

PASSOPISCIARO, MOUNT ETNA PASSOROSSO AND PASSOBIANCO 2017

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“The 2017 growing season was exceptionally hot, even on Mount Etna,” commented **Andrea Franchetti**, the oenologist who was one of just a handful of pioneers to recognise the winemaking potential of the volcano’s utterly unique soils and climate. His research led him to select 26 hectares of terraced vineyards that today constitute the Passopisciaro wine estate. “Nonetheless,” he continued, “that intense heat, which continued unabated into September, with diurnal temperature fluctuations less marked than usual, had no negative impact at all on wine quality; rather, the marriage of the site’s unique conditions of sunlight, elevation and volcanic soils retained its determining influence and yielded wines of powerful character.”



Passorosso 2017

Passorosso 2017, 100% Nerello Mascalese, is an eloquent interpretation of its Etna home, and in particular of the villages of Malpasso, Guardiola, Santo Spirito, Favazza, and Arcuria, lying at elevations of 500 to 1100 feet. Soils in the highest zones are composed of large-size gravel, while those lower down are deeper and finer-grained, derived from ancient lava flows. In 2017, ripening in the vineyards was slow and gradual, and harvest arrived slightly early, between 20 and 29 October. Following fermentation in steel, Passorosso concluded malolactic in large oak ovals, where it matured over some 18 months. The wine boasts an ultra-crisp acidity and earthy minerality, impressive structure and body, and restrained alcohol.

The all-Chardonnay Passobianco 2017 is grown in four hectares at an elevation of 850-1000 metres, where the steep terraces in the Guardiola district offer loose, deep soils of lava derivation with high mineral content. During the 2017 season, the Chardonnay vines required spray irrigation at night to ward off heat stress, and harvest came early, between 13 and 30 August, bringing yields that were lower than normal but with concentrated fruit. The must fermented 20 days at around 23°C in steel, then Passobianco matured for 10 months in both concrete vats and large oak ovals. Today, it is crisp and zesty, with its prominent tropical fruit promising significant longevity.

When Andrea Franchetti met Mount Etna, the offspring of the encounter was Passopisciaro. In 2000, Franchetti began to reconstitute the terraced vineyards of Nerello Mascalese, successively planting new vineyards at densities of 12,000 vines per hectare and then restructuring a building, at 800 metres’ elevation, that would eventually become the Passopisciaro winecellar. Thus began Etna’s winemaking renaissance. Andrea Franchetti was likewise the proponent of the concept of the “vini di Contrada,” or wines reflecting the various individual districts, which today is celebrated by the international-level event “Le Contrade dell’Etna” that focuses on the Nerello grape.

Today, the Passopisciaro estate relies on 26 hectares of vineyards distributed over the north flank of Etna; most are planted to Nerello Mascalese, often un-grafted vines 80-100 years old, but there are Petit Verdot, Cesanese di Affile, and Chardonnay as well. Eight wines are produced. In addition to Passorosso and Passobianco, the portfolio boasts five crus: the *contrade* of Chiappemacine, Porcaria, Guardiola, Sciaranuova, and Rampante, plus the prestigious Franchetti, a marriage of Petit Verdot and Cesanese d’Affile. Andrea Franchetti is the owner of Tenuta di Trinoro as well, located at Sarteano (Val D’Orcia) in Tuscany, famous for its Bordeaux blend wine of the same name.



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