

teroldego



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—luca mazzotti

Teroldego is, in a way, the only child of the Trentino wine region. It is grown exclusively here, in the Campo Rotaliano, to the north of the region's capital, Trento. As such, Teroldego is the true ambassador of what was once described as "the most beautiful garden in Europe," a sunny vineyard area enclosed by glorious mountains and 12th-century castles. Quality can vary dramatically between producers though, and there seems to be little consistency between the great expressions of the fruit by some and the very ordinary wines released in massive quantities by large-scale cooperatives. Italian law doesn't help here, as extremely high yields have been not only permitted but predetermined by DOC regulations since 1971. But the tide is beginning



to turn, and finally, it seems that the young and dynamic Trentino winemakers are spontaneously avoiding overcropping and concentrating their resources to make better, and not just more, Teroldego.

the name

One grape, many legends. The most accredited etymology of the word Teroldego comes from the hamlet of Teroldeghe within the commune of Mezzolombardo. A notary act of 1480 mentions the details of a commercial transaction that involved two *brente* (a local unit of measure) of Teroldego wine. But much more picturesque interpretations exist. The Viennese knew the Trentino area as the Tyrol, and apparently prized the wine. Teroldego might be the linguistic corruption of Tyroler Gold, as this wine was nicknamed at the court of Vienna.

the campo rotaliano

Nestled between the banks of the Noce and Adige Rivers, rich in alluvial soil and gravel deposited over the centuries, and sheltered from the cold northern winds by the Dolomite Mountains, the Campo Rotaliano is the natural cradle of Teroldego. In all, it encompasses a little less than 1,000 acres of vineyard, cultivated by more than 500 growers, who mostly sell grapes to the mighty cooperative of the region. Teroldego is a grape that is extremely loyal to its territory, and must have found a very comfortable home in the Campo Rotaliano since it grows almost nowhere else.

let's have a taste

Ruby red in color with purple hues when young, Teroldego turns distinctively garnet with age. Extremely aromatic (violets, raspberry, brown spice, licorice, almonds), the wine offers a harmonious,

medium-bodied palate of elegant, at times complex flavors, ranging from the simplest red berry fruit to an intriguing combination of spices, flowers, and juicy red and black fruit. The texture is velvety and lightly tannic; the finish dry and pleasantly bitterish. Teroldego is also produced in a *rosato* (rosé) version, as an even fruitier, simpler wine for early consumption.

teroldego people

Elisabetta Foradori, the uncontested leader of a driven team of quality Teroldego producers, is aware of the

challenge ahead. "Winemaking is not an exact science, so the sheer concept of 'succeeding' is not part of our work," she says. "We must deal with a particular vine that grows in a particular microclimate, and be ready to face countless variables. We can only take one step at a time, working hard to preserve biodiversity and quality." Foradori's ideas translate into a commitment for quality now shared by other producers, who are now adopting strict yield restriction, higher planting density and more complex winemaking practices. The future of Teroldego, as well as the respect for its glorious past, is in their hands.



Previous page: A bottle of Foradori's Granato. Above: A castle perched high above the vines in the region of Trentino; careful harvesting of Teroldego grapes.



what to drink

good:

Zeni, Teroldego Rotaliano "I Pini" 1997

This is a small-production Teroldego from Andrea and Roberto Zeni, respected and qualified winemakers from San Michele all'Adige. Their wine is rich and well structured, with fine floral aromas balanced by intense flavors of spice, licorice and vanilla.

better:

La Vis, Ritratto Rosso 1998

The proverbial exception to the rule, Cantina La Vis is a quality minded co-op whose blend of Teroldego (80%) and Lagrein is a very good expression of the grape. 18 months in *barrique* don't interfere with the complex range of fruit aromas and spices (from blackberry to cloves) that satisfy both the nose and the palate.

best:

Foradori, Granato 1999

A 100% Teroldego from old vines, this wine is complex and has incredible finesse. With concentrated blackberry, blueberry and violet aromas accompanied by a silky palate, it is warm and perfectly balanced by ripe tannins. Its long, lingering finish promises more years of enjoyment.