



2016 Montessu

Agricola Punica, Sardinia, Italy

Product details

Vintage:	2016	Drinking:	
Producer:	Agricola Punica	Alcohol:	
Region:	Sardinia	Variety:	
Country:	Italy		

About the producer

Agricola Wine

In the south-western corner of Sardinia, between Cagliari and the white sand beaches of Porto Pino, is a wild land of Maquis. But here and there can be seen serried rows, where the scrubland has been tamed and planted with vines. Chief among those who have mastered this challenging terroir is Antonello Pilloni, President of Santadi winery. For years, Santadi's consultant oenologist was the great Giacomo Tachis. Of course, the late Tachis was better known as the innovative genius at Tenuta San Guido in his home province - co-creator of the first Super-Tuscan, Sassicaia.

It was Giacomo Tachis who persuaded Tenuta San Guido winemaker Sebastiano Rosa to join him and Pilloni in a joint venture to realise the full potential of the Sulcis Meridionale region of Sardinia - following the Super-Tuscan model and planting non-indigenous grapes which would nonetheless thrive. (Santadi largely, although not wholly, concentrates on grape varieties typical to the region.)

The resulting estate was founded in 2002 and named Agricola Punica, after the Phoenicians of Carthage, who controlled this part of Sardinia from the ninth to second centuries BCE and were the first people to plant vines here. Thanks to Armit Wines' relationship with Tenuta San Guido, we were very pleased to be invited to act as exclusive UK agent for the new Agricola wine estate in 2009.

The supergroup of winemakers acquired 60 hectares of vineyards in two sites, Barrua and Narcao. Barrua wines are made closer to the coast, but both receive a beating from sunlight and heat, with occasional balm in the form of sea breezes, although as often as not, any wind is actually a warm Scirocco from North Africa. As a result, varieties such as Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon ripen more rapidly than in Bordeaux, and tannins can develop in the grapes while they're still on the vine.

Although they are located within the Carignano di Sulcis DOC, the planting of Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Chardonnay mean AgriPunica's wines are IGT-classified as Isola dei Nuraghi - a name with even more ancient history than Agricola Punica, referring to the Nuragic civilisation which occupied Sardinia from Paleolithic times until the Carthaginians arrived.

Agricola Punica's first wine in 2002 was Barrua wine. If one were to compare it to Tenuta San Guido's production, it is actually closer to Le Difese than to Sassicaia, because the philosophy behind it was not to reject entirely the indigenous grape (for Sangiovese in Tuscany, read Carignano here) but to use the Bordeaux grapes to bring out its best characteristics - Barrua wine's intense purple colour, as well as a balance of acidity and rounded sweetness. The blend of this Agricola Punica Barrua wine is usually around 85% Carignano, with 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and just 5%

Merlot.

Despite its name, grapes are harvested from both Barrua and Narcao sites, from chalky, clay and sandy soils. Fermentation with skins in stainless steel takes 15 days at between 25-30°C, with periodical pumping over. Malolactic fermentation confers softness to the wine, which is then aged in barriques (30% new) for 18 months, before a further year of bottle ageing. The result for these Agripunica wines is rich with mature red fruit and black cherry, with spice and a hint of maquis plants, particularly the myrtle.

A second wine, Agricola Punica's Montessu, which arrived three years into the AgriPunica project, is 60% Carignano, with 10% each of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Syrah. It is released earlier, after 12 months in French oak, and has a full-bodied structure and incredibly fruity richness, with heightened liquorice notes.

Samas, the Agripunica estate's white wine, blends 80% Vermentino with 20% Chardonnay. Harvested grapes are transferred to the winery in cool boxes and each variety ferments separately at a controlled temperature for 40 days, with pump-overs. After blending, there is a three-month maturation in concrete vats. The soft gold wine with greenish highlights is best served well chilled with fish, where the silky texture carries freshness, salinity, tropical fruits and maquis herbs such as sage. And if you're too far from a restaurant overlooking Porto Pino, that description could equally suggest a recipe to serve in your back garden.

Find Agricola wines from our extensive collection. Order Agricola Punica Montessu, Samas and Barrua wines online today.