Tenute Orestiadi: the Mediterranean spirit of Sicily

scritto da Alice Alberti | 15 Febbraio 2017



The story of Cantine Ermes and its most iconic brand, Tenute Orestiadi, digs its roots in a past of destruction. It is the story of the Phoenix, the mythical bird that rises from the ashes. Even though in this case instead of ashes we'd better talk about ruins, ruins of what was left from a terrible earthquake that in the night between the 14th and 15th of January 1968 destroyed Belìce Valley, a wide portion of western Sicily. Almost 400 people died that night, over a 1.000 were injured and more than 70.000 were forced to leave their homes. A catastrophe that brought a land to its knees.

But it was from that same land, so cruel yet so generous, that a group of young vine growers decided to start again, undertaking a process of social and economic rebirth completed in 1998 when Cantine Ermes was founded, right in the wounded heart of Belìce Valley, between the towns of Gibellina and Santa Ninfa. Today Cantine Ermes is one of the most important producers in Sicily, with its 5.000 hectares of vineyards,

spread across the province of Trapani, Agrigento and Palermo, and its 1.200 members, who every day with passion and sacrifice cultivate both local and international grape varieties.

Belìce Valley takes its name from the river that flows through its territory, characterised by different soils, microclimate and elevation. “There are three main types of soil here.” says Alessandro Parisi, Marketing Manager of Cantine Ermes “Red soil, typical of the southwest coast of Sicily, rich in sand, stones and ferric elements. A dry microclimate makes it perfect for growing white grapes like Zibibbo and Grillo and red grape like Frappato. We find black soil in Trapani inland, up to 350mt; it is solid and can resist long periods of dryness, ideal for growing all type of grapes, red ones like Nero d’Avola, or white ones like Catarratto, Grillo and Grecanico. Lastly white soil, typical of the hills around Belìce Valley, up to 350-500mt, rich in limestone and chalk. Thanks to its minerals, it’s the best option for growing Grillo, Zibibbo and Catarratto, but also reds like Perricone”.

A crucial step in Cantine Ermes evolution was the year 2008. That was the moment when Cantine Ermes started its collaboration with Fondazione Orestiadi and created Tenute Orestiadi, the iconic brand exclusively dedicated to Ho.Re.Ca channel. However Tenute Orestiadi is much more than a simple company brand, it’s the result of the dialogue between two worlds, the one of wine and the one of art. This is why the partnership with Fondazione Orestiadi, one of the most important art and culture institutes in the Mediterranean, is fundamental in order to promote local identity through the bond between art and wine, two elements that have found their home in Belìce Valley since a long time. Indeed Tenute Orestiadi derives its name from ancient myths and legends brought to life here in Sicily by the Greek dramatist Aeschylus, who took to the stage the myth of Orestes in his famous trilogy, the Oresteia (also Orestiadi in Italian).

“Tenute Orestiadi wines represent the Mediterranean spirit of both company and Sicily itself. They are authentic expressions of the territory where vines are full of life and grow up breathing warm wind of Sirocco and cold Tramontane.” Parisi adds “From a strict selection of best crù and best grapes six single grape wines are created, three whites, Grillo, Catarratto, Zibibbo, and three reds, Nero d’Avola, Frappato and Perricone. The newborn Pacènzia is the result of a late harvest Zibibbo. Though the most iconic wine of Tenute Orestiadi is the Ludovico, 90% Nero d’Avola and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. It is dedicated to Ludovico Corrao, Mayor of Gibellina in the years right after the earthquake, founder of Fondazione Orestiadi, who gave a new, contemporary identity to the town. He was a strong man, eclectic, in love with his own land yet projected into the world. These same characteristics can be found in the Ludovico”.

The story of Cantine Ermes and Tenute Orestiadi is complex and fascinating. It talks about rebirth, love and respect for land and traditions. Most of all we agree with Alessandro Parisi when he says that this is a story that talks about “a viticulture done by authentic men who, with daily passion, grow their vines as if they were leading actors in the most authentic play of all, directed by Nature”.

http://www.tenuteorestiadi.it
http://www.cantineermes.it