



2016 Ribolla Gialla

Castello di Buttrio, Friuli Colli Orientali, Italy

Product details

Vintage:	2016	Drinking:	
Producer:	Castello di Buttrio	Alcohol:	
Region:	Friuli Colli Orientali	Variety:	
Country:	Italy		

About the producer

CASTELLO DI BUTTRIO WINE

Like many parts of the country, Friuli-Venezia Giulia is both part of Italy and not. The province is semi-autonomous; in parts, such as the Friuli Colli Orientali, it has its own language; and it has its own grape varieties - Ribolla Gialla, Friulano, Refosco and Verduzo.

Located in the Veneto wine region of the north-east of Italy, between Udine and the Slovenian border, Castello di Buttrio is surrounded by the eastern Friulian hills. Cooled by the Bora wind, these steep foothills of the Julian Alps are made of ponca, a mineral-rich sandstone-calcium marl which used to be seabed. It tends to produce low-yield vines with concentrated fruit and minerality. At least, it does when the terroir is in good hands...

Alessandra Felluga is certainly a great guardian of the Colli Orientali. Scion of a family of Friulian grandees, she is also a fifth-generation winemaker. Her father Marco Felluga acquired the Castello di Buttrio winery in 1994, with Alessandra working alongside him before taking the reins herself in 2007. Armit Wines began exclusively importing Castello di Buttrio's wines to the UK in 2015. The estate's history of viticulture goes back centuries before the Felluga family took over, however. The hill on which the grapes grow is called Pampinutta, derived from pampino (vine leaf). Records from 1429 refer to the lord of the castle giving people gifts of white wine described as "highly aromatic, tasting of rosolio and carnations". Documents from the 17th century refer to grape varieties such as refosco and ribolla gialla being cultivated, as they are today.

The vital organs of the Castello di Buttrio wine estate are ancient plots of old-growth vines. These long-planted rows provide the power, balance and structure of Castello di Buttrio wines. Alessandra views them as "a heritage to safeguard and enhance". However, a carefully planned programme of expansion has grown the estate to 26 hectares, including the acquisition of the nearby Dorigo vineyards. Although these vines yield a little higher than the ancient plants, they are controlled, naturally, to concentrate flavour. Among the vines, a biodiverse scrub of grasses and wildflowers is allowed to flourish, attracting wildlife which controls pests without use of chemicals.

In the Castello di Buttrio winery, hand-selected bunches in small boxes are vinified separately by vineyard to preserve the unique character of each plot, before assemblage achieves what Alessandra calls "a kaleidoscope of tones".

Initially, the Fellugas produced premium red wines, but Castello di Buttrio's white wines - particularly the indigenous Friulano and Ribolla Gialla - have arguably overtaken them as the flagship wines, especially as they offer such value.

The straw yellow Ribolla Gialla is fresh and dry with mineral and herb notes

accompanying a fine acidity that makes it the ideal fish wine - especially with carpaccio of tuna or scallops, but also to complement ceviche or cut through fritto misto. Friulano has intense floral aromas which endure from nose to tail, with ripe fruit and almonds throughout as well - it's an incredible accompaniment to prosciutto crudo.

Castello di Buttrio does produce single variety wines from non-native grapes too - Chardonnay and Sauvignon. The former is clean and medium-bodied, with orchard fruit and honey notes, while the latter is velvety and full-bodied, with distinctive yellow peppers, sage and wild fennel in addition to tropical fruits, peach and melon.

In addition, there is a playfully named blend of Ribolla Gialla, Malvasia and Friulano which can be served with light fish dishes and omelettes - it's fresh, floral and fruit-led but with a lively acidity that makes it linger on the palate. In the red blend, Mon Rouge Merlot's intense fruit and the tannic structure of Cabernet Sauvignon provide the rhythm section. But the soaring guitar solos are the work of a Friulian grape, Refosco - offering layers and depth of dark berry fruit while also reaching the spicy high notes.

Refosco is also available in a single variety wine, with aromatic spice notes such as cardamom, along with bramble leaf, blackberry and even earthy root aromas. This deep ruby wine is fresh and vibrant and works as well with cheese and dried meats as it does with hearty casseroles. Finally, there is Pignolo - possibly Castello di Buttrio's most interesting wine. This grape variety is notable for its colour: deep purple. And, like the band of the same name, while its first impression is of muscular power, it actually has more subtlety and finesse than that. A cornucopia of fruit is measured out over the palate rather than tumbling out all at once, while cameos of vanilla, spices and herbs are given their moments, thanks to the elegant structure. Still, it certainly stands its ground when challenged with roasted and grilled meats.

The Felluga family has not only maintained and improved the vineyards of Castello di Buttrio, but have built a wonderful destination winery, with a hotel de charme, agriturismo and locanda, where a great food and wine pairing is guaranteed. As is the future of Castello di Buttrio, given that Alessandra Felluga's three daughters - Maria Vittoria, Michela and Maria Eugenia Bianconi - all work for the winemaker. In fact, Mon Blanc and Mon Rouge were their creation. With degrees in economics, history and oenology between them, they are ideally placed to take the label forward while never forgetting the heritage of Friuli.

Browse our full range of Castello di Buttrio wines online today.