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Passionately Pursuing Italian Wine and Food

February 22, 2021

VINO NOBILE 2016: TASTING REPORT PART 1

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~ The Main Piazza in Montepulciano with its distinctive Cisterna – (image courtesy of Andrea Contucci) ~

In 1789, when Thomas Jefferson returned home from his station abroad in France, he could hardly imagine what lie in store for him. The United States was a nascent country and its fate hung in the balance. Mounting debts and a collapsing currency brought the country to a tipping point and Jefferson seized the moment. He invited Alexander Hamilton and James Madison to his home for an elegant and elaborate dinner. His hope was to broker a deal between the three men that would save the fledgling republic. What was the chosen wine for the evening? *Vino Nobile!*

Countless comparisons have been made between *Vino Nobile* and Brunello. Which is better? Are they equals? Which boasts the oldest history? I say simply, it does not matter. They are related only in so far as they come from towns that begin with the letter “M”. Yes, they both rely on Sangiovese. However, they are no more comparable than dark chocolate is to milk chocolate containing almonds or dried fruit! They are similar but it ends there. They are both original, storied and unique. So let’s move on.



~ The town hall dominates the Piazza Grande in Montepulciano ~

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano

What then is Vino Nobile?

Although there are requirements for minimum alcohol and even proper altitudes for growing the grapes, the basics for wine to be labeled Vino Nobile are as follows:

- The wine must be at least 70% Prugnolo Gentile, which is the local clone of Sangiovese. The remaining 30% can be almost any other red grape such as Canaiolo, Colorino, Mammolo, Malvasia Nera, Cabernet or Merlot. Some producers are steadfast in terms of blending while others have embraced 100% Sangiovese for their wines.
- The wines must be aged a minimum of 2 years prior to release. 12 months is the minimum requirement for aging in barrel. Riserva must be aged an additional year.
- Originally established as a DOC in 1966, Vino Nobile was promoted to DOCG status in 1980.

Interestingly, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano suffers from a bit of a PR dilemma. For the less experienced wine drinker, the name often causes confusion with Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, the rustic southern Italian red. In that case, Montepulciano is the grape as opposed to the place.

To counter this, the Vino Nobile Consorzio has permitted the labeling of wines to drop the Montepulciano name and simply read: "Vino Nobile". The success of this endeavor is yet to be measured. What's curious, is the number of producers that have not dropped the name as you can see in the photos from this report.



~ Hilltop Montepulciano has released its 2016 vintage ~

I Vini di Nobile di Montepulciano

Tiny is as tiny does. When it comes to artisan producers, Il Molinaccio may have no competition. The current owners restored the estate's villa which sits among oak trees, fruit orchards and the tiny 3 1/2 hectare vineyard. It's as much a vacation destination as a winery and it offers an intimate setting in Montepulciano.

The 2016 Il Molinaccio "La Spinosa" is a full medium ruby and 100% Sangiovese. Bright cherry fruit on the nose is accented with smoke, powdery incense and fresh herbs. Medium bodied on the palate. This is more on the savory side. Juicy, slightly austere berry fruit is complimented by dried herbs and earthy notes. Tobacco and ash too. Soft, almost absent tannins make this approachable now. Vinified in stainless steel and then aged 15 months in French oak barrels. Nice value and also available directly from the winery. 88 points. [Find this wine \(https://www.wine-searcher.com/find/molinaccio+la+spinosa+docg+nobile+di+montepulciano+tuscany+italy/2016\)](https://www.wine-searcher.com/find/molinaccio+la+spinosa+docg+nobile+di+montepulciano+tuscany+italy/2016).



~ La Spinosa is "The Porcupine" which inhabit Il Molinaccio's Estate ~

The Il Molinaccio cellars lie under the Villa which includes apartments for rent, a small restaurant, gardens and a pool.



~ A treasure of Vino Nobile ~

Since 1972 the Talosa Estate has been owned by the Jacorossi family. A relative fledgling property by historical Tuscan standards, the Jacorossi's now boast three generations working on the estate. The family farms 33 hectares of vineyards devoted mainly to Sangiovese in a Cru area of Montepulciano called Pietrose. Conversely, the main cellars of Talosa are located in the center of old Montepulciano. Above the catacombed passageways where barrels rest holding Vino Nobile, is a small taverna and enoteca.