



The Wines of Andrea Franchetti 2009 & 2008 Vintages, En Primeur

Andrea Franchetti applies his vivid imagination and considerable talent, bordering on genius, to two very different vineyard projects. We are delighted to represent both in the United Kingdom and in Hong Kong.

The first estate, Tenuta di Trinoro, Andrea created from scratch, on rough farm and woodland in the far-flung reaches of south-west Tuscany. Though a significant challenge, this was equalled by his most recent endeavour, which involved the renaissance of reclaimed formerly-abandoned terraces of vines on the slopes of Etna, a live volcano.

Both sites are extraordinary, complex and poles apart in terms of *terroir*. Andrea's final challenge is to translate such individuality in the glass. The results are the stuff of legend.

Never one to obey convention, Andrea creates and releases wines when he feels it is right to do so. In 2009, the first time in a while, he created Palazzi - a wine which we first offered in 1998. We loved the wine, as did our customers, but Andrea stopped making it as it was 'too easy' - such is the mark of the man. We are very pleased Andrea is releasing it once again.

From both his Tuscan and Sicilian estates, Andrea has produced a portfolio of wines which is rich, diverse and exceptional in every sense; from the locations of the vineyards through to the finished wines in the glass. We marvel both at the goals Andrea sets himself and, more importantly, the formidable results he achieves.

Please do refer to the tasting notes for guidance.

Alison Buchanan
Associate Director, Buying
January 2011

Tenuta di Trinoro, Val d'Orcia, Tuscany

Remote from the ochre roofs of the Tuscany with which we are more familiar, the Val d'Orcia was not the most obvious area for wine production. Andrea Franchetti arrived as an enthusiastic apologist for the great wines of Bordeaux. His knowledge and experience of Bordeaux informs his certainty that quality is reliant on terroir. In a vivid, extraordinary flight of imagination, Andrea determined that the plot of land destined to become Tenuta di Trinoro was ideally suited to produce one of the best red wines in Italy – quite a leap of faith given that there was only a steep slope of uncultivated copse and a couple of dilapidated buildings devoid of access roads. The only witnesses to the seemingly crazy enterprise were grazing sheep.

Undaunted, Andrea cleared the land and built terraces to house the vines. Soil analysis essentially determined his choice of varieties; it so happens that he does not particularly like Italian wine so it was fortuitous that the clay and fossil-rich limestone and gravels identified, which he dubs the Graves and Côtes, are ideally suited to Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Thus Andrea was able to spurn the region's revered Sangiovese, a variety which he actively dislikes and which still does not feature in his wines. Abandoning Tuscany's most haloed grape, he nonetheless embraces the cultivation of ancient, indigenous varieties, Cesanese d'Affile and Uva di Troia as he finds them 'interesting'.

There is one point of difference between Andrea and the Bordeaux producers he so admires as he questions the general disregard of Cabernet Franc by the Bordelais. He prefers it to Cabernet Sauvignon at Trinoro. Likewise he is a great supporter of Petit Verdot, which does brilliantly there, in the right climatic conditions.

Tenuta di Trinoro lies in a wide valley between 500 and 700 metres above sea level, facing west-south-west and protected by two mountains, Cetona and Amiata. The climate is continental with very hot days but cool, autumnal nights. Very dry conditions allow for prolonged ripening, which adds complexity and increases intensity. The vineyard is densely planted, at 9,000 vines per hectare, which restricts yields. Andrea also prunes severely, further to concentrate the resulting wines.

Even when the vines were young and vigorous the wines from Trinoro astonished the wine world with their richness and complexity. Now much more mature, the vines are expressing their personality in the complexity of the finished wines.

2009 Vintage

This is the second vintage that has passed Trinoro leaving us at with a feeling of the tropics; each of our varieties ripened slowly and the rains let us wait long enough to pick them: that always makes a great vintage... this (the eponymous wine) is one of the best wines ever made at Trinoro.

Andrea Franchetti, November 2010

The vines had enjoyed a rainy winter and were bursting with energy at the beginning of the growing season, super-fertile and overly eager to grow. A blazingly hot summer had fulfilled the forecasters' suspicions. In retaliation, Andrea sought to counteract the effects of such heat by controlling the canopy, hoping that some of the water in the grapes might be absorbed, thereby alleviating hydric stress. It was a gamble which paid off.

The year had been rather odd all round and for whatever reason the grapes doggedly refused to pick up the pace in terms of ripening. A number of rainless storms had perhaps unnerved them but, happily, the climate allowed the team to wait as long as they needed. Merlot, described by Andrea as 'wild and powerful', was harvested in October rather than September. The Cabernet Franc grapes were 'beautiful and tight textured', and Cabernet Sauvignon was 'darker and more mysterious than anything coming from a berry'. In such years Petit Verdot also finds its form and the 2009 was decidedly exotic in its aromatics. Despite Andrea's habitual, radical pruning, this 2009 was determined to be a productive vintage so Andrea chose to bleed the tanks by some 20%. The results are remarkable.

2008 Vintage

The 2008 growing season began auspiciously with much needed rain, in order for the vines to replenish reserves after a particular dry 2007. The cool wet weather continued through into spring however, leading to uneven flowering and fruit-set. Summer was hot and dry but the vines, now with sufficient reserves, continued to thrive until September when they effectively shut up shop, self preservation being more important than the ripening process. This would be problematic for a less patient individual but Andrea is well used to a long wait. His harvests are always very protracted in any case and so he was content to wait... and wait. Eventually the Merlot resumed

progress in the middle of October, soon joined by Cabernet Franc. Andrea harvested plot by plot once the grapes had attained maximum ripeness. This was to be one of his most fraught, worrying vintages whereby he had to weigh the odds between harvesting ripe fruit and losing all to late autumn rains. Andrea's patience was sorely tested but finally after savage selection a very limited but exciting production was achieved.

2008 was a very good year on Etna with a very hot, dry summer followed by a period of light rains which served to boost the vines which were on the verge of hydric stress. Nerello Mascalese responds well to a little rain at the end of the growing season and this was Andrea's best vintage to date.

Le Cupole, Tenuta di Trinoro 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 17+

35% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Franc, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot

This is a perennial Corney & Barrow favourite and invariably features in tastings serving to introduce our portfolio. It never fails to please. A rich ruby-garnet in colour, it reveals exuberant red and black fruit from the outset, characterful and inviting, sweetness enhanced by a heady dash of spice, punctuated by minerals and underpinned by fine-grained tannins.

Recommended drinking from 2011 to 2015 plus

£98/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

£103/ case of 3 magnums, in bond UK

£82/case of 1 double-magnum, in bond UK

Palazzi, Tenuta di Trinoro 2009

Corney & Barrow Score 19

100 % Merlot

Tasting with Andrea, we were most indignant that he had denied the world this wine for over a decade. It is sensational. A deep plum in colour, it clings alluringly to the sides of the glass. The nose is enticing, with a very obvious ripe red and black fruit character, cassis and kirsch, allied to spice and tobacco notes. The palate presents a similar aromatic profile, combining sweet berries, a savoury layer and mocha richness. Beautifully balanced, the ripe tannins are almost obscured by the intense concentration of fruit – a masterpiece.

Recommended drinking from 2014 to 2020 plus

£1230/case of 12, in bond UK

Tenuta di Trinoro 2009

Corney & Barrow Score 19+

42% Merlot, 42% Cabernet Franc, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petit Verdot

A deep plum-cherry in colour, this has instant appeal, presenting a generous blend of red and black fruit aromatics (cassis, cherries and plums), all complemented by earthy notes and graphite minerals. The aromatics follow through to the palate which is beautifully balanced, elegantly structured and appetising, opulent fruit supported by ripe, silken tannins. This is a very fine Trinoro of which just 700 cases were produced.

Recommended drinking from 2016 to 2025 plus

£695/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

Passopisciaro, Mount Etna, Sicily

The slopes of Mount Etna provide Andrea Franchetti with a new set of challenges, though the fact of the vineyard being sited on the slopes of a live volcano appears to be very low in Andrea's concerns. His first task was to clear and restore long-abandoned terraces of ancient vines on the northern slopes of the mountain, replanting at a density of 12,000 vines per hectare on thin lava dust. The high altitude, sun-drenched vineyards are idyllic yet a constant plume of smoke and the odd ash-filled belch present a constant reminder that Etna is indeed a volcano with attitude, given to relatively frequent lava spills. These 'spills' devastate the landscape yet Andrea has cause to be grateful as each flow leaves a unique mineral profile giving rise to "individual contrade wines". Generally however volcanic soils impart a profound mineral element across the board. Andrea, as ever, respects and plays to the strengths of his chosen terroir and here, on Etna, produces wines of remarkable complexity and individual personality. Significant temperature differences between day and night also play an important role, necessitating a longer growing period and this, in turn, contributes complexity and intensity. The harvesting of the indigenous Nerello Mascalese continues well into November.

Guardiola, Passopisciaro 2009

Corney & Barrow Score 17

100% Chardonnay

Guardiola is produced from Chardonnay vines also planted on the volcanic soils of north Etna at an altitude of between 1,000 and 1,100 metres above sea level, 12,000 vines per hectare. The yields are low at this height and the nights are cold, with the temperature dropping significantly to a mere 10 degrees. The harvest is consequently rather late, in the middle of September, with the grapes given the opportunity to ripen fully without amassing overly high sugar levels. The nose has a wonderfully focused linear direction, a spearhead directed through a complex blend of citrus notes and exotic fruit, all complemented by stony minerals and perfumed with white flowers. On the palate, this is simply delicious, opulent and ripe, Chardonnay in a very pure form.

Recommended drinking from 2011 to 2014

£98/case of 6, in bond UK

Passopisciaro 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 18 to 18+

100% Nerello Mascalese

Due to the favourable climatic conditions, 2008 was the best vintage to date from Andrea's Etna estate. The Nerello Mascalese, from vines between 60 and 120 years old, was harvested between the 21st and 31st October – very early for this traditionally late-harvested varietal. Deeply coloured and clinging to the glass, this shows inherent richness from the outset. The nose is stunning, presenting opulent, sweet red fruit, underscored by characteristic volcanic minerality. The palate reflects the aromatics offered on the nose, voluptuous old vine fruit complemented by silken tannins – a lovely wine with tremendous personality.

Recommended drinking from 2011 to 2018 plus

£120/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

£125/case of 3 magnums, in bond UK

£95/case of 1 double-magnum, in bond UK

Franchetti, Passopisciaro 2009

Corney & Barrow Score 19

100% Petit Verdot

The vineyard here is planted at 1,000m above sea level, upon lava flows above the vines which produce the estate's eponymous wine Passopisciaro itself. Franchetti is a tiny production produced from around 130 terraces reclaimed from undergrowth, planted with Petit Verdot and Cesanese d'Affile. Opaque, jet-shot plum-ruby in colour, this is immediately attractive. The nose continues the seduction; intense, sweet, berried fruit to the fore, refreshed by floral and herbal notes all underpinned by significant mineral intensity. The palate is decadent, layered and complex, generous dark fruit given a mineral focus, with intriguing hints of the exotic adding to the charm. What is truly remarkable here is the prevailing freshness, an exuberance which lifts the palate – a very fine wine produced in, sadly, very limited quantities.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2020 plus

£350/case of 6, in bond UK

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TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system.

We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

14-16 A very good to excellent wine.

16-18 An excellent to outstanding wine.

18-20 An outstanding to legendary wine.

• Wines are judged within their peer group.

• A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a 'spread' (e.g. 14 - 16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A '+' adds further to that potential.

• A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.