Giannitessari: uniqueness is built through intuitions, research and experimentation

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Giannitessari's philosophy rotates around the strict respect for the local vineyards, the sustainability and the suitable territories.

The approach (experimental, yet strongly pragmatic) has brought the company to produce original, elegant and fascinating wines: the **Soave** white wines, the equilibrated red wines from the calcareous soil In the **Colli Berici**, the sparkling wines from the **Monti Lessini** with its main wine, Durella.

We talked about it with Valeria Tessari (V), sales and marketing specialist, and Gianni Tessari (G), owner and

founder of the company.

What are the main distinctive and identifying traits of Giannitessari and what are the practices and the production philosophy that clearly distinguish you from the competition?

V: I think that the characteristic that most distinguishes us is precisely the types of wines we produce. The initial choice to focus on native varieties of our territory which are surely more difficult to narrate and transmit to the final consumer, in my opinion, is precisely what has rewarded us because, even if it takes more time, **these territories have a lot to tell and they make us recognizable**.

G: I think it is the land we work on and the grapes we get from it; I'm talking about Soave for the whites, Lessini Durello for the sparkling wines and Colli Berici for the reds. **The varieties and the terroirs' variables and potential allow us to apply a winemaking style which, with simplicity and without frills, allows us to bring into the bottle only what comes from the grapes,** because in a simple, but not trivial way, we enhance the nature and the predisposition of each product without forcing or compromising, not because we would not be capable of doing so, but simply because it is not necessary. This certainly characterizes us. Finally, as one last distinctive trait: my endless search for novelty, with experiments and intuitions that are very personal and difficult to replicate by others.

What motivated your interests and your research towards some resistant vineyards (PIWI) such as Solaris? Has the market proved to be open to these alternative proposals?

V: I still remember when in 2018 we launched our first Rebellis vintage, made with 100% Solaris grapes. **The reaction was of immediate amazement from customers and journalists, and**

there was a lot of interest on this matter. What I see now is that the simple interest has transformed into something much more concrete. Our Rebellis has transformed from an "experiment" to a real product with a commercial importance in our portfolio.

G: The research, the curiosity, the experimentation and the intuition I mentioned above gave birth to the project, strengthened by the fact that it was also a step towards the direction of ecological sustainability for the intervention's reduction in the field. We are always looking in all areas for more sustainable products and, for me, **these PIWI grapes are an absolute representation in this direction.** Now we currently learned to better understand the raw material and to work with this type of grape.

A topic of discussion concerns the longevity of "Piwi", like your Rebellis, which are often considered as wines to be consumed in a short time. What do you think about this?

V: I believe that our choice to keep all the vintages on sale is a big novelty for the wine world.

In fact, **having all the vintages at our disposal, our clients can test the longevity of our wines by coming to the cellar and taste old vintages.**

Besides, it has become a sort of fun "game": visitors come to the cellar and start improvising themselves as tasters.

G: When we started, the one about longevity was a big question for us too, and from a "if I don't see it, I don't believe it" thought, we decided to experience it firsthand.

Comforted by the value of the raw material and on the basis of the winemaking type applied, which also involves fermentation with the peel, we ventured in a challenge for the skeptics on this subject.

This is why we currently have all the vintages produced up to now on sale in our price list. 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 are available for everyone to see the evolution and the longevity of the wine with their own eyes and, above all, with their palate. As I said before "trying is believing".

In Italy there is still not a date for the possible inclusion of Piwis in the DOC regulations. There are those who are wary about these varieties and consider them a threat to the Italian winemaking tradition. What's your vision?

V: I think the fundamental point is to make consumers understand that these vines have nothing to envy to the traditional ones. In our idea, however, our Rebellis was conceived as a rebel wine, totally different from the others and it has not replaced or eliminated any of our other labels. We wanted to tell it right from the labels, **between ballerina legs dancing together, elegant and classic, yet with a difference:** the central ballerina dances with orange sneakers, to represent the wine itself.

G: The question of the DOCs and the related regulations is very delicate and it is also difficult to generalize, some are more permissive than others, each has its own motivations, history and traditions. In my opinion, each **Denomination should evaluate internally which vision to follow.** What should be avoided is having an ideological vision of the topic and, instead, approach it with a logic of efficiency and functionality. Things change, the climate changes, the sensitivity to certain issues changes. I consider it a mistake to refuse change, even if it would be equally wrong to give up territorial identity. I know I gave a "diplomatic" answer but, as mentioned above, any "clear" answer risks being ideological and not rational as our way of producing wants to be instead.

The French term “terroir” is often wrongly used as a synonym for territory or land. But with “terroir” we refer to the coexistence, in a limited area, of elements that include the climatic peculiarities, the soil, the vine and the human aspect (history, culture, tradition). What are the terroirs that you have identified in your production areas and what potential do they have?

V: **Our motto is “three territories, one passion”**. This is because the areas represented to us are three: Soave, Lessinia and Colli Berici.

G: Each one has its own distinct identity from the others, there are almost no varietal overlaps, if there are, they are very limited. The soils and the climates are different. Our role was to highlight and enhance each potential, a task that proved to be quite easy because for the Monti Lessini the combination with the queen variety, which is the Durella grape, inevitably leads to favoring high quality sparkling wine. **The history, traditions and territorial inclination of the Soave area leaves no room to anything but white wines in all their expressions.** Finally, the Berici Hills, which have always been the source of red wines with a strong personality, are giving us great satisfaction in this area, especially with the autochthonous variety par excellence, the Tai Rosso.

How has the use of amphorae influenced your production? What are the advantages of this choice and what are the challenges to face?

V: The choice of aging in amphora is, for the moment, used only in Rebellis wine. **This is because we were looking for a different maturation material that could meet this wine and this type of grape.**

G: The characteristic of terracotta, the material with which the amphoras are made, is in fact a porosity that allows **the**

wine to have an exchange with oxygen, but without hints of wood that is usually given by the barrels; this is a style that I consider successful for this label.

Focusing on the international wine market, what are the critical issues that worry you the most and what are the most stimulating prospects that you currently see?

V: The answer will seem a bit strange, but in reality, the point against and the one in favor is the same working with grapes that are still considered very much a niche. **When I attend international fairs or meetings with my clients to present my wines, the most expressed concern is:** how can I sell this wine if nobody knows it? No one knows this grape why should they buy it? My answer and, in my opinion, what gives us a great advantage is that these wines have a lot to tell, they have a story about people, tradition and territory behind them.

G: Our wines are not traditional "catalogue" wines. **They are wines that need to be narrated and, after an initial storytelling effort, they can make the difference precisely because of their uniqueness.** As far as I'm concerned, from a production point of view, it's always stimulating to find a compromise between what the market is asking for and my personal ideas. Although I admit I am always slightly biased.

One of your export destinations is Norway, a complex market, characterized by a substantial bureaucracy and by consumers who are very attentive to prices. What are your strategies on this market and which are the most suitable wines for the Norwegian consumer?

The Norwegian market, like most of Northern Europe, works with the monopoly system, i.e., a state-managed system of purchasing and controlling the wine and spirits sales.

Initially, due to our choice of not working with the most famous wines and denominations, **it was not easy to enter the market, the monopoly in fact proposes "tenders" year after year, that is, competitions in which wines with certain characteristics are requested.** Our strategy was first of all to find an importer who would fall in love with our products and our philosophy and who would take charge of the Horeca sales strategy, a method of importation which provides that the wines, instead of ending up directly on the shops shelves of the monopoly were sold directly by the importer to operators in the sector, the same thing that happens in the rest of Europe, but which is not the norm in Norway. At the moment we only work with still wines in this market but our goal, with time and patience, is precisely to be able to make Durello known and appreciated.

What are the future projects and objectives that Giannitessari intends to pursue?

V: **This year we are celebrating Giannitessari brand 10 years anniversary, and I think this is already a small milestone**. Surely in the short term our goal is to consolidate more and more as a brand of quality and territoriality.

G: A little secret dream? Being able to bring Lessini Durello Spumante among the big names in the world regarding the classic method sparkling wines.

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