

# Winews

*A proposito  
di vino*

Year I • No. 2  
Autumn 2000

## Editorial

Here we are at the end of our second labour.

Why one says "labour", I don't know, when it is actually rather fun to choose photographs, make printing decisions and write articles!

The first edition of the newsletter met with greater success than expected, we have received many compliments and congratulations, and they are still arriving.

Thanks again!

As is customarily expected of wine producers, we'll be reporting on our harvest. The text is written by winemaker Nicola Scottini, who has recently joined our team, taking more than a little of the "alchemy" fermentation work off Mimmo's shoulders and sparing me from writing about acidity, Brix degrees and polyphenols which are outside my field of competence.

But this harvest signalled another important event for me: I have now been making Morellino for twenty years!

Although twentieth anniversaries have an unpleasant significance for Italians and are not to be celebrated, I asked Giovanna - "Tatina" - to write about her memories to mark the anniversary. Who is Tatina? A distant relative, and the sweetest, most sensitive person I have ever met; although we meet infrequently, I cherish the memory of the early "country" days we experienced and loved together as perhaps the happiest period of my life.

There have been important changes on the farm over the last year: the first phase of the new vineyards at Poggio Maestrino has been completed. It's hard to express the effect of seeing such an expanse of little plants which will grow and become

## Happy Birthday!

*20 Morellino harvests  
From a pioneer idea to reality*

To tell you the truth I would feel more at home talking about oil, after all I'm Tuscan! But as this is the birthday of Morellino, I'll have to put aside that ancient, healthy arrogance

When your birthday cake only has a few candles, someone always says, "My dear, before you were born...", and today I feel like saying the same thing to those two doves which in

1961 settled on the ruby red Bordeaux bottle of new wine in the cellar up at the castle of Montemerano.

Well before it was born, there was Erik, obviously, who had for some time been aware of the beauty of the Maremma; so much so that he had already "opened house and shop" there, as

we say round here. At the time there was no house more open, and no shop more cheerful. The countryside was to be rediscovered and idealised, people mingled during snacks that lasted the morning and serenades in May: we felt like happy pioneers facing a near, familiar west. Meanwhile Erik, between one glass and another, moved heaven and earth. Curious as ever about everything, he fell in love with the new technology, and exchanged the old barrels for barriques, the tuns for high steel vats, to the astonishment of "the mute", his first assistant, who, unable to express himself any other way, shook his head and carried on bottling. The rest of us in the family were a little more optimistic; we knew he was clever, but still that tiny spark of apprehension would not be extinguished - "let's hope he's not going too far...".

But of course, he did go even further. He opened a restaurant, the best of all, in an abandoned oil press, in a square with a view of the sunset over the Argentario, at the end of a stone-paved alley across which the houses touched. He met with other winegrowers, (if only even one had been boring!) and began to disappear for days on end, very well-dressed, and would return as pleased as punch and tell us about wine shops, other restaurants, new contacts, some of them far off - all of Europe but also Japan, America - and in



inherent in every slice of bread and olive oil, and write a few lines about the first bottle.

many bottles of Morellino!

The vineyards on the property will be completed in 2001 along with the planting of an olive grove.

Our thanks also to Italian bureaucracy, which after 3 years has given us permission to apply for permission to build necessary extensions to the cellar; the work should begin next spring and be completed within the year.

New offices will be built, and a Californian-style wine shop where our wines and selected gourmet food products (see p.4) can be tasted and purchased, along with various gadgets like T-shirts and corkscrews, glasses, books and specialist magazines.

The bottling area will have a new, *last page* ➔



# Millennium harvest



from first page

(Happy Birthday)

any case wherever there was a golf course.

I mentioned America – but the real America, for Erik, was always the Maremma: less bitter and fatter with new vineyards planted using the most up-to-date techniques, on pieces of extraordinary land purchased here and there, always after lengthy negotiations; a beautiful, definitive cellar on a hill with oak trees, in Scansano, shiny with the silver of vats (or silos?) - towards clear skies and new goals. As ever in life, small steps taken every day, with patience, will cover large distances: suddenly our blessed wine, loved and cared for like a child, took flight like a dove and came to rest with a dignity both old and new alongside the best wines in Italy. So just as Armani created the jacket and God created woman, Erik can boast that he created Morellino (although for women the comparison is not a comfortable one).

So after a gestation period of several years, and twenty post-partum years of joys and sorrows, success and labour, risks and madness, we really feel we were there at the birth, we the good few (“boncitti” as they say), intensely proud (but still a little less than for the oil, we all know wine is younger...) and determined to stand firm against the new conquerors of the wine lands, however prestigious.

Gentlemen, we have discovered Maremma! □

Giovanna “Tatina” Raugeri

I qualified in viticulture and oenology at the Istituto Tecnico Agrario in S. Michele all’Adige in 1992, and after a few years of work experience in the Trentino area, I ventured into Tuscany, in order to improve my technical knowledge and satisfy my curiosity to discover new places. I arrived in Maremma in 1997 (in Pitigliano, to be precise), and I stayed here because as time passed I gradually fell in love with this place; its thousand-year-old history and natural beauty, the popular traditions and last but not least, the fact that wonderful wines are made here, wines to rival those of other, better-known Tuscan winemaking areas. But I no longer live and work where I did three years ago: I came to Scansano and Erik Banti’s cellar because he needed a hand making his wine. I accepted his invitation, because it gave me the chance to work in a long-standing Morellino production cellar with high quality standards, and to become personally involved in making the Maremma area and its principal wine, Morellino di Scansano, known throughout the world.

Now to my first harvest in Scansano, in 2000, considered a historical one because it was the first of the millennium, and carried out in full respect of its unique and anything but predictable nature. The harvest began unusually early (10-15 days) and lasted a comparatively short time due to the fact that the grapes were ripe, and fairly scarce (40% less than 1999). These are the salient features of a harvest that translate into low production per unit (less than 50 quintals per hectare), very sugary grapes (23-25° Brix) with good total acidity and high polyphenol content, forming the basis of a wine with high in alcohol, of excellent structure, and intense colour with purple hues. The fruit reached the cellar in excellent condition thanks to the good weather throughout the harvest and swift delivery, only a few hours after picking. The grapes underwent the classic red

wine vinification process, starting with the selection of the various batches of grapes, then the removal from the stalks by crushing-destemming and the commencement of fermentation in steel vinification vats, with continual checking of the must temperature and periodical pumping-over to encourage the extraction of polyphenols and regulate alcoholic fermentation.

After 8-10 days of maceration (up to 20 for the special selected grapes), racking began of the completely fermented must, now transformed into new wine.

This was placed in steel vats, leaving in the prestigious sediment from

fermentation to further enrich the wine and facilitate malolactic fermentation. The next step will be decanting, with continual tasting to control the progress of the new wine, and then decisions will be made about the ageing of the various wines according to the grapes and vinification procedures.

We must decide which wines will be placed on the market first and which will become reserves; these will soon be placed in barrels or bariques where malolactic fermentation will be completed and they will start to become great wines, aged in wood. □

Nicola Scottini



## News

My past experience as a country restaurateur brought me into contact with many small producers of local, hand-made products of incredibly high quality: from tomato-based sauces, to meat-sauce and truffle products, most of these organic.

I have selected just a few of these little masterpieces to offer to lovers of Italian gourmet products.

Ask for our price list and visit our website to find out more about them! □



*I don't know whether or not Eberhard's passion for wine is the result of time spent in his youth in the little cellars of Montemerano. However we met on one of these occasions, and our eyes and memories are still clouded today by a glass too many. Eberhard and his "Garibaldi" shops have become a landmark in Bavaria for good quality Italian wines. Thank you Eberhard – from all of us.*



# A little nostalgia

## Morellino in Montemerano

by EBERHARD SPANDENBERG

I am almost afraid to admit that more than twenty years have passed since I discovered the town of Montemerano and its splendid surroundings as a student. A group of us were travelling to Sardinia and one of our number, a geologist, advised us to visit the thermal springs in Saturnia. We arrived one moonlit night and stayed in the hot water until dawn. As the sun came up I fell in love with the landscape, and I am still in love with it today. Thanks to my work as a wine importer, distributing wines from 17 Italian regions in Germany, I have seen most Italian landscapes from Alto Adige down to Sicily, but the Maremma is still my favourite.

We liked this area so much that we decided to spend another night there, this time in a hotel. In those days the "Terme di Saturnia" was just a little country hotel with only ten rooms and even students like us could afford to stay there. There was none of the weekend tourism that crowds the waterfalls and springs today, no camper vans and no people along the roads playing at relaxing in

tracksuits and swimming costumes.

A short while after, I stayed for six months in the Pensione Laudomia, between Montemerano and Manciano, where I was treated like a member of the family. Around that time I bought a house, with the help of Italian friends, for very little money, in Montemerano's Piazza del Castello.

Foreigners were practically nonexistent in the town then, and therefore gourmet cooking was equally unknown. Da Caino was still a little bar, and only later became a trattoria, and then a restaurant. Today it shines with its two Michelin stars in the southern Tuscan sky.

In those days I knew nothing about wine but the local farmers and the region itself taught me to appreciate their wonderful red wines. A more knowledgeable friend helped me to tell the difference between good wine and very good wine: this was our first encounter with Morellino di Scansano.

A few years later when I was running a restaurant in Munich we decided to import wine from "my" area

of Italy. My next trip to Montemerano was by truck and we bought a load of Morellino di Scansano from a wine producer. Morellino was the first of more than 400 wines that I now distribute in Germany.

Over the years more and more Italians and foreigners who loved Tuscany came here from the cities, enchanted by the Maremma region and the town of Montemerano, and some of them even moved into the Piazza del Castello. Among these invading newcomers was a certain Erik Banti who soon became my neighbour in the Piazza. It was a fascinating period during which I got to know many of the interesting people who came to Montemerano, all in search of new experiences and open to new encounters. Erik and I soon became friends. A few years later I began exporting his wine to Germany – that was more than ten years ago.

Erik became a kind of institution in Montemerano. His wine cellar, the "Vecchio Frantoio", was for many years a destination for all lovers of good wine. I especially admired Erik's sense of discipline: although a famous wine producer he worked as a waiter in his own restaurant.

When Erik moved his business from Montemerano to Scansano it was a great loss for us "newcomers". I miss you in Montemerano, my old friend! I miss seeing you walk your dog in Piazza del Castello. I miss playing cards with you in the bar. I miss the bottles you used to bring me at home so that I wouldn't run out during the holidays. Your laughter, your kindness, your way of looking to the future lit up a town which is continually hovering between country provincialism and an open-hearted welcome for the whole world.

Well, I must accept that you've moved to Scansano. Our friendship is strong enough to overcome the 20km to Scansano, and even 200 or 2000km. I am reminded of you every day by those two ducks on the shelves of my shops, which amuse the customers. □



(Editorial)

highly sophisticated, sterile packaging line to enable us to guarantee the utmost hygiene in the production of our wines.

The store-room and wood ageing cellar will be enlarged and guest accommodation will also be built.

Although the year is not yet over we can already take a look at some of the statistics for wine in general, and our own in particular.

It is well-known that wine consumption is decreasing, especially in traditional markets like Italy, France and Spain. In the future we will drink less, but better, wine.

2000 has confirmed this trend and, counting on quality as always, we are prepared, with our '98 wines aged in wood, the Morellino '99 and the latest obsessively selected harvest.

The importers exhaust our supplies with their bookings well before the wines are bottled, and without even tasting them!

This is confirmed by a review of the press which over the last year expressed overwhelming approval: we mentioned *Der Feinschmecker* in the last edition of *Wineews*, and also the *Wine Spectator*, which repeated itself in October 2000, giving Carato 1998 a score of 87/100 and naming it BEST BUY in the New Releases: Cellar Selections article; last but not least 5 glasses out of 5 for my divertissement from the best daily Danish paper, *Politiken*, by Henrik S. Andersen.

Many articles have appeared in the most prestigious magazines like *Dove*, *Tuttoturismo*, *Panorama* in Italy, *Vinum* in Switzerland, *Smag & Bebag* and *Mad og Vin* in Denmark, *Bon Appetit*, *Wine & Spirits* in America, and Mercedes Benz have even asked me to be their testimonial for their CLK publication. They all confirm my role as a "prophet" in the history of Morellino.

My only regret is the pointlessly polemic stance adopted by *Gambero Rosso*.

I still vividly remember the early enthusiasm, the early drinks and experiences shared with Daniele Cernilli over twenty years ago, when I ran a travel agent's in Rome and Daniele was a young schoolteacher.

To lose a friend whom I respected above all for his decency, politeness and professionalism is really stupid.

As we draw closer to the festive season, Laura and all the staff join me in sincerely wishing you a peaceful Christmas and a happy "annosecondo", in the second year of the third millennium. □

Erik Banti

**MORELLINO DI SCANSANO DOC 1999**

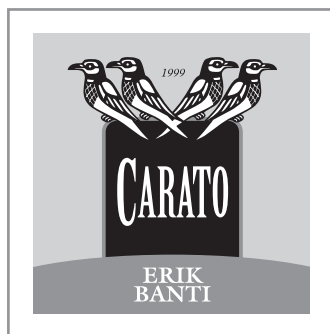


**GRAPES:** 85% Sangiovese, 15% Grenache, Canaiolo and Malvasia in equal quantities. An average spring and a dry, hot summer ripened the grapes early; the harvest began on 6th September and fermentation on the skin lasted for 12 days. The wine will not be on the market for at least a year after harvesting.

The results of analysis carried out in September 2000: alcohol 12.48, dry extract 27.8, total acidity 5.58, volatile acidity 0.52, pH 3.39.

**DEVELOPMENT:** Morellino '99 reflects the high quality of the region and will reach maturity two years after the harvest. It can be aged for 5 years.

**CARATO I.G.T. TOSCANA 1999**



**GRAPES:** 85% Sangiovese, 15% Grenache, Canaiolo and Malvasia in equal quantities. An average spring and a dry, hot summer ripened the grapes early; the harvest began on 6th September and fermentation on the skin lasted for 12 days. Carato was matured in 225L "carati" barriques, which are 80% Slavonian and 20% American oak, 50% new, between January and October 2000.

At this moment the Carato is not yet bottled. We report the analysis carried out for the '98 vintage: alcohol 12.87, dry extract 28.8, total acidity 5.84, volatile acidity 0.70, pH 3.47.

**DEVELOPMENT:** The wine should be drunk while young and will reach full balance at the end of 2001. It can be aged for another 5-6 years.

**Acknowledgments**

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who has helped and contributed (even unknowingly) in the adventure of preparing the second edition of *Wineews - a proposito di vino*:

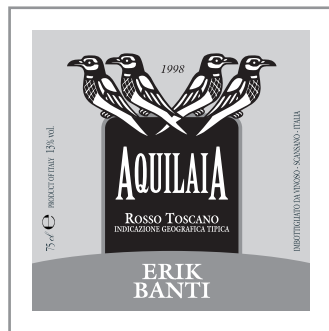
Laura and Serena, Giuseppe Romanazzi ([romanazzi@nexus.it](mailto:romanazzi@nexus.it)) who edited the graphics; Christina Dubbers ([cdubber@tin.it](mailto:cdubber@tin.it)) for the German texts; Ailsa Wood ([awood@tin.it](mailto:awood@tin.it)) for the English texts; and Paolo del Bufalo ([lapagina@tin.it](mailto:lapagina@tin.it)) who printed the magazine.

Photo by Erik Banti.

**Our wines**

**AQUILAIA I.G.T. TOSCANA 1998**

(E.B. label for the American market)

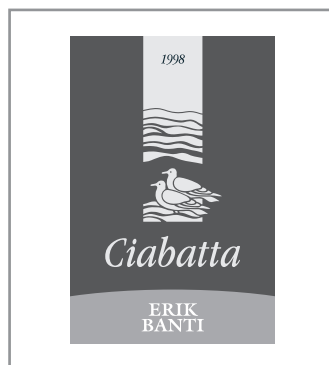


**GRAPES:** 80% Sangiovese, 20% Grenache. A hot, dry summer with a little rain at the end of August perfectly ripened the grapes and they were harvested on 18th September. Fermentation on the skins lasted for 14 days. Aquilaia '99 was aged in 225L barriques of Allier and Nevers MT+ oak, 35% new, between May 1999 and June 2000.

The results of analysis carried out in June 2000: alcohol 13.36, dry extract 29.2, total acidity 5.56, volatile acidity 0.51, pH 3.41.

**DEVELOPMENT:** With its particular blend of grapes Aquilaia will be ready in 2001, and can mature pleasantly for another 5-6 years.

**CIABATTA I.G.T. TOSCANA 1998**



**GRAPES:** 100% Sangiovese.

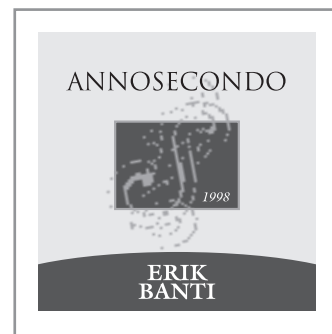
A hot, dry summer with a little rain at the end of August perfectly ripened the grapes and they were harvested on 24th September. Fermentation on the skins lasted for

15 days. Ciabatta was aged in 225-1000L Slavonian oak barriques, from October 1999 to October 2000.

The results of tests carried out in October 2000 were: alcohol 13.49, dry extract 30.5, total acidity 5.70, volatile acids 0.52, pH 3.43.

**DEVELOPMENT:** This vintage will be at its best in 2002/3, but Ciabatta '98 can easily be aged for another 7 years or more.

**ANNOSECONDO I.G.T. TOSCANA 1998**



**GRAPES:** 95% Sangiovese grosso, 5% Merlot.

A hot, dry summer with a little rain at the end of August perfectly ripened the grapes and they were harvested on 26th September. Fermentation of must on the skins lasted for 14 days and the different types of grape were separated. Annosecondo was aged in 225L MT Allier, Nevers and Tronçais barriques, 100% new, from June 1999 to September 2000.

The results of tests carried out in October 2000 were: alcohol 13.17, dry extract 30.20, total acidity 5.91, volatile acids 0.52.

**DEVELOPMENT:** Excellent ripening of the grapes has made the Annosecondo a full-bodied, robust wine. Its best features will be enhanced by further ageing in bottles of at least 10 years.

The EXTRA VERGIN OIL of the 2000 harvest will be ready by February 2001.

OUR FREEPHONE NUMBER IS NOW ACTIVE THROUGHOUT ITALY:

**800-765952**

ALSO BY CELL PHONE WITH NO EXTRA COST

VISIT OUR WEBSITE [www.erikbanti.com](http://www.erikbanti.com)

NEW E-mail: [erikbanti@tin.it](mailto:erikbanti@tin.it)