



from **P**olenta
to **P**rosciutto

*A gastronomic journey
through southern Styria and Friuli-Venezia Giulia*



Peter
Ramspacher

Pignolo

Pignolo is one of the oldest indigenous grape varieties in Friuli. Documents from 1398 provide evidence that the grape was first cultivated in the Abbey of Rosazzo in the Colli Orientali. A preference for other grapes during subsequent centuries led to the decline of Pignolo cultivation and many thought that the grape was extinct. The grape was rediscovered in 1978 when Walter Filiputti, who was at the time working in the Abbey of Rosazzo, found two ancient vines growing against a south-facing wall which were later identified as being Pignolo vines. This lucky discovery is today regarded as the birth hour of one of the best red wines of Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Pignolo is a unique wine with a luscious ruby-red colour, a prominent but balanced tannin structure and powerful aromas of morello cherries.



Fulvio Bressan, Farra d'Isonzo

The undisputed master of Pignolo is Fulvio Bressan, a charismatic personality and renowned vintner.

When I first visited Fulvio in October 2006, I found him in the wine cellar bottling the 1998 Pignolo vintage. This already revealed a good deal about his wine-making philosophy. Before I could start asking him about the techniques and methods he employs, he gave me a rapid tour of the vineyards close to

the main farmhouse and showed me how he trained his vines and how he prunes them back to restrict yields. He felt this introduction was necessary so that I would understand him when he later explained his wine-making practice to me. The subsequent long interview simply rounded off the image of his personality I had formed during our walk through the vineyards. It also gave me an insight into his dreams and visions. Nothing in his life is 'normal' - neither the range of varieties he produces, nor the vinification and maturing techniques he employs, nor his marketing strategy.





Fulvio's father started making wine 40 years ago. Fulvio obtained a degree in psychology before he took over the estate. For him, it is essential that traditional techniques and experience of previous generations of vintners are respected.

His motto? -“When you forget your history, you forget yourself.”

Fulvio's primary wines are Schiopettino and Pignolo, both made from indigenous grapes. In addition, he also produces Pinot Nero, Verduzzo Friulano and Pinot grigio.

Fulvio is convinced that the main factor determining the quality of wine is the terroir; in the wine cellar all the vintner can do is put his personal stamp on the wine. Restricting yields ensures optimum quality. Yields for Pignolo average 4,000 kg per hectare. In less favourable years - for example in 2005 - he harvested only the Schiopettino grapes. All others were left unharvested to be picked by the birds.

After destemming, the grapes are macerated for 30 days in a must to which he does not add any yeast because he thinks that yeast obliterates the terroir's typical flavours. After pressing, the wine is matured in large oak barrels, each holding 2,000 litres of wine. After another 18 months of ageing in bottles, the wine is ready to be sold.

Fulvio's Pignolo is an intense ruby-red in colour. The acid, tannin and alcohol content are superbly matched and harmoniously balanced. The wine has a powerful, elegant body with fine fruitiness despite its long maturation. To allow the wine to fulfil its full aroma it should be opened three days before it is served.

“I know that I am a crazy man.”

“When you respect nature, nature respects you.”

▷ *(Fulvio Bressan)*

