

Tommaso Bussola

When Veneto legend Giuseppe Quintarelli was asked years ago to name the region's next superstar, he didn't hesitate: Tommaso Bussola.

Quintarelli's prediction began to be realized in 1999, when Tommaso's '95's were released. Among the countless accolades he received, *Gambero Rosso* gave him the first of many *Tre Bicchieri* for his majestic Recioto TB.

Learning on the Job

Originally trained as a stone mason, Tommaso took over over his uncle's Valpolicella estate—with its prized old vineyards in the heart of the Classico zone—in the mid-1980's. While vineyard work came naturally to him, he experimented relentlessly, and absorbed information and ideas from every source available. With each passing vintage, his wines came to show more polish, finesse, intensity, and personality.

By the late nineties, his style had matured, and his

wines had become world-famous for their incredible intensity of fruit. Over time, his usage of new barrels has diminished, but any hint of new wood is hidden by cascades of lush, opulent fruit.

Ancient Clones

The key, we think, is not only the age of his vines but the fact that they are nearly all naturally low-yielding ancient clones:

Corvinone (40%), Corvina Grossa (25%) and Rondinella (20%).

Corvinone, in particular, is quite rare today because of its low yields and finicky growing habits. Yet, Tommaso claims it is the Corvinone that gives his wines their depth. He calls it the "Super Corvina," saying that it produces stronger, denser, richer, more perfumed wines.

Small percentages of old-vine Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Dindarella and Pindara round out the *cépage*, along with newer experiments like Teroldego and Merlot.

Tommaso Bussola's wines have received a good deal of critical acclaim over the last few years, and with good reason. These are remarkable wines of the highest level.

Antonio Galloni in *The Wine Advocate*

Linea "Ca' del Laito"

Despite being the estate's standard wines, the Ca' del Laito selections are near the summit of the Valpolicella pyramid. Only estate fruit is used, including declassified wine from top sites like Alto, Soto el Barbi, Casali and Ca' del Laito.

Valpolicella Ripasso — The Ca' del Laito Valpolicella is made in a bold, Ripasso style that highlights the quality of Tommaso's raw materials.

L'Errante — An Amarone-styled wine made from Bordelais varietals, the "Wanderer" results from Tommaso's boundless curiosity. Unique.

Amarone Classico — Tommaso's first goal every year is to make the best Amarone Classico possible. An incredible Amarone value.

Recioto Classico — Tommaso is the master of Recioto, and even his *normale* can challenge the region's elite.

Linea "TB"

The "TB" selections are Tommaso's finest, made from a ruthless selection only when nature allows.

Valpolicella Classico Superiore TB — While the Amarone and Recioto enjoy greater renown, this 100% Ripasso wine may be Tommaso's greatest achievement.

Amarone Classico TB — Fantastically hedonistic, offering great velvety richness on the palate and exotic notes of black cherry, cocoa and ash.

Amarone Classico TB "Vigneto Alto" — A limited selection made only when certain barrels display a little extra "magic."

Recioto Classico TB — Bussola's wines are *the* reference standards for Recioto. Lofty scores and awards have been legion.

TOMMASO BUSSOLA

Veneto, Italy

HISTORY

Established: 1985

Winemaker / Viticulture: Tommaso Bussola

Marketing: Daniela Bussola

History: The self-taught Bussola took over his uncle's domaine in 1985. He aims to make the best *normale* wines possible in each vintage. In many years, he is also able to make limited quantities of his elite TB line, selected from the best grapes at harvest.

VINEYARD INFORMATION

Soils: Toar (basalt) & chalky gravel. Terraced steep hillside vineyards

Fruit Source: 9 hA in Valpolicella Classico.

Estate Plantings: 40% Corvinone, 25% Corvina Grossa, 20% Rondinella

5% Molinara, Cabernet Franc, Pelara

Cabernet Sauvignon, Dindarella. Tommaso specializes in finicky, heirloom varieties.

Corvinone, in particular, is difficult to grow, but is largely responsible for the depth of fruit in Bussola's wines.

Vine Age: 35% 14+ years old, 40% 30+ years old, 20% 60+ years old, 5% New plantings

RECENT VINTAGES

2006 – Early indications are for a strong, classic, structured vintage.

2005 – A mildly challenging vintage, with some spotty rain around harvest.

2004 – A classic vintage, with beautifully balanced wines. Similar to 2001.

2003 – Atypical heat and drought led to abnormally high grape sugars, and less need than usual for raisining.

2002 – Difficult year, with rain at harvest. No TB wines made.

ADDITIONAL WINEMAKING NOTES

Bussola uses different barrel sizes, woods (oak, cherry, chestnut, acacia) and aging for each wine, and is always experimenting.

Because of Bussola's demanding standards, production of each cuvée varies dramatically from vintage to vintage.

THE WINES

Valpolicella Ripasso “Ca’ del Laito”

Grapes: 40% Corvina and Corvinone, 40% Rondinella, 10% Molinara, 10% Others

Avg. Production: 1,200 cases

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico

Grapes: 65% Corvina and Corvinone, 30% Rondinella, 5% Other varieties

Production: 2,500 cases

Recioto della Valpolicella Classico

Grapes: 50% Corvina and Corvinone, 30% Rondinella, 20% Other

Avg. Production: 800 cases (6x500mL)

L’Errante IGT

Grapes: 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet (both)

Note: 75% is partially dried, and 25% is done in the *ripasso* style before *assemblage*.

Avg. Production: 1,000 cases

TB Valpolicella Classico Superiore

Grapes: 50% Corvina and Corvinone, 40% Rondinella, 10% Other varieties

Note: 100% *ripasso*

Avg. Production: 2,500 cases

TB Amarone

Grapes: 75% Corvina and Corvinone, 20% Rondinella, 5% Other varieties

Avg. Production: from 0 to 700 cases

TB Amarone “Vigneto Alto”

Grapes: Alto is selected from the best barrels of TB Amarone

Avg. Production: from 0 to 500 case

TB Recioto della Valpolicella

Grapes: 60% Corvina and Corvinone, 10% Rondinella, 15% Cabernet Franc, 15% Other

Avg. Production: 0 to 300 cases (6x500mL)