Feudo Antico’s Pecorino Tullum DOCG e Pecorino IGT Terre Aquilane Casadonna

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Pecorino is one of the most contemporary white wines Italy has to offer. I say this up front because it is the reason I wanted to tell the story of two Feudo Antico wines together. My aim is to show how the same grape, in two different places, can say different things that are equally convincing, rather than to decide which one is better.

First, it is worth explaining who Feudo Antico is. It is the premium winery of Cantina Tollo Group, created to showcase the Tullum DOCG, one of the smallest appellations in Italy. We are in the hills of Tollo, in the province of Chieti. The winery stands on the ruins of a Roman rustic villa, and this is more than a brochure detail: it reminds us that wine has been made

here for two thousand years. Today Feudo Antico works with careful vineyard zoning and a clear idea: to let Abruzzo’s native grape varieties speak in a modern language.

Pecorino is the heart of this project. Until a few decades ago it was an almost forgotten variety. Today it is among the most sought-after native white grapes, and in my view that is no accident. It has naturally high acidity, freshness and savoriness. It can be full-bodied without becoming heavy. It pairs easily with light cuisine, raw fish and vegetables. In a word, it captures what white wine drinkers look for today: freshness, identity, and minimal construction in the cellar.

There is also a factor that is becoming decisive, and that is altitude. With climate change, high-elevation vineyards are a precious resource. Ripening is slower, and the temperature swings between day and night preserve acidity and aromas. On this theme, Feudo Antico has made a bet that I consider among the boldest in Italian wine.

Pecorino Tullum DOCG 2024

Let’s start with the hills. The Tullum Pecorino comes from vines on well-drained soils, with ventilated exposures and strong diurnal temperature variations. Harvest takes place between late August and early September, precisely to preserve the acidity that is this grape’s signature.

The work in the cellar is essential. Cryomaceration, spontaneous fermentation with indigenous yeasts, a period of skin maceration that adds structure, then aging in concrete tanks. The wine rests for about six months on fine lees without racking and is bottled without filtration or fining.

In the glass it is a luminous lemon yellow with golden reflections. On the nose, pear and golden apple, a delicate almond note, then sage and lavender. On the palate the acidity is high but perfectly integrated into the fruit. The sip is full and long, with a slightly phenolic, dry finish.

We paired it with an excellent grilled sea bass. The choice was almost natural. The grill gives the fish a toasted note and a light smokiness that the Tullum was able to embrace without being overwhelmed. On the contrary, the wine’s full structure and that slightly phenolic finish added depth to every bite, while the acidity cleansed the palate and invited the next sip. The aromatic herbs you can smell in the glass, sage above all, seemed made for the sea bass. A successful marriage, one of those simple, sincere pairings that need no explanation.

Pecorino Terre Aquilane IGT Casadonna 2022

Then there is the mountain. In 2010 Feudo Antico went looking for land at altitude to test Pecorino in the mountains. It found it in Castel di Sangro, at Casadonna, on the estate of three-Michelin-star chef Niko Romito, who became a partner in this adventure. Next to the vegetable garden and the orchard, an experimental vineyard was planted above 800 meters of elevation. Pecorino had never been grown this high. The winery itself speaks of extreme viticulture, and it is no exaggeration.

Here the cellar steps back even further. Spontaneous fermentation, aging in acacia barrels, no stabilization or filtration. The only goal is to leave undisturbed what comes from the vineyard.

And from the vineyard comes the mountain. Saline acidity, a sharp minerality, very fresh aromas and citrus notes (grapefruit above all) of great intensity. It is a more tense, vertical Pecorino that expresses altitude with surprising clarity. About 1,500 bottles are produced each year. It is a rare wine, made for those who want to understand how far this grape can go.

We enjoyed the Casadonna with an extraordinary fritto misto of paranza fish, strictly from the Adriatic, of course. Here the

mountain met the sea, and the encounter was a celebration. The saline acidity and tension of this Pecorino cut through the frying with almost surgical precision, while the citrus notes worked like a squeeze of lemon. Every sip left the mouth clean and ready for the next piece of fish. A perfect marriage, and confirmation that a wine born at 800 meters above sea level can sit comfortably at the most maritime table Abruzzo knows how to set.

Two wines, one thesis

Placed side by side, these two Pecorinos complement each other rather than compete. The Tullum shows the richness and depth that Pecorino can express in its favored hills. The Casadonna shows that the same grape, taken to altitude, finds a new tension and perhaps points to a path for the future.

I am convinced that Feudo Antico is doing important work for Pecorino. It does more than produce it well. It questions the grape, tests it, and takes it where no one had dared to go. And it reminds us that the heritage of our native varieties is still largely waiting to be explored.

Company Profile

Feudo Antico is the premium winery of Cantina Tollo Group, created to express the excellence of Tullum DOCG, one of Italy’s smallest appellations. It combines organic viticulture, research, and deep respect for the land in a project that showcases the authentic identity of Abruzzo. The estate stands on the remains of an ancient Roman villa, a testament to a thousand-year-old winemaking tradition that continues to inspire its vision. Through careful vineyard zoning and a quality-driven approach, Feudo Antico enhances native grape varieties, crafting wines that reflect their origin, character, and sense of place. As part of Cantina Tollo Group, it shares a commitment to sustainability, innovation, and the promotion of Abruzzo’s wine heritage,

bringing a contemporary expression of Italian excellence to international markets.

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