

Highlight

Etna, a masterclass with Master of Wine Jeremy Cukierman

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Sicilia en Primeur 2017: the masterclass on the wines of the volcano with *Master of Wine* Jeremy Cukierman. An important viewpoint which, instead of focusing merely on the sensorial characteristics, offers reflections on international markets in a simplified manner which deals with business questions.

Two grape varieties which are the key to the tasting: **Nerello Mascalese**, etymologically the Nerello grape from Mascali, and **Carricante**, the white grape which “loads” (“carica”) the vine, endows it with much fruit. The former belongs to the large family of Nerelli or Nigrelli, all fertile, suited for the production of wine, found all over Sicily, black in color and hence its name.

The second is known as well as Caricanti, Nocera Bianca, or Catanese Bianco, instead, is cultivated solely in the provinces of Catania and Messina. It is hypothesized that the grape is a spontaneous crossing of Montonico Pinto with Scacco.

The master class presented ten wines between reds, white, and rosés, a range chosen from differing slopes of the volcano in order to show the appellation off as faithfully as possible.

Nicosia – Sosta Tre Santi, Carricante Brut Metodo Classico 2014

DOC Etna Bianco, 100% Carricante

It is a classic (i.e. bottle fermented) sparkling wine with a surprising fascination. The bubbles are dense and delicate. Forceful and complex the opening. Not particularly varietal, an advantage in terms of elegance and versatility in confronting every type of context. The notes of bread and biscuits indicate a long aging on the lees. Among the perceptible notes are aromatic herbs and tropical fruit with a slight acidity. Fresh and decisive the palate, the wine could take on, without any problem, a number of Champagnes.

Cottanera – Contrada Calderara 2015

DOC Etna Bianco, 100% Carricante

Produced on the northern face of the mountain in the Contrada district, it is a cru produced solely from Carricante. The character is fresh, savory, and agile. It is not an entry-level wine or one for beginners. The acidity is the driving, enlivening force of the wine. The finish is long and vibrant.

Girolamo Russo – Nerina 2015

DOC Etna Bianco, 100% Carricante

The characteristics of this wine are truly singular. Among the recognizable notes: honey, yellow fruit, expressive notes of citrus fruit. On the finish, smoky sensations, a wine which is quite dry and with a bracing acidity. A wine for connoisseurs, and an ideal accompaniment to smoked salmon.

Tenuta di Fessina – Erse bianco 2015

DOC Etna Bianco, Carricante 100%

A light wine, lively and swift. Strikingly pure on the nose and palate. Small white fruit, medlars and lychees along with pears. Truly pleasurable, it asks to be sipped with an alarming frequency.

Barone di Villagrande – Etna Bianco Doc Superiore 2016

DOC Etna Bianco Superiore: 90% Carricante 10% Minnella bianca, Catarratto e Visparola

An outstanding wine, versatile and particularly suitable to drinking with food. An excellent opportunity for sommeliers to match it many dishes of international cuisine. An ideal companion. The vineyards are near Milito, one of the townships with the highest potential for high level Carricante white wines.

Palmento Costanzo – Mofete Rosato 2016

DOC Etna Rosato: 100% Nerello Mascalese

The grapes are cultivated near one part of the northern face of Mount Etna, between Castiglione della Sicilia and Randazzo in the Santo Spirito district. The vines are over 100 years old, an usual choice for the production of a rosé wine. Red berry fruit is expressed with a millimetrical precision. The palate is long and fresh and fully brings out the cleanness of the wine, as does a finish which is pure and savory.

Tornatore – Trimarchisa 2014

DOC Etna Rosso

Trimarchisa is the district where the Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Capuccio grapes are grown. The terrain hosts vines which are over 40 years old and is situated in the Verzella district. The soil is lava-based with calcareous sediment. The must ferments in conical oak fermenters and then ages in oak casks and cement tanks. The aromas are intense with notes of dark berry fruit, black, cherries, and aromatic herbs. Very fine the spiciness, as are the notes of sweet oak. The palate is full, the tannins well expressed.

Graci – Arcuria, Nerello Mascalese 2015

DOC Etna Rosso

Produced from one sole vineyard plot in the Arcuria area, and is almost entirely a Graci property, what the French call a Monopole. The altitude is close to 2300 feet (700 meters) above sea level. The wine ages for 24 months in Slavonian oak casks. A fascinating wine with a great personality. The volcanic soils comes through in a manner which is so clear as to leave one speechless.

Pietradolce – Vigna Barbagalli 2014

DOC Etna Rosso – 100% Nerello Mascalese

On the northern slopes of Etna near Solicchiata, this is a pre-phylloxera vineyard at 3300 feet (1000 meters) above sea level. This is an ambitious wine with almost two years of cask aging behind it. Ample and earthy in aroma, with notes of red fruit and Mediterranean brush land along with smoky sensations on the close. Full on the palate, pleasurable firm in texture, noble. The tannins are decisive, the savory character lengthens the flavors. This is the top single-vineyard wine of this cellar. A long aging it highly recommended.

Benanti – Serra Della Contessa 2013

DOC Etna Rosso: 85% Nerello Mascalese, 15% Nerello Cappuccio

A grand Etna classic. Mount Serra, a small volcanic cone on the eastern side of the mountain, is the site of the vineyard, bush-vine trained and high in vine density, approximately 4000 vines per acre (10,00 per hectare). The maceration takes place in oak fermenters and the wine then ages for a year in small oak barrels and a year in bottle. The fruit is decisively felt, fleshy, and with notes of tobacco and leather. Mineral as well. The flavors are firm, vigorous in its acidity and with lovely, pleasurable textured tannins. It recalls in its style various important red wines of Burgundy. A wine which could last for decades.

by *Francesco Pensovecchio*

Jeremy Cukierman MW was born and raised in Paris. After a short experience in advertising agencies, the passion for wine quickly prevailed. Co-founder and co-CEO of Des Mets des Vins, Jeremy runs two wine shops in Paris, a wine event agency and a wine school. Through his wine business he is working with more than 200 top producers. He also consults for private customers and wine companies, lectures across all levels of WSET certification and trains future wine professionals in customised courses. He is writing for the French magazine Vignerons and for his own blog (www.intothewinewithjeremy.com). He is married, with two children and particularly loves Northern Rhône, Burgundy, Riesling, Italian and fortified wines.

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