



Location: Pedemonte Valpolicella,  
Province of Verona, Region of Veneto



The Speri Family

The name Valpolicella comprises the Italian word for “valley”, ‘valle’ or ‘val’. The Valpolicella appellation, however, is not so much a single valley as a number of small valleys fanning out towards the hills behind Verona. Its wonderful climate, abundant sources of water and gently rolling landscape have made this a densely inhabited territory throughout the centuries. Classico is the Valpolicella appellation’s historical core, covering a mere fifth of the DOC’s total territory: select, elevated terrain on the Alpine foothills, enjoying a temperate climate you would not expect at this northerly latitude.

The Speris’ presence in this heartland of fine winemaking goes back to **1874**. Every one of the Speri vineyards is within the Classico area, totalling 60 hectares, i.e. **148 acres**, in the finest Classico districts: **Fumane, Negrar, San Pietro in Cariano**. In spite of size and scope, the Speris personally deal with every detail: every grape going into their wines is estate-owned and estate-grown, personally sculpted by the Speris with just as much pride in the craft of viticulture, the manual, hard-working side to it, as in its art. In their own words: “**We are proud to be farmers**. We hold dear the deep-rooted values of this ancient civilization: respect for nature and its rhythms; fervent dedication to laboring the land; the highest regard for our heritage, for the experience of past generations.”

The four Speri brothers (and now, their children, who make up the family’s **fifth generation**) are a shining example of the values and strengths, even today - in fact, all the more so in this age of huge, impersonal conglomerates - of a timeless culture, rooted in the family and the soil.



The terraced *marogne* (drystone walls) at Sant’Urbano

Successive generations have gradually expanded the estate yet were careful to keep it all in the family: Nonno Benedetto, his son Sante, the latter’s four children and now their children have looked after each detail personally, from vineyard to bottle. The fourth generation, in the 1960s and 1970s, invested heavily in clonal selection, state-of-the-art equipment, ever-higher quality criteria. These are watershed years, when the Speris’ in-depth research comes to a head and the brothers decide to **vinify each vineyard individually** for all wines and not just Amarone. The vineyards themselves are divided into distinct **crus** comprising **La Roverina, Sant’Urbano** and **La Roggia**.

**Carlo Speri** will tell you that the vineyard has always been foremost in the Speri philosophy: “the local heritage in terms of terroir is so exceptional, we have always and exclusively grown native Valpolicella clones. We believe that these alone constitute the appellation’s most authentic expression. Our ultimate objective - a pretty ambitious one! - is that of achieving perfect harmony of the soil and its vines.” Throughout the property, the indigenous Corvina, Rondinella and Molinara are planted with a much higher density than the appellation’s average, and a training

system specifically devised by the Speris to lower crops and enhance exposure and concentration: the “small, open *pergola*” (*pergoletta aperta*) in lieu of the area’s traditional *pergola veronese*. Vineyard altitude is 150-350 meters (c. 490-1,150 feet) above sea level, and terrain and microclimate are very different from vineyard to vineyard. Methods employed are **organic**, and the hillside vines are terraced by means of drystone walls called **marogne** (see photo above); yet another aspect of the local heritage which the Speris have preserved and enhanced.

**NOTE:** In the summer of 2009, ten historic Valpolicella families created an association, Famiglie dell’Amarone d’Arte or **Amarone Families**. The association believes in setting the bar as high as possible: growing grapes on top locations only, following a self-prescribed protocol that is stricter and more restrictive than the DOC norms. The founders’ combined history totals over... 1,600 years, and the 10 families together are alone worth 55% of the entire market value of quality Amarone. **The Speris are one of these ten, top families.**



**LA ROVERINA VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO SUPERIORE DOC:** *Approx. 70% Corvina, 20% Rondinella, 5% Molinara, 5% other native varieties. From a single vineyard in the La Roverina area (alluvial soil, particularly well drained and rich in mineral components) and c. 18-year-old vines. After malolactic fermentation in oak, it is aged in 50-hl. barrels for 10 months to a year. Ruby red, with intense, ample bouquet recalling vinous and almond notes; dry, flavorful and structured on the palate, with a pleasing bitterish nuance. Big news on the Roverina*

*front: this historical vineyard was completely renovated in 2002. Packaging has been correspondingly renewed (see photo, above left) and closure is now screw cap, ensuring the integrity of the vineyard's characteristic fruit.*

**RIPASSO VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO SUPERIORE DOC:** *70%*



*Corvina, 20% Rondinella + 10% Molinara and other indigenous varieties, from vineyards in San Pietro in Cariano, Fumane & Negrar. Crops are harvested the second half of September, soft-pressed and destalked previous to maceration on the skins for 8 days in stainless steel. The must is subsequently racked into vitrified cement to complete alcoholic and malolactic fermentation. During the last week of February, the wine referments on Amarone marc for 8 days: this is the method known as Ripasso - hence the wine's name. It matures 12 months in oak barrels of 20 hl., then in bottle for several more months. Rich, full, spicy, fruity, well balanced.*

**SANT'URBANO VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO SUPERIORE DOC:**

*The select, single-vineyard grapes (70% Corvina, 25% Rondinella, 5% Corvinone and Molinara) from the estate's most prestigious cru,*

*Sant'Urbano (a calcareous-cretaceous hill of volcanic origin) are placed in wooden boxes and left to rest until they lose around 5% of their weight, achieving great concentration.*

*Vinification then takes place in November, with 8 to 10 days' skin maceration and daily pumpovers. Élevage is 2 years in new, 500-liter Allier oak tonneaux, 12 months in the bottle.*

*Deep ruby with a rich, ample bouquet of spice and ripe red fruit confirmed on the full, layered palate.*



**AMARONE DELLA VALPOLICELLA**

**CLASSICO "VIGNETO MONTE**

**SANT'URBANO" DOC:** *Amarone is the king of Veronese wines, combining power and softness, evolving to Port-like lushness over three decades or more awesome with grandeur and depth. It starts off like Valpolicella, but select bunches of Corvina grapes are lengthily dried on racks after the harvest, achieving greater concentration. Speri Amarone is only released in select vintages, and is 70% Corvina, 25% Rondinella, 5% Corvinone, from c. 15/16-year-old vines. Manual selection of the best bunches*

*takes place the last two weeks of September. The fruit is subsequently dried for some 110-120 days under ideal conditions in terms of temperature, humidity and ventilation, losing 41% of its initial weight. In January, the grapes are soft-pressed and destemmed. This is followed by 25-35 days' maceration on the skins with periodic pumping over and délestage. Separation of the skins takes place in February, and alcoholic and malolactic fermentation is completed in 50-hl. oak barrels, followed by 24 months' ageing in 500-liter Allier oak tonneaux and a further 12 months in Slavonian oak barrels of 20-40 hl., and 12 months in bottle. The resulting wine is characterized by the deepest color and very, very intense bouquet with spicy, aromatic and jammy notes combining power and finesse, prelude to a palate that is rich, sensuous, highly structured and complex, lingering on and on.*

**RECIOTO DELLA VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO "LA ROGGIA" DOC:**

*70% Corvina, 30% Rondinella from a single vineyard in the cru of La Roggia (predominantly miry terrain with a bed of gravel at 20-24 inches below the surface, which favors good drainage), very densely planted for particularly concentrated, sugar-rich grapes, perfect for Recioto's lengthy withering process. The best bunches*

*are selected manually in early September, then dried for some 120 days, up to a 43% loss from their initial weight. They are subsequently soft-pressed, destemmed, then macerated on the skins for about 20-25 days. We are by now in February; in early March, the skins are removed, and the wine is subsequently brique-aged two years, bottle-aged another 12 months. The result is amazing: intense garnet in color, with a superb bouquet of raisins, violets and jam, and a full, velvety, round palate that delights without palling, and matches even that wine steward's torment, chocolate!*

