drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and garnished with Parmesano Reggiano.

**The 2004 Querceto di Castellina "Podalirio" is \$23.99/bottle, \$259.10/case.**