

Fattoria

AMBRA

Tuscany

The wines of Carmignano, a small hillside town northwest of Florence, have not yet gained a reputation for themselves abroad, perhaps due to the very limited amounts produced, and often not even bottled by the producers. But in Italy, the name of Carmignano has been synonymous with fine wines since the 13th century, and documents attest to a sale of Carmignano in 1396 at four times the price of other contemporary prestigious wines. So great was its reputation that Cosimo III de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, decreed in 1716 that the appellation be strictly controlled, as well as the harvests and the sales, whether local or abroad. The confines of the ancient appellation remain identical to this day, making it one of the smallest D.O.C.G. areas of Italy.

The wine itself has a physiognomy all of its own for, although its varietal makeup is similar to that of the Chianti (high percentage of Sangiovese), it boasts up to 10% of Cabernet Sauvignon in its blend - all of Bordeaux stock at Ambra - in addition to a 5% allowance of other varietals including Merlot, Syrah and such native Tuscan vines as Colorino, Mammolo, and even some Occhio di Pernice. Thus, in

Carmignano we find wines characteristically richer than those of the Chianti: of more obvious structure and colour, more prodigal in their longevity and of better defined character. And yet Carmignano is not what one would call a big or tannic wine, nor does it have the rigour of a Brunello di Montalcino. Its richness is smooth and accessible and its bouquet expresses itself in finesse rather than in power. It likes wood, but not too much of it and, rightly (for once!), the laws governing its production demand only one year in wood, eight months after which it may be bottled.

The Ambra estate has its vineyards in the crus of Santa Cristina in Pilli (where the soil has a high percentage of lime-stone), of Montalbiolo (planted in rich, mild, loose, Galestro soil), of Elzana (the soil of which is clay and Galestro) and of Montefortini (the soil of which is sandstone) close to the Etruscan tomb bearing the same name.

However, Giuseppe Rigoli, the agronomist who owns the estate, though white grapes are allowed, employs only the red varietals relying mainly on Sangiovese and Cabernet. Thus, Ambra's Carmignano has a concentration and deep aristocratic

"robe" quite unique among its leaner siblings.

The estate is small, the total vineyard extension 18 hectares. The total output is only about 400 hectolitres which is a yield of only about 30 hectolitres per hectare; an indication of the rigid grape selection that goes into the making of this wine.

Since the 1985 vintage, a Carmignano riserva has been produced, aged in small French oak (500 and 350 litre tonneaux) and from the estate's vineyards of highest elevation, called Le Vigne Alte di Montalbiolo, producing a wine of unmatched elegance.

1998 brings the debut of a second Riserva; the 1995 Vigna Elzana: still Galestro soil but here clay is a defining component and the resulting wine is powerful, warm-natured and opulent.

Ambra also produces a Trebbiano based proprietary white wine; Barco Reale (the young version of Carmignano), a fruity, fresh, dry red table wine; a dry spicy rosato (made from the "saignée" of the best must of Carmignano) and from 1999 a regular Carmignano, Montefortini.



Carmignano Riserva Le Vigne Alte Montalbiolo

Zone: Carmignano
Cru: Montalbiolo
Varietal: Sangiovese, Cabernet, Merlot, Canaiolo
Vineyard Ext.: 1.5 hectares
Average Prod.: 6,000 bottles

Carmignano Vigna S. Cristina in Pilli

Zone: Carmignano
Cru: S. Cristina in Pilli
Varietal: Sangiovese, Cabernet, Merlot, Canaiolo, Colorino, Syrah
Vineyard Ext.: 6 hectares
Average Prod.: 20,000 bottles