

Costaripa • The Story

March 2010



Location: Moniga del Garda,

Province of Brescia, Region of Lombardy



Entering Costaripa

The
Garda
Classico
and
Lugana

appellations, between Lake Garda and Brescia, form a gently rolling landscape of great charm and tranquillity, rich in historical remains and lovely ancient castles. Geologically, the area goes back to some 70-80 million years ago, when glaciers melted, forming morainic amphitheatres, lakes and hills up to 980-990 feet, made up of around 60 different kinds of soil, from clay to limestone and rock, which supply wines with a wealth of beneficial quality components.



Moniga del Garda

Nestled among the hills on the western, Lombard shore of Lago di Garda is the tiny lakeside village of **Moniga del Garda**. In the

words of Costaripa owner & winemaker **Mattia Vezzola**, it is "one of the world's northernmost territories to enjoy a climate that is almost Mediterranean". True enough, the stretch of land between Salò and Limone reminds one of the Amalfi coast rather than Lombardy: there are lemon trees and cedars, capers, cypresses, vineyards, olive groves and agave...

As far back as the late 1800s, the property now belonging to Mattia (also famous for the **Bellavista *bollicine*** in nearby Franciacorta, and **Gambero Rosso/Slow Food Winemaker of the Year 2008**) was planted to the strictest quality criteria by the proprietor of that time, Venetian Senator Pompeo Gherardo Molmenti, together with a team of Bordeaux agronomists. (Molmenti also created Charetto in 1896: hence Mattia's Garda Classico Charetto *Molmenti*).

In 1936, Mattia's grandfather (also named Mattia Vezzola) fell in love with these well ventilated, sloping morainic vineyards that face the lake and the rising sun, and purchased Molmenti's land. In the early 1970s, the estate took the name of Costaripa from the favorable position of the vineyards: in Italian, "costa ripa" means "coast/slope/mountain ridge/steep hillside".

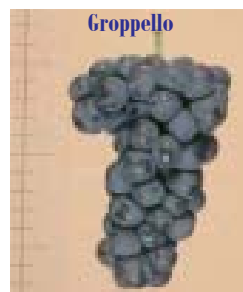
It was only in 1994, however, while Mattia's father Bruno was travelling in the U.S. and the new generation could have its own way in the winery, that a major quality revolution began on the family estate: Mattia applied the techniques he'd learnt in Burgundy to halve yields per vine and use cold maceration and barrique ageing on the native Gropello grape. Results were so amazing that Mattia saw his convictions confirmed: by selecting native varieties, lowering crops



Mattia Vezzola

and employing state-of-the-art technology, Costaripa terroir would yield fantastic wines. One of Mattia's top priorities is precisely that of maximizing local potential with such intriguing indigenous grapes as the elegant **Gropello** or the fragrant **Marzemino**. Mattia, in particular, did some in-depth research on Gropello, known in

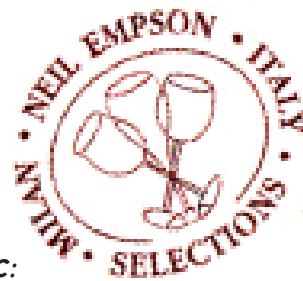
the area for the past 500 years. Similar to Pinot Noir, it takes its name from the shape of the tightly knit, conical bunch ("gropo" means "tangle, knot" in Italian), with blue, spherical berries (cf. photo below). The grape stalk is short, so that the



Gropello

growing berries tend to press against each other. This makes it easy for bunches to rot and very difficult for them to ripen properly, so the variety needs south/southeastern exposure and tiny crop yields on mixed gravelly, silty and clayey soil such as you get at Moniga del Garda.

Gropello is high in acidity and low in color, and can be complemented by other varieties in local DOCs: Marzemino, conversely conducive to rich color and low acidity; Barbera, with high acidity and intense aromas; and Sangiovese, favoring structure. The blend of all four gives us the appealing and fragrant Charetto. The area also features native white grapes like **Trebbiano di Lugana**. In fact, the very deep, clayey and silty soil yields one of the most powerful Trebbianos in Italy and even one of the latest-ripening, so much so it is harvested at the same time as Cabernet. Mattia, incidentally, is not only extremely knowledgeable in winery techniques, but is also a great expert in the vineyard. In fact, he is not afraid to get his hands dirty in pruning himself, occasionally. He is married to Lia and is preparing the next Costaripa generation, Nicole and Gherardo.



PIEVECROCE LUGANA DOC: 100% Trebbiano di Lugana. Particularly cellar-worthy, also due to the cool climate, conducive to freshness and full flavors. Intense, highly concentrated straw yellow; the bouquet is very crisp and mineral, with notes of white flowers, citrus fruit, ripe apples and pears, dried fruits. The palate is perfectly consistent and well balanced; a distinctive, crisp and savory note returns to the fore, enriched by freshness and extreme persistence.

ROSAMARA GARDA

CLASSICO CHIARETTO DOC: 60% Groppello, 40% Sangiovese, Marzemino & Barbera in equal proportions. From the 2009 vintage, Rosamara has been totally

redesigned in package and contents: crops have been further cut back to a maximum yield of 40 hl. per hectare, and the wine ferments and matures in French oak pieces of 228 liters. The ensuing color is an even lighter, luminous shade of shell pink, and the bouquet is even more floral, ample and fruity, reminiscent of mayblossoms, black cherries and pomegranate. Well balanced on the palate, with a subtle, pleasing almond finish; very persistent,



characteristically fresh and appealing. The new packaging is just as delightful.

MOLMENTI GARDA CLASSICO CHIARETTO DOC: A selection of 60% Groppello, 40% Sangiovese, Marzemino & Barbera in equal proportions. This wine is dedicated to the Venetian senator Pompeo Gherardo Molmenti, who created Chiaretto in 1896, and is labelled with the original label (dated 1904). It undergoes "teardrop" vinification (vinificazione a lacrima) and fermentation in 5-hectoliter barrels, followed by approx. 5 months' bottle age. The color is copper pink with appealing cherry reflections, the nose is ample and elegant, recalling sweetly scented white flowers, berries and cherries, with subtle vanilla notes. The palate is structured, mellow and fresh at the

same time, flavorful, mineral, with a hint of almonds.



MAZANE GARDA MARZEMINO DOC:

Single-vineyard, 100% Marzemino, now DOC! Refraining from oak élevage enhances the variety's ripe red fruit flavors, crispness and fragrance. Intense ruby in color, the bouquet jumps out of the glass, recalling marasca cherries, strawberries and violets, with notes of honey, pennyroyal and lemon verbena. On the palate, the soft tannins, pulpy fruit flavors and balance make it easy to understand why Marzemino was such a Mozart favorite.

CASTELLINE GARDA CLASSICO GROPPELLO

DOC: 100% Groppello Gentile, the Garda area's most ancient variety. Vinified in stainless steel with a minor

percentage in wood. Light ruby in color with light burgundy highlights, its bouquet is intense and unique, recalling herbs, vine buds, sage leaves and quince apples. On the palate, the primary sensation is flavorful freshness, with sweet, splendidly integrated tannins and crisp, fruity finish.



CAMPOSTARNE GARDA CLASSICO ROSSO DOC: A selection of 60% Groppello, 40% Sangiovese, Marzemino & Barbera in equal proportions.

The wine was originally created for Christiaan Barnard, the celebrated heart surgeon, who'd asked for a "healthy" wine suitable for drinking both by young adults and the elderly. It sojourns 1 year in an exhaustively used barrel, so as to round tannins out. Rich crimson color, ample bouquet of brushwood and berries, aromatic herbs, mint, plums and marasca cherries. Silky-textured, smooth tannins, full body and intense cherry, blackberry, raspberry and compote flavors; very cellar-worthy.

BRUT METODO CLASSICO: This Champenois sparkling wine from 100% Chardonnay is straw yellow with greenish hues and minuscule, persistent perlage worthy of the

Master of Bollicine. The bouquet is elegant and fragrant, recalling fresh fruit, quince apples, bread crust, sage leaves and honey, the palate is fresh, flavorful, well balanced and persistent.

