

Azienda Agricola MAZZI

Veneto

The Veneto probably produces more wine than any other region of Italy. Experience has led me to suspect that one unfortunate reason is the all too frequent practice of overcropping. Fine exceptions to this rule happily exist and, today, in Roberto Mazzi's Estate I believe I've found the integrity indispensable to fine winemaking.

An agronomist with a passionate organic bent, Roberto Mazzi perpetuates the rigorous, labour intensive practices that made Amarone and Valpolicella world famous.

A first small crop - destined for Amarone - is harvested, the clusters placed in shallow wooden crates to be piled up in a cool, ventilated granary where they will partially dry until crushing in January - the clusters hand selected, as they must be perfect to avoid rot as they dry. The second harvest is crushed immediately, and will become Valpolicella Superiore.

The practice of drying the grapes used in Amarone, (and in Mazzi's case also used for his Valpolicella Superiore "Poiega"), naturally results in uncommon concentration, alcoholic and otherwise. However, there are risks in this procedure - aside from simple rot - for a wine may end up overly

cloying, too heady and hot, easily one of the reasons for Amarone's overall decline in popularity.

Mazzi's wines are a happy exception. The Estate's vineyards are positioned in the highest hills of Negrar. One of the five townships of Valpolicella's classic appellation, Negrar has always been the focal point of my research because its lean, calcareous soils yield the appellation's most elegant wines. The added element of altitude endows Mazzi's wines with rare balance and a silky, rather than meaty, texture.

Mazzi's Valpolicella Superiore Poiega may be considered as their Amarone's younger brother: clusters are dried for 30-40 days before crushing, after which the wine is aged in oak for 18 months and rests in the bottle for 6 months before being released. The Valpolicella Superiore is a fruity, fresh, medium bodied red, extraordinarily fragrant and eminently drinkable upon release. Recioto Le Calcarole is a delightful dessert wine.

These are all seductive wines whose appeal lies in elegance rather than clout - a style I've always been partial to.



Amarone Punta di Villa

Zone: *Negrar*
Cru: *Villa*
Varietal: *Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella*
Vineyard Ext.: *3 hectares*
Average Prod.: *8,000 bottles*



Valpolicella Superiore Poiega

Zone: *Negrar*
Cru: *Poiega*
Varietal: *Corvina, Rondinella, Molinara*
Vineyard Ext.: *4 hectares*
Average Prod.: *10,000 bottles*



Valpolicella Superiore

Zone: *Negrar*
Cru: *Poiega, Villa, San Peretto*
Varietal: *Corvina, Molinara, Rondinella*
Vineyard Ext.: *7.5 hectares*
Average Prod.: *20,000-22,000 btl*