

Azienda Agricola SANTA LUCIA

Puglia

On the Adriatic coast in the region of Puglia about sixty kilometres south of the spur of Italy's boot lies the port town of Trani. In full daylight the clean bright whiteness strikes the eye. At sunset, instead of the usual yellow and orange hues, the town turns a delicate pink. The entire port enclosure is constructed above and below from Pietra di Trani, a local white marble-like stone. The Romanesque Abbey of Santa Maria di Colonna, of the same reflective stone, rests massively and immaculately at shore's edge. These sights are seen often by Giuseppe Perrone Capano and his son Roberto, a world-class yachtsman, whether sailing into Trani or looking out from its solitary restaurant. In fact, this view has been shared by Perrone Capanos since the early 17th century, and for these same four hundred years viticulture has been part of the family.

Twenty kilometers inland from Trani, just beyond the town of Corato and rising 300 meters above is the Santa Lucia farm. A few kilometers further and rising higher, stands the extraordinary octagonal castle built by the Swabian emperor Friedrich II, visible except on the rare cloudy day. It is from this singular structure that Castel del Monte D.O.C. gets its name.

Here, the summers are long and hot, so hot that one's spirit sags and wilts. The single-level villa of about 300 square meters - from the same Pietra di Trani and dating back to the arrival of the family - has walls so thick that a complete bathroom was carved into one. Inside it is cool and in the subterranean cellar the temperature is never above 16° C, even in the hottest July and August days. But the most unusual aspects of this estate, so unusual as to be almost unheard-of, are its dimensions and the methods of production.

Puglia is completely dominated by co-op wineries where production is

more and more in the hands of the beverage industrialists, and qualitatively vacillates between wines that are stripped and nondescript and those that are baked and dirty and still nondescript. Santa Lucia consists of 15 hectares of vineyard producing approximately 75,000 bottles per harvest; a small production by any standards, but minuscule by Puglia's. The vineyard is worked as if it were a garden, by hand and by people who know every plant and the idiosyncrasies of each nook and cranny. Vineyard density is 5,500 vines per hectare and single Guyot is the trellising system.

The red grape of this area is Troia (Troy), which like its western cousins in Campania, Greco and Aglianico, has its origins in Greek antiquity. Aging of Santa Lucia Castel del Monte Rosso is mostly in large Slavonian oak casks and lasts for about 6/8 months after which it rests in the bottle for 6 more months. The Castel del Monte Riserva sees 12/18 months of French oak barriques and rests 12 months in bottle. Because Castel del Monte is rarely made with the care exercised by the Perrone Capano family, with the intent of expressing fresh varietal character, it is rather impossible to judge it comparatively: the wines are simply different than those of Tuscany or even Abruzzo, one wonders at the unique but lovely vinosity and aromas. The Rosso is dark and luscious with a medium body betrayed by a full feel on the palate. The Riserva is finer, more tantalizing and longer finishing. In their price class these wines are hard to beat.

An interesting Fiano (named "Gazza Ladra" after the opera of Rossini) is now added to the range and soon we will also have a 100% Negroamaro (in fact 2.5 hectares have been planted with this varietal).

Since 2001 the estate's winemaker, Luigi Cantatore, is supported by oenologist Paolo Caciorgna, who

consults for many southern Italian wineries.



Vigna del Melograno Rosso Castel del Monte

Zone: *Castel del Monte*
Cru: *Vigna del Melograno*
Varietal: *Uva di Troia*
Vineyard Ext.: *4.5 hectares*
Average Prod.: *25,000 bottles*