

2016 Pinot Nero 'Turmhof'

Tiefenbrunner, Trentino - Alto Adige, Italy

Product details

Vintage:	2016	Drinking:	
Producer:	Tiefenbrunner	Alcohol:	
Region:	Trentino - Alto Adige	Variety:	
Country:	Italy		

About the producer

TIEFENBRUNNER WINES

The town of Cortaccia or Kurtatsch sits almost exactly halfway between the cities of Trento and Bolzano (or Bozen), close to the border between the two halves of the autonomous province of Trentino-Alto Adige, aka Trentino-Südtirol. Confused yet? Well, this is a complicated part of Europe - officially Italian, partly independent, mostly German-speaking - because it has changed hands several times, amid times of terrible conflict.

One thing however has remained constant. Whether part of the Austro-Hungarian Graftschaft of Tirol, annexed by Italy or, as these days, inside an EU Euroregion - the town is also on the region's Weinstraße, or Via del Vino, and the Tiefenbrunner family have been making exceptional wines here for 170 years.

In fact, the area's history goes back further than that. Archaeological evidence points to human settlement dating back to the Stone Age. There was a Linticlar estate (now known as Niclara/Entiklar) registered in land records as far back as 1225. The first winery at Castel Turmhof was built in 1848 (one of the oldest established in the Südtirol) and, within 10 years, its "spicy white wine" (presumably a Gewürztraminer) won an award at a national agricultural show (the nation being the Tirol at the time).

Towards the end of World War II - yet another turbulent time for the region, as for most of Europe - 15-year-old Herbert Tiefenbrunner became a winemaker on the family estate. In 1968, he brought the operation into the modern era. Instead of selling barrels and demijons to local wine merchants, he began to bottle his wines and sell to a wider clientele of connoisseurs. The same year, his wife Hilde opened the Jausenstauion, a café serving Südtirolean specialities. The estate has since become a destination winery, with visitors walking off a good lunch accompanied by Tiefenbrunner wines with a tour of the beautiful castle gardens and cellars.

In the 1980s, Herbert and Hilde's son Christof and his wife Sabine took an increasingly decisive role in the estate. They took official full control in 2012, three years before Herbert passed away, but had effectively run the winemaking for at least a decade prior to that. Armit Wines has been happy to work both with father and son, importing Tiefenbrunner wines to the UK since 2006.

Christof says, "The art of winemaking is a valuable element of our family identity. It is our daily responsibility to maintain and develop it further in a spirit of respect." And it is that phrase "develop it further" which is important. The long family tradition has not stifled his experimentation. He has introduced new training systems for vines, as well matching grape varieties to the optimum soil type among the 25 hectares of the estate's own vineyards (and 45 hectares of vineyards owned by growing partners who supply the winery).

One parcel of land where Christof has not considered changing grape variety,



however, is that planted by his father in 1972, at 1,000m close to the walls of the Hofstatt estate on Fennberg - the highest plot of Müller-Thurgau grapes in Europe. This vineyard produces the spectacular Feldmarschall von Fenner zu Fennberg, named after the founder of the Austrian Kaiserjäger regiment in the 1890s (that history is impossible to escape), who used to spend his summers there. It is delicately coloured, generously aromatic and delicately structured with good acidity and an exciting mineral finish.

The rest of Tiefenbrunner's single-variety wines are similarly characterised by finesse, elegance and freshness, but also concentrated flavours. The motto in the winery - agreed on by Christof and winemaker since 2007, Stephan Rohregger - is "Less is more", allowing the grapes' individuality to emerge with minimal intervention. Around 70% of the production is white wine.

The Gewürztraminer is a wonderful accompaniment to Asian food or blue cheese, with its full-bodied structure and wide aromatic range of rose petals, honey and lychees. It can stand a few years of ageing if you don't open it immediately. In addition to a main range Sauvignon Blanc, the Sauvignon Blanc Kirchleiten Südtirol is a marvelous thing - it has the crisp minerality, gooseberry and Far Eastern herbs of a Loire Sauvignon Blanc, but 50% of it is aged briefly in oak for an additional fragrant lift, as well as extra body and spice. There is also a choice between a full-bodied Pinot Bianco and the lighter, fresher Tiefenbrunner Pinot Grigio.

Tiefenbrunner's red wine production, however, is by no means an afterthought. The garnet glow of the Pinot Nero Turmhof gives way to a subtle scent of raspberries and blackberries and then to a soft, full-bodied wine of youthful strength. It's an ideal accompaniment to game. Then there is Lagrein Castel Turmhof, made from the great yet underrated grape of northern Italy. Like all the best Lagreins, it has a fine-grained tannic structure with acid notes which provide punctuation to the rounded fruits and the violet and cherry aromas. Simply grill a steak and enjoy it.

Frankly, no matter what the latest treaty says, this frontier country is ruled by its winemakers, the Tiefenbrunners chief among them.

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