

Romagna

View of the village of Modigliana

# BEYOND THE RIVIERA SANGIOVESE BOOM

Giorgio Melandri

THE IMAGE EUROPEANS HAVE OF ROMAGNA IS ALL ABOUT THE ADRIATIC COAST: LONG WHITE CROWDED BEACHES, LOUD VOICES, BRIGHT CLOTHING, PARTYING DAY AND NIGHT. BUT A FEW KILOMETERS FROM THE SEA, HIDDEN AMONG THE HILLS, IS ANOTHER ROMAGNA, ONE DEVOTED TO WINEMAKING. THIS YEAR, THE REGION STUNNED EXPERTS BY WINNING TEN TRE BICCHIERI

**B**EYOND the fun factory, beyond the Riviera, is Romagna's wine country, hidden among the hills that travelers see from the autostrada. For most tourists and visitors, those hills are a faraway scrim, as if the beautiful wild valleys leading to Tuscany had no depth. Yet, in the last few years, a group of grapegrowers in this zone has completely rewritten the story of Sangiovese. Today they are beginning to harvest the benefits of their dedication and stubbornness. Romagna's achievements are still not in the wine news, but the same open and free people that invented the Adriatic Riviera are looking at their vines in a new way. If they find a leader and a voice, then Romagna will write a new and surprising chapter in the history of Italian wine. Ten Sangiovese labels from Romagna in the 2010 edition of Gambero Rosso's Vini d'Italia can't be ignored. It is the visible tip of a movement that has quietly emerged.

There is a precedent. Gian Vittorio Baldi's Castelluccio, a firm that in the 1980s produced extraordinary Sangiovese that enchanted wine drinkers, came too early and couldn't provide a model. Those in the know soon

mourned the unrealized potential. Wines that had been served at state dinners in the mid-80s disappeared totally from the scene.

In the 1990s, Tuscan enologists found their way to Romagna and all made large, seductive wines. That was an error, but the agile grace of the

Castelluccio bottles was too complicated to understand. Today, the frenzy for wood and wines of impenetrable red seems to be passing. Little by little, as producers search for the true identity of

their wines, a more authentic language is appearing. Slimmer, cleaner palates are replacing softness that isn't natural here.

This new direction for Romagna is coming from a troop of long-established producers, the few who have weathered the seasons coherently and are placing their accomplishments at everyone's disposal. "We never gave up this style, even when the whole world seemed to be going in another direction. It was difficult, and in some years, it seemed impossible to continue. Now it looks like we were right." Enrico Drei Donà speaks calmly, and confidently: his Pruno is a benchmark of style >>

## BEHIND THE RIVIERA HILLSIDE VINEYARDS



The San Patrignano community

Maurizio Baravelli, owner of Calonga, with his wife Monica and their sons, Lorenzo, Francesco and Matteo



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– firm, earthy and straightforward. Its ‘little brother’, the second label wine, Notturmo, expresses itself in the same elegant tones. “We’ve always seemed far from modern, but wine requires long periods of time. Finally now we’ve become classics, simply good translators of our territory.”

Alessandro

Nicolucci took on the long family tradition and led it away from modish trends and also away from the most ancient cultural defects of the territory. “We still age in large barrels. Only a few of us are left who do, but I’ll bet that in a few years, there’ll be a return to this kind of wood.” In fact, “We stopped using barriques for Sangiovese,” Andrea Muccioli tells us. He heads the San Patrignano community and winery. “After years of trying them. Our Avi is

### TRADITION AND HISTORY NOT FASHION AND SHORTCUTS

now a mature project, absolutely pure sangiovese right from the first release.”

“The age of our vineyards gives us more reliability and more precise expressivity,” Cristina Geminiani from Fattoria Zerbina says. She is another important figure in Romagna, who has been working in these hills since

1985, determined and hardheaded. Her goal: to produce great wines in Romagna. Cristina came here while very young, leaving Lombardy where she had grown up. She wanted to turn her

father’s small family farm in the hills of Faenza into a great wine estate. “It wasn’t simple, but I never doubted the potential of this territory.”

Today Romagna is beginning to think deeply about the language of its wines, thanks to producers like >>

## Romagna’s Sangiovese Tasting. The 10 tre bicchieri

### Avi 2006 Sangiovese di Romagna Sup. Ris. San Patrignano

via San Patrignano, 53  
Coriano (RN)  
tel. 0541 362 111  
www.sanpatrignano.org

The San Patrignano community was founded in 1978 by Vincenzo Muccioli and today is the most important establishment in Europe dedicated to the rehabilitation of drug addicts.

In 1995, when Vincenzo died, Andrea Muccioli took his father’s place at the head of the community. Andrea’s passion for wine transformed one of the community’s activities into a complex and ambitious project. San Patrignano’s vineyards cover 110 hectares of limestone-clay terrain on the hills of Coriano facing the Rimini shore, 5 kilometers away as the crow flies. Avi ‘06 is a pure sangiovese with an elegant and subtle palate, fresh, straightforward and

balanced between a mineral timbre and lively tannins.

### Corallo Nero 2006 Sangiovese di Romagna Sup. Ris. Gallegati

via Isonzo, 4  
Faenza (RA)  
tel. 0546 621 149  
www.  
aziendaagricolagallegati.it

Corallo Nero ‘06, a pure sangiovese both in its

component and in its personality, wins a tre bicchieri award thanks to its joining of dense texture to elegant, fresh expression. The nose is complex and fragrant; the palate has character, good acidity, and flavor that fills the mouth. Its style has become a benchmark for sangiovese winemakers who cultivate on clay, even those on the lower fifth of the hillside.

## Michelangiolo 2006 Sangiovese di Romagna Sup. Ris. Calonga

loc. Castiglione  
via Castel Leone, 8  
Forlì (FC)  
tel. 0543 753 044  
www.calonga.it

Maurizio Baravelli runs this small winery together with his wife Monica and three sons, Lorenzo, Matteo and Francesco. He draws on a fund of sensibility that makes him a rare interpreter for Romagna, as rare as the sandy soil of the winery is rare in this territory. His land is located on the low hills of Forlì about 100 meters above sea level and extends for about 12 hectares on sandy-clayey soil that is at the center of a sandy zone, purer in some points, mixed with clay in others. The grapes of the most venerable vines on the estate, some of them 40 years old, are used to produce the most important and representative wine, Michelangiolo, which has won tre bicchieri for the fourth year in a row. The nose is deep, with good, velvety fruit, healthy and full. The mouth is sumptuous and rich, but fresh, with a dense texture of elegant tannins. Michelangiolo shows how this variety can express differences of soil and climate, how it is able to interpret its territory when its soul is respected.

## Il Nespoli 2006 Sangiovese di Romagna Sup. Ris. Poderi dal Nespoli

loc. Nespoli I villa Rossi, 50  
Civitella di Romagna (FC)  
tel. 0543 989 637  
www.poderidalnespoli.com

Poderi dal Nespoli is one of the longest-established and deepest rooted wineries in Romagna. It vinifies grapes from over 30 hectares, all located around the hamlet of Cusercoli in the upper part of the Valle del Bidente. The soil is in part clayey and in part marly-sandy (marnoso-arenacei). The entire production of the winery has a style that favors elegance over power, a difficult path but interesting for the future. Tre bicchieri for Nespoli '06, one of Romagna's most elegant sangiovesi, vinified from the highest altitude vines which tend to be on marly soil. The nose is austere, precise, composed. The mouth is an arrow that moves quickly and precisely as well. Great character, perfectly modulated tannin, subtle and resolute.

## Ombroso 2006 Sangiovese di Romagna Sup. Ris. Giovanna Madonia

loc. Villa Madonia  
via de' Cappuccini, 130  
Bertinoro (FC)  
tel. 0543 444 361  
www.giovanmadonia.it

Giovanna Madonia's style may appear confused, but is of an overall extraordinary coherence. Within this style, she slides away from rules that she doesn't like and moves freely, avoiding banalities that could interfere with production. The labels designed by Altan, for example, are those she noted down in pencil herself when she was bored by the ideas of professionals. Ombroso '06 won its tre bicchieri award thanks to its extraordinary, authentic character. The nose is austere and deep. The wine impacts the mouth with an impressive charge of flavor, straightforward, dry, almost rough, progressive, with a finish that exploits acidity and so lasts for a long time, elegant and rapid, fresh and composed.

## Petrignone 2006 Sangiovese di Romagna Sup. Ris. Tre Monti

loc. Bergullo  
via Lola, 3  
Imola (BO)  
tel. 0542 657 116  
www.tremonti.it

Sergio Navacchia bought this winery in the 1960s and took his sons David and Vittorio in with him full time in 1986. They brought the firm into the elite of Romagna's producers and Petrignone '06 won a tre bicchieri award. A sober and agile wine, almost austere on the nose,

it unleashes great energy in the mouth as it opens and extends. The tension of dense and mature tannin is expressed along with acidity that lends character without altering overall balance. This is the most continental of the clay-based wines, that is, the one which feels least the influence of the nearby sea.

## Pietramora 2006 Sangiovese di Romagna Sup. Ris. Fattoria Zerbina

via Vicchio, 11  
Faenza (RA)  
tel. 054 640 022  
www.zerbina.com

Fattoria Zerbina has been one of Romagna's most dependable producers for twenty years. The firm is built around obsessive management of the vineyard so that today, with the vines fully mature, the entire range of wines displays great quality and character, from the simplest to the most ambitious riserva. Pietramora '06, a monovarietal sangiovese, has an unmistakable character. The palate is sumptuous, displaying courageous acidity and fine, abundant, mature tannin. The mouth is deep and flavorful. Pietramora comes from historic alberello-trained vines of Romagnolan clones, by now 20 years old, a selection from microparcels of land on clay-limestone soil.



Alessandro Nicolucci and his father Giuseppe from the Casetto dei Mandorli winery

Geminiani who have stood their ground, gone beyond obstinacy. "Luckily," observes Fabio Ravaioli of Poderi dal Nespoli, "a territory needs interpreters to render it legible, to give perspective and indicate a path." The wines from Poderi dal Nespoli are always austere and elegant. "We interpreted our territory respectfully, aiming high for a subtle, mineral palate. Our family history was encouraging. In 1929 our grandfather Attilio opened an inn in Cusercoli. It was a success. He bought grapes all around the zone and sold the wine at the inn, but also in demijohns that he home-delivered. He had an old Fiat Balilla transformed into a pick-up truck. Attilio had a gift for making wine, but above all, he was infallible when

buying grapes," Fabio explained.

Aiming high in terms of sangiovese style is what's new in Romagna. "I'm 500 meters above sea level, and when I began producing Sangiovese, many people thought I was crazy," Emilio Placci from Il Pratello winery tells us. "Today my wines grown at higher altitudes have shown the potential for longevity." Emilio's wines require time, and given that time they express the hard and vibrant soul of the zone's marnoso-arenacea terrain on the upper slopes, soil that lends the wine its marked mineral character. Finally today, Romagna can explore its diversity, refine the language of its labels, and use its differences to express its land more aptly.



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## **Poggio Tura 2006** **Vigne dei Boschi**

via Tura, 7° , Brisighella (RA)  
tel. 054 651 648

Paolo Babini cultivates his hectares in the high Valle del Lamone according to the precepts of biodynamic agriculture. The terrain is marly-sandy (marnoso-arenacei), almost at the limit for vine growth. In fact, Paolo's vineyards are surrounded by woods and steep slopes carved out by the river. His winery is a laboratory and if, on one hand, his most interesting results come from sangiovese, on the other hand, his experience is important from a philosophical point of view – he researches and investigates the terroir. Tre bicchieri for Poggio Tura '05, monovarietal sangiovese, an elegant, complex and mineral wine, the result of an extraordinary project. The sangiovese vineyard was planted by gathering shoots of very old vines from all over the valley. This is a rare, precious, and biodiverse population.

## **Pruno 2006** **Sangiovese di Romagna Sup. Ris. Drei Donà**

loc. Massa di Vecchiazzano  
via del Tesoro, 23  
Forlì (FC) | tel. 0543 769 371  
www.dreidona.it



Cristina Geminiani from Fattoria Zerbina near Faenza

Claudio and Enrico Drei Donà number among the longest-established producers in Romagna. Their sangiovese labels are among the few benchmarks in this territory, both for the coherent style that has always characterized them and for the great respect they have always shown for the variety. The estate vines are beginning to be mature, since the first modern vineyards were planted in 1981 when Claudio Drei Donà decided to leave his profession as a lawyer and dedicate himself full time to the family farms. He intended to build something important, modeled after a small Bordeaux chateau. Pruno '06 won tre bicchieri: austere on the nose, it is stupendous in the mouth – dynamic, fresh, precise, straightforward – and acidity lends rhythm that lightens and lengthens it. A pure personality.

## **Valturio 2007** **Marche Rosso** **Valturio**

via dei Pelasgi, 10  
Macerata Feltria (PU)  
tel. 0722 728 049  
www.valturio.com

Montefeltro is a beautiful and pristine zone, straddling the Marche and Romagna regions. Adriano Galli his wife Isabella Santarelli brought vines here for the first time in a 100 years, trusting an old tradition. The project, to produce sangiovese at an altitude ranging from 400 to 500 meters above sea level, was carried out with intelligence and ability. The lovely amphitheater of densely planted alberello-trained vines, 7,000 per hectare, is perfectly managed, and it now begins to reveal its identity – original and interesting. Valturio, made with monovarietal sangiovese, won tre bicchieri thanks to the purity of its

energetic palate, sharp and subtle, and for its fruity timbre expressed with austerity and great elegance. The wine, born of a courageous and creative idea, has on its label the image of a war machine in the shape of a dragon drawn from a military tract edited by Roberto Valturio of Macerata Feltria in 1455 for condottiero Sigismondo Malatesta.

RN = Rimini  
RA = Ravenna  
FC = Forlì-Cesena  
BO = Bologna  
PU = Pesaro



## STYLE. Sangiovese, translator of terroir

Sangiovese is a pliable variety, a faithful translator of terrain and climate, a champion of detail, a grape that gives wine a deep mouth and interesting aromas. Romagna is an ideal place for sangiovese, where the variety can find many different expressions. “I never get bored in Romagna. Every zone has a different language and the challenge to us enologists is, above all, to understand. Over the years, I have learned not to push a wine in one direction or another. I like to feel that in different situations I can make different wines,” Fabrizio Moltard explains. He is a Tuscan enologist who has worked devotedly and successfully in Romagna for many years.

The first fifth of the hills is clay, more or less pure, more or less evolved. The fruit here is meaty, austere but expressive. Mouthfeel can work on volume thanks to acidity that heightens the wine’s rhythm. The evolved red clays of the Zerbina winery form a benchmark terroir for this style, but the lighter-colored clays of the Rimini zone and the sandy clays of the zone between Vecchiazano and Forli are also interesting. Drei Donà’s earthy, deep wines are a point of reference for this terroir. Between Faenza and Forli, the sandy terrain allows Maurizio Baravelli of Calonga to produce Michelangiolo, full of color, substance, and unusual agility in the mouth. On the sea-facing slope of the Romagnoli hills is another unique terroir, the limestone soil of Bertinoro. A sandstone and limestone geological conformation called spungone is typical of this zone (arenaria calcarea). Bertinoro wines always have a dense tannic texture, great potential for longevity and a fine balance between elegance and personality. The Rimini territory – clay and limestone, soft, open hills with temperature extremes mitigated by the sea – produces seductive wines, as a rule.

## Chamber of Commerce. Betting on foreign markets

Two important delegations of buyers will be guests of Enologica 2010, a show dedicated to Emilia-Romagna’s celebrated wine and food, to be held in Faenza from November 19 to 21. Tastings, business meetings, and trips to wineries and farms will be the centerpieces of this internationally-minded event. Romagna’s most renowned wineries and food producers will introduce their products to importers from the United States and Switzerland to be considered for their own marketplaces. The event is organized by Azienda Speciale Eurosportello of the Ravenna Chamber of Commerce, the Forli-Cesena Chamber of Commerce, and the Rimini Chamber of Commerce together with the Italy America Chamber of Commerce of New York and the Italian Chamber of Commerce for Switzerland, with the support of Faenza Fiere and the Enterprise Europe Network, a European community structure supporting PMI, that is, small and medium-sized enterprises. Romagna’s three Chambers of Commerce have been involved for years in the process of helping local businesses find their position in foreign markets. Among their strategies for internationalizing the region’s enterprises have been projects involving economic cooperation, organized business meetings, dedicated conferences, commercial missions and participation in international fairs. Enologica 2010 is part of a larger project “L’agroalimentare negli Stati Uniti e in Svizzera”, an initiative designed to launch and spotlight food and wine products from Romagna on the most receptive international marketplaces. Info: [www.ra.camcom.it/eurosportello](http://www.ra.camcom.it/eurosportello)



Below, a view of Macerata Feltria



As we gain altitude, Romagna produces a series of interesting and varied wines. Today’s quality frontier is on the higher hills: Valturio in Montefeltro (although the headquarters are in the Marche region, the soul of this firm is in Romagna), Poderi dal Nespoli, Pertinello in Galeata, Il Pratello, Villa Papiano, Balia di Zola, Castelluccio, Vigne dei Boschi in the zone of Modigliana and Brisighella. The Modigliana territory has several wineries experimenting with the characteristics this marnoso-arenacea terrain favors: marked minerality and tannins that stand up to long cellaring.

## Where to go in Romagna. A few days in the hills

An itinerary in Romagna around the Sangiovese territory, an unknown and still pristine hinterland, spectacular and varied, that also offers unexpected culinary pleasures

### FIRST DAY

Start from Faenza in the afternoon, the historic doorway to Sangiovese as well as a center of supreme majolica since the Renaissance. Visit Fattoria Zerbina and Gallegati for clay-based wines, Il Pratello and Vigne dei Boschi for wines from sandy-marly (marnoso-arenacei) territories.

### DINNER

**Trattoria di Strada Casale**  
Via Strada Casale, 22  
48013 Brisighella (RA)  
tel 0546 88054

### La Baita

Via Naviglio, 25  
Faenza (RA)  
tel. 054 621 584

### HOTEL

**Campiume**  
via Campiume 6  
Fognano di Brisighella (RA)  
tel. 054 680 112 | 3391 137 070  
www.campiume.it

### Villa Liverzano

Via Valloni 47, Brisighella (RA)  
tel. 054 680 461  
www.liverzano.it

### SECOND DAY

Go towards Forlì in the morning, then to Calonga, on sand and molasse soil, to reach Drei Donà in Vecchiavazzo. In the afternoon, visit Nicolucci in Predappio Alto: sulfur and mineral terrain, producing consistently taut, authentic flavor. Continuing to Valle del Bidente, visit Poderi Dal Nespole and Pertinello to taste their austere, elegant wines.

### LUNCH

**Don Abbondio**  
piazza G. da Montefeltro, 6  
Forlì  
tel. 054 325 460  
www.donabbondio.net

### DINNER AND LODGING

Locanda al Gambero Rosso  
via G. Verdi, 5  
loc. S. Piero  
Bagno di Romagna (FC)  
tel. 0543 903 405  
www.locandagamberorosso.it

### THIRD DAY

Go to Bertinoro in the morning, to Giovanna Madonia and Villa Trentola. The first is in Monte Maggio, a cooler and more continental climate; the second is in Capocolle, on the slope that faces the sea.

In the afternoon walk along the famed Adriatic beaches and take a break from wine. Or stop into the Museo della Civiltà Salinara

in Cervia, an unusual museum dedicated to the ancient, salt-related history of the zone. (viale Nazario Sauro, tel. 0544 993 435)

### LUNCH

**Osteria del Gran Fritto**  
c.so Giuseppe Garibaldi, 41  
Cesenatico (FC)  
tel. 054 782 474  
www.stefanobartolini.com

### DINNER/LODGING

**Osteria Del Povero Diavolo**  
via Roma, 30  
Torriana (RN)  
tel 0541 675 060  
www.ristorantepoverodiavolo.com

### FOURTH DAY

In the morning visit the clay-limestone zone of the Rimini zone, stopping at San Patrignano and Podere Vecciano: soft, open hills, with temperatures mitigated by the sea. Wines here have a softer mouthfeel, but freshness as well. In the afternoon, make your way to Montefeltro, a zone between the Marche region and Romagna, with breathtaking views and a

visionary project – to make slim Sangiovese wines with composed, clean fruit that is both mineral and deep.

### LUNCH

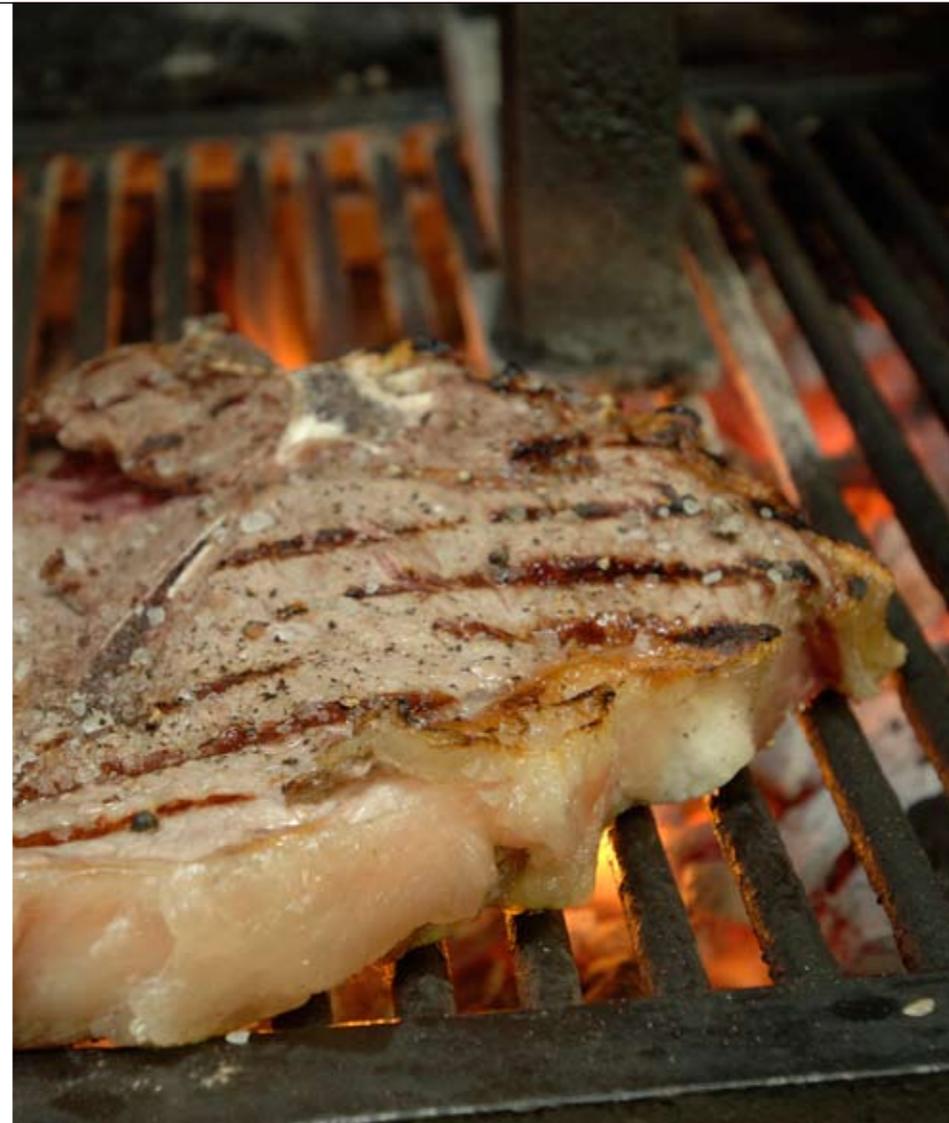
**Vite**  
via Monte Pirolo, 7  
Coriano di Rimini (RN)  
tel. 0541 759 138  
www.ristorantevitesanpa.org

### Il Piastrino

via Parco Begni, 5  
Pennabilli (RN)  
tel 0541 928 106  
www.piastrino.it

### DINNER/LODGING

**Hotel Carducci 76**  
Via Giosuè Carducci, 76  
Cattolica (RN)  
tel. 0541 954 677  
www.carducci76.it



## Pairings

Romagna's Sangiovese is high in acidity and tannin, so may appear hard in the mouth. Its aromas never, ever verge on sweetness. For the simplest, youngest labels, the classic pairing is seen at seaside tables. Peppery, quick, fresh and fruity, the wine is perfect with the rich fish soup of the zone, brodetto, or else with grilled fish. For more important bottles, the traditional accompaniment is grilled meat: sausages, pork chops or lamb. The deeper flavors of wine grown on clay soil go well with aged cheeses, especially the ones prepared by the Sardinian shepherds that have been in Romagna for decades. More mineral and subtle wines enhance roast meats and most winter stews and fried foods.