

# PIAZZANO

Empoli

This is the first estate of the Empoli area to produce a Chianti, (and other wines), unequivocally worthy of note. So fine, I will add, that they easily rival many very well known, and much more expensive, siblings from the Chianti Classico appellation.

Riccardo Bettarini, Piazzano's polyhedric owner, believes the unusual quality of his wines is due to his very low yields – 40 – 45 hectolitres per hectare – and to his farm's unique terroir, which powerfully differentiates it from his neighbors. Bettarini's historical and archeological interests led him to discover that his farm dates back to ancient Roman days, Piazzano deriving from "Fundus Plautianus", ("Plautus' farm"). Moreover, archeological remains of wine amphorae dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. found in the property attest to the early discovery of Piazzano's peculiarly favourable grape growing aptitude and to its exploitation. And, indeed, Piazzano's soils not only are very different from the neighboring ones, but have strikingly differentiated plots within the property. For Piazzano's thirty hectares of vineyard literally straddle a geological fault, where the earth in its remote upheaval played gingerly with its soils and sub-soils.

So, every plot is separately winified in order to evince the terroir's identity. Then only the very best vats are selected and blended for bottling. The richest

cuvee is used to produce a Chianti Riserva. The Chianti "Rio Camerata," named for the little river down below the vineyards, is



the estate's answer to Chianti Classico costing nearly twice the price. The rest is saved for a splendid everyday hearty Chianti in the quaffing tradition. Piazzano's answer to jug wines. And what is deemed unworthy for bottling is simply sold in bulk. Curiously enough, it was tasting this bulk wine in a pizzeria at the beach that originally sparked my interest in Piazzano. About 3000 half-bottles per year of wonderful Vin Santo is also produced, in the traditional way: semi-dried grapes fermented and aged in 50-100 liter oak and chestnut wood "caratelle" which are sealed and then left in the attic for half a decade or so. Distinguishing this Vin Santo is 30% San Colombano, a pink coloured grape which is left to dry on the vine – as opposed to on straw mats – and which yields a spicy maple flavor and deep amber tones.

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Tuscany

## Chianti "Rio Camerata"

Zone: *Colli Empolesi*

Crus: *Vigna di Camerata, Vigna del Poggio, Vigna della Querce, Vigna della Cava, Vigna del Casone*

Varietal: *Sangiovese, Canaiolo and Colorino*

Vineyard Ext: *selection of the best clusters of all vineyards*

Average Prod.: *25,000 bottles*

## Chianti Riserva

### "Piazzano"

## Vin Santo

Zone: *Colli Empolesi*

Crus: *Vigna dell'Alberone, Vigna dell'Albicocco, Vigna della Grotta*

Varietal: *Sancolombano, Trebbiano and Malvasia*

Vineyard Ext: *1.13 hectares*

Average Prod.: *3,000 bottles*

## Olio Extra Vergine

Total acreage: *59 acres*

Soils: *clay, chalk and fossil matter*

Varieties: *Sangiovese (79%),*

*Canaiolo, Colorino (and for their Vin Santo, Sancolombano, Trebbiano and Malvasia). Ancient olive trees.*

Average production: *ca. 5,500 cases.*

Viticultural highlights: *greening between rows, aggressive green harvesting*

Vinificatory highlights: *Destemming and gentle maceration of around 3 weeks. The riserva is aged in seasoned barriques. Vin Santo is four years in 50-liter casks and topped off with ancient reserves that were discovered when the Bettarini purchased the property! The winemaker at Piazzano is the renowned Attilio Pagli, who is also one of the partners in the Mendozan project Altos las Hormigas.*