

Giuratrabocchetti, Gerardo; Arcieri, Margherita

## Article

# The history of the wine farm "Cantine del Notaio": An interview with Gerardo Giuratrabocchetti

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# The history of the wine farm 'Cantine del Notaio': An interview with Gerardo Giuratrabocchetti

A Business Article by Margherita Arcieri

*Via O. Valla, 3, 85100 Potenza, Italy*

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The wine farm 'Cantine del Notaio' was founded in 1997 in Rionero in Vulture, Basilicata, a town on the slopes of Mount Vulture. Passion for viticulture in the family Giuratrabocchetti is ancient and has been handed down from generation to generation. In the 26 ha property, Aglianico del Vulture is grown by combining innovation, tradition, history and culture in vineyards for more than a hundred years. I went to visit the cellars of the winery 'Cantine del Notaio', among the leading manufacturers of Aglianico del Vulture, to listen to the wine grower Gerardo Giuratrabocchetti<sup>1</sup> of such a wonderful tradition.

Q. How did you come to make wine?

It all began one morning when I went into my grandfather's Vineyard, and I felt a strong call to change my life. At that time, I was Director of the A.P.A (Provincial Farmers Association). I felt motivated to make a transition, so I spoke to my wife and family. It was hard to leave a lucrative job that had given me great professional satisfaction, but I decided to just go ahead and attempt a new and exciting adventure that my grandfather offered me. However, because this was a new venture, I had to improve my professional bases with specializations in the wine sector at highly specialized centres, first in Italy and later in France.

Q. What were the results of your research?

Aglianico del Vulture is especially difficult to cultivate because it is late in maturation, it is less productive, has higher production costs than other varieties and it is particularly sensitive to diseases such as mildew and powdery mildew. For these reasons, farmers could not restrict their cultivation only to Aglianico in this area. They usually cultivate Aglianico in association with white varieties such as Muscat and Malvasia. On the slopes of the volcano, all these varieties grow perfectly giving the advantage of an early collection and the production of excellent wines that can be sold in a much shorter time. Back to our Aglianico del Vulture, the tannins are quite plentiful and hard, and this justifies some remaining sweet or sparkling versions (in fact both were included in the first draft of the official product specification in 1971 at D.O.C.). For the same reason there was the tradition to "cut" Aglianico with other grape varieties, such as Lambrusco, or other varieties, such as Stampacavallo, Colatammurro, and so on, which are grown locally. I started rediscovering the great

<sup>1</sup>The company owner Gerardo Giuratrabocchetti has a degree in Agricultural Sciences, and he is a qualified Agronomist since 1982.

tradition already present in the area, in little towns like Barile, Maschito, Ripacandida, Rionero in Vulture, Venosa, Ginestra, figuring out which of these "contrade" responded the best to vine production. Then, in collaboration with the Institute of San Michele all'Adige, which specializes in genetic studies, I started to focus on field-testing. At this point, it was necessary to develop a real sustainable project, involving the entire process, from the cultivation to the production and then the marketing of the wines. In this way the project "Cantine del Notaio" started, a project carried out with passion, determination and involvement of the entire family.

Q. How does location influence the production of wine?

It is not so much the soil chemistry, but the place, i.e. the site (altitude, slope, soil texture, rainfall, temperature, temperature differences between day and night, etc.) which influences the grapes production. A detrimental factor is the volcano. It is the Vulture that makes the difference. The Vulture is a volcano born about 700 thousand years ago and it is equidistant from three seas: the Tyrrhenian Sea, Ionian and Adriatic Sea. It is located in an area that, in summer, receives hot air coming from Africa with temperatures above 35 °C, but with variations between day and night of, over 20 °C. In addition, the ashes of the volcano, from the last eruption, have shrunk to the ground and created a kind of sponge (the volcanic Tuff) that absorbs water in winter and gives the water in summer when it is hot and dry. It is the "Tuff plant feeding", as the old farmers point out, alluding to a poem about mother earth not abandoning her children and in summer, nurtures and supports, from below. All of this is extraordinary, but mostly makes the Aglianico del Vulture unique compared to other "aglianici" grown in the neighbouring regions. So for example, in Puglia there are high temperatures, often without summer rains, but they do not have the temperature that we have in Vulture. Similarly, the Campania region has rainfall spread throughout the year, without the temperature extremes that we have here. As a result, we have a completely different ripening of the grapes of Aglianico. Then, there is the winemaking tradition; the wine growers of the Vulture are unique for the passion and tradition they express. They are among the best in the world, and continue to make enormous sacrifices, not motivated only by money but by the pleasure of seeing a vineyard as a beautiful garden. It is an aspect that is of extreme cultural importance.

Q. What binds you to your land and what features are present in the wine you produce?

The passion to host people, and have them enjoy such a delicacy. We do this because we are tied to our land.

Q. What flavors of your land do you love to match with your wines?

The lucanian cuisine fits perfectly, for example, the cod with crispy peppers, "catturiedd" (sheep, boiled for hours, flavored with spices, lamb today) which is part of our culture, but also homemade pasta with a magnificent sauce.

Q. Could you list some keywords associated to your work, if there are any?

Surely, the "passion", (in Italian cuore, cervello, cash, capacità e fortuna): the heart, brain, cash, expertise and luck.

Q. In a globalized world, do nature and land, farming still have something to teach us?

The agricultural world, in particular the "lucano", is preparing itself to play a substantial role in the future. Imagine a landscape without rows of vineyards, olive groves and crops. Endless sorrow! The greatest architect, after "Lord", is the farmer, who plays and gives harmony to nature. Somewhere in the future, the "lucani people" will wake up with an amazing opportunity, the rediscovery of natural and genuine aspects that have already been lost by others, but have survived here.

Q. About global markets, your wine is in Japan, as well as in the USA. I guess it is a business strategy, but is also a way to export the "lucanità"?

A single market is undoubtedly very risky. When you confront yourself with a globalized sector, it becomes inevitable to face the challenge in multiple markets. In fact, if you choose a single market, you risk a lot. You need to address multiple markets, which is an added cost, but also a challenge because you have to understand different cultures and you need to work hard to be appreciated.

Q. Considering that there are competitors, what scenarios are being opened?

Italy is a country, which produces everything and more. Very often, if one thing goes well, after a while, everything else goes well. This is what happens in all fields, and in Italy wine producers are making almost as much as the National coaches of soccer!! What is my message? Definitely, point to make a major product, with a recognizable style, from whom it is possible to recognize the love and the passion that drives all manufacturers and us in the Vulture area.

Q. Finally, let's use our imagination. Imagine sitting at the end of a business day and relaxing with your wine. What would be the music that accompanies the emotion of the moment?

Like a dad, any bottle is the same for me! I like all types of music and my choice depends on my mood, from Chopin to Pino Daniele, passing through the music of a great artist like Mango.

Q. To end this interesting conversation, which flower would match your wine?

The purple fragrance is present in the olfactory characteristics of Aglianico. I also think a lawn of daisies, enjoying the capacity of nature to be amazing even with its simplicity!

