

“CANTINA GIARDINO may be closed by the time you arrive.”

I was nervous, it was my first wine trip in Italy and Cantina Giardino was our first stop. I hadn't realized there were open hours and hated the idea of being late and

inconveniencing our hosts. When we finally made it to their place in Ariano Irpino (after “close”) I realized we had pulled up to a house. Daniela De Gruttola swung the door open for us and we traversed the five different welcome mats to meet her. Crossing the threshold we could smell the fermenting grape juice coming from the basement. Art that I recognized from their iconic labels dotted the walls. I had been told the project was small, but this was beyond my grasp; it was hard to anticipate this level of intimacy.



Seeing the De Gruttolas live with their work became the foundation upon which I approach all natural wine. Maybe they live with this, maybe it's the first thing they smell when they wake up, maybe they're so accustomed to the smell they barely think of it.



Photo thanks to Mac Parsons

The rest of the day was a blast: we tasted through the wines in the basement while paging through Daniela's photo album, ate dinner until midnight and lingered at their local wine bar til 3 before falling asleep in their guest bedroom. Our friend Trish's old quarters.

Cantina Giardino has since expanded; in advance of their 20th anniversary they built a larger facility to both produce and archive their wines. The project has changed over those twenty years, starting as a collective of six friends (and named for one of them) Cantina Giardino is now primarily helmed by Antonio and Daniela De Gruttola who continue to work to find and preserve old vineyards planted to Campania's native varieties over volcanic soil. They are perhaps most well known for their work with a spectrum of white varieties: Falanghina, Greco, Coda di Volpe, and Fiano that see macerations long and short. These wines are aged in stainless steel or vessels that speak directly to the region like chestnut barrel and amphoras made from clay dug from their vineyards. For reds they specialize in a singular variety, Aglianico, known for its tough, sinewy tannins and intense concentration. These wines often see at least two years in an aging vessel before their release.

Photos, thanks to Emily

The selections for this month's wine club are some of my perennial favorites.

Volpe Rosa is plainly one of the great rosatos of Italy; made from a pink-skinned mutation of the white grape Coda di Volpe it spends one day on skins before aging in a mix amphora and concrete. Both the maceration and aging vessel offer a delicate structure that offer balance to the spice and minerality that volcanic terroir can show in such delicate wines. Drinking rosé like this in January serves as a reminder that it's the tail end of citrus season and I would treat it very much like adding slice of blood orange to a salad or marinade for olives. Certainly uplifts on a grey day.

Drogone is all Aglianico from a 75-year old vineyard in Montemarano, about an hour's drive from Ariano Irpino. Deep red from a two month maceration, the wine then ages for two and a half years in old chestnut barrels allowing for the wine to gain some wisdom before its release. A lovely candidate for the cellar, we just opened a 2013 the other day with few snacks in sight and sustained ourselves on the tannic chew balanced by the refreshing lift of volatile acidity. I would drink the 2018 now to reframe the dark days of the next few months, a lesson on how to find pleasure in moving slowly. And I would have a nice cut of lamb alongside my glass.

-Emily



January Happenings:

- 1/7 - Jerome Forget Tasting
- 1/14 - R. O'Neill Latta Tasting
- 1/21 - Cos a Cos Tasting
- 1/28 - Jean-Yves Péron Tasting

DIVERSEY

WINE 2

CLUB

January

2024

CANTINA GIARDINO

Volpe Rosa
Drogone