



The Wines of Andrea Franchetti

2011 & 2010 Vintages, En Primeur

Andrea Franchetti, former Rome restaurateur, turned New York wine distributor, gradually wound his way to his spiritual homeland in Bordeaux where his appetite for making his own wine found its origins. Andrea left Bordeaux with a quiver of talent, imagination and dogged determination, heading for his native Italy.

His first project was in Tuscany where he created a vineyard from scratch, in an area unknown to vines. Tenuta di Trinoro was an instant hit even when the vines were extremely young and Italy had a new iconic name. Never one to obey convention, Andrea creates and releases wines when he feels it is right to do so. In 2009, for the first time since the 1999 vintage, he produced 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 that Andrea has also released 2010.

After a number of years taming Trinoro, Andrea's burning imagination began wandering further afield and he set his sights on the formerly-abandoned terraces of vines on the slopes of Mount Etna, a live volcano. Both sites are extraordinary, complex and poles apart in terms of *terroir*. Andrea's final challenge was to translate such individuality in the glass. The results are the stuff of legend.

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

We are delighted to represent both the Tuscan and Sicilian estates in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and, most recently, Singapore. Here we are offering, *en primeur*, the 2011 vintages of Trinoro and Palazzi, from the Tuscan estate as well as the 2010 vintage of Le Cupole. From Etna, from 2011, we present Franchetti and the estate's white wine Guardiola as well as the eponymous Passopisciardi from 2010.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Alison Buchanan', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Alison Buchanan,
Associate Director, Buying
December 2012

TUSCANY

Tenuta di Trinoro, Toscana

The most important lesson Andrea gleaned from his stint in Bordeaux was the crucial role played by *terroir*. He saw, in the rough woodland that would become Trinoro, soils reminiscent of those he knew so well in Saint-Emilion, *argilo-calcaire* (clay-limestone) and gravels. The combination of the soil and high altitude pandered to Andrea's penchant for Bordeaux, being best suited to Bordeaux varietal vines, and quite unsuitable for the indigenous and almost ubiquitous Sangiovese.

This explains, at least in part, why he thought it was logical to create an estate from scratch on rough farm and woodland in the far-flung reaches of south-west Tuscany, in the remote Val d'Orcia. Of course it was the right place, higher altitude with the right soil make-up but there was just that slight inconvenience of the would-be vineyard being a clutter of scrubby woodland and ruined outbuildings. Undaunted, Andrea cleared the land, built some access roads and terraces and, flying in the face of the norm, planted vines he was certain would thrive. Soil analysis revealed clay, fossil-rich limestone and gravels which Andrea dubs the *Graves* and *Côtes*. This determined that Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot fitted the bill. He also found abandoned vines in Affile, near Rome, of an ancient indigenous varietal Cesanese d'Affile. Andrea began propagating it at Trinoro and he has been solely responsible for protecting it from extinction. A further Italian indigenous rarity, Uva di Troia, completed the picture and perhaps dispelled accusations of Andrea being anti-Italian.

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

The estate 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. This, allied to dry conditions, allows for a prolonged ripening period, which adds complexity and increases intensity. Picking often extends well into November as Andrea has patience in spades when awaiting optimal ripeness. 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 – the result of strict vineyard management. Now much more mature, the vines are really expressing their personality in the complexity of the finished wines.

2010 Vintage

"2010 is a bright, profound vintage with intriguing, complex red fruit. These wines should age beautifully."

Andrea Franchetti, November 2011

The vines enjoyed a winter with a lot of rain and snow. Spring was late and May was rainy so flowering in June was rather uneven. The disjointed nature of growth which began at flowering would continue through fruit set and *véraison* (when the grapes change colour) during August. August had in fact enjoyed good, hot temperatures which continued through the first half of September. During the following weeks, up to the 16th October, temperatures fell off rapidly under clear skies with cool nights, which definitely favoured improved intensity. The weather at the usual harvest time was mixed and Andrea waited. The weather turned fair, allowing a longer maturation period for Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Merlot was picked in the middle of October and Cabernet Franc between the 25th and 30th. Both varieties produced wines with unmistakable freshness, purity and clarity of fruit. Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot fared less well and only the best was retained to add just 15% and 5% respectively to the blend, the remainder being 45% Cabernet Franc and 35% Merlot. All of

the separate passages through the vines are vinified separately and the wine is taken off the skins immediately after fermentation to be transferred to new *barriques* made from well-aged and lightly toasted wood. The wine is fined with egg whites and remains in 2 and 3-year-old barrels for 8 months before being racked into cement vats for 10 months. The yield of Cupole 2010 is 30 hl/hectare.

Le Cupole, Tenuta di Trinoro 2010

Corney & Barrow Score 16.5 - 17 +

45% Cabernet Franc, 35% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot

It is a rare tasting which does not have Le Cupole in pride of place on the bench – a real winner with the team and customers alike. 2010 is a rather more elegant, restrained style than we are used to, whilst offering its habitual smooth texture. A good, deep ruby in colour it presents an appetising, intriguing nose, an enticing blend of sweet and savoury notes on both the nose and the palate. Dark cherries and red fruits are refreshed with flowers and wild mint, yet there is a darker element, fennel and tobacco, laced with spice. The palate echoes the aromatics presented on the nose, accessible and combining a rare marriage of innovation and classicism – very attractive.

Recommended drinking from 2013 - 2016

£115/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

£120/case of 3 magnums, in bond UK

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

2011 Vintage

“Musts fermented slowly to the point that residual sugars are still being digested even in spring, as I write. Many wines were grandiose in one way or another when I tasted them to find the best mix for Tenuta, especially the startling array of Cabernet Franc; I blended those into a rich liquid that now constitutes 90% of Tenuta 2011.”

Andrea Franchetti, Spring 2012

2011, in Tuscany, presented a combination of heat-waves and drought so that by the middle of September most of Tuscany had decided to pick, the Sangiovese rapidly shrivelling into raisins.

At Trinoro, planted at higher than average altitude, Andrea decided to wait for optimum ripeness, exercising strict vigilance, working the soils to help the vines which, gradually were slowing down through hydric stress.

Ultimately the vines called a halt and the Merlot grapes particularly, started to shrivel. Andrea and his team went through the parcels regularly, stripping out the raisin-ed berries until eventually, having lost about half of the crop, the remaining grapes came to a late, sudden ripeness and the Merlot harvest was carried out in six separate passages between the 4th and 10th October.

Sorting was also severe, ensuring that any remaining dried fruit was removed. In mid-October there was a lengthy storm – just one night – but it immediately demarcated the start of autumn. Temperatures came down and afforded much better conditions for the later ripening Cabernet Franc. The drought had affected them greatly but in different ways so that when they were harvested in the last days of October they came in healthy and with rather exciting nuances of freshness and ripeness. Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot then followed the last to join the 2011 entourage.

Fermentations were intriguingly slow, lasting into spring. Andrea was faced with individual *cuvées* which were extraordinary in one way or another and was particularly fascinated by how the various Cabernet Francs had turned out – fashioning a rich blend which constitutes 90% of the 2011 Trinoro, with 6% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petit Verdot, for seasoning.

The total production of Trinoro 2011 is 650 cases and Palazzi 2011, 2000 bottles only.

Palazzi, Tenuta di Trinoro 2011

Corney & Barrow Score 18 - 19

100 % Merlot

Palazzi made a welcome return to the fold with the 2009 vintage, after a gap of some ten years – for which thanks are due to Andrea for “demeaning” himself by making something so “simple” – the reason he had stopped previously. The nose and palate deliver a staggering array of fruit, rich, concentrated blackberry, blueberry and kirsch allied to dark chocolate, brooding spice and alluring savoury intrigue. There is a clear mineral focus throughout and attractive drive and definition and yet it never quite loses its rather decadent air – and all the better for that – indulgent and inviting.

Recommended drinking from 2016 - 2028+

£1150/case of 12 bottles, in bond UK

Tenuta di Trinoro 2011

Corney & Barrow Score 18 - 19+

90% Cabernet Franc, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petit Verdot

We tasted a cask sample which was understandably very primary on the nose – gushing red fruits, summer berries to the fore with darker, more savoury notes emerging on the palate, hints of espresso, dark chocolate, tobacco and heady spice. Trinoro is always complex, playing with the senses, chameleon-like in its capacity to express its personality, at once bright, brooding, floral and earthy with an enduring, focused finish - impressive.

Recommended drinking from 2017 - 2027+

£625/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

ETNA

Passopisciaro, Mount Etna, Sicily

Andrea Franchetti's second project seems at first and even second glance to have required just one step beyond genius in its conception. Passopisciaro is sited on the slopes of the live volcano, Mount Etna. A constant plume of smoke and the odd ash-filled belch present a constant reminder that Etna is indeed alive and kicking, a volcano with attitude, given to relatively frequent lava spills. These ‘spills’ devastate the landscape, rich woodland instantly given over to a sea of solidified black ash – rather terrifying really - yet Andrea has cause to be grateful as each flow leaves a unique mineral profile giving rise to “individual *Contrada* wines”.

Andrea's first task was to clear and restore long-abandoned terraces of ancient vines on the northern slopes of the mountain, replanting where required, at a density of 12,000 vines per hectare on thin lava dust. The indigenous Nerello Mascalese is ill-disciplined and produces rustic, heady wines. Andrea is rigorous in restoring order with strict pruning and selection. This, allied to high altitudes and high density, makes for a very different, elegant and balanced style with an emphatic sense of place borne of the volcanic soils. These 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, he 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.

2010 Vintage

The summer of 2010 was cooler than usual and the threat of rain meant that harvest was earlier than originally anticipated. The vines had benefited from the warmth of a sunny July and August and September began with fair weather but in the middle of the month temperatures dropped rapidly, exacerbated by a lingering fog. Night-time temperatures saw the most dramatic drop, starting with icy air on the higher sites and gradually working its way down, slowing the vines progress. It was every man and woman to the pump helping to retain the grapes on the vines for as long as possible, whilst maintaining their health. Meticulous work on the vines meant that the grapes were picked in several passages, unripe grapes left behind for subsequent pickings. In fact, they were able to wait until the 28th October – a very respectable length of growing season in the end. One consequence of a milder than average year, is a lightness of touch in the wine, soft and ample, with no distracting hard edges.

Passopisciaro 2010

Corney & Barrow Score 17 – 17.5

100% Nerello Mascalese

Nerello Mascalese often surprises with its colour. Given its name (*nero* inferring black) and the fact of being in Sicily people generally expect a dark, fathomless wine; when in reality the indigenous varietal produces rather pale wines, a fact which belies their inner power and complexity. The nose and palate present a predominantly red fruit profile with a liberal dash of pepper and spice. Supple and lissom, this is a very inviting, comforting wine – elegant with no hard angles, tannins ripe and well-integrated. As ever the mineral base here is very marked – crushed volcanic rock adding focus and personality.

Recommended drinking from 2012-2019+

£115/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

£115/case of 3 magnums, in bond UK

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

2011 Vintage

2011 was the best vintage on Etna since 2006, according to Andrea, due to the rapid growing season. This ensured that the grapes were ripe, harvested and in the vats before the arrival of seasonal rain on the 5th November. Cesanese D’Affile was harvested in three passages between the 28th October and 1st November and produced very aromatic, intense, floral musts. Petit Verdot had five separate pickings to ensure optimum ripeness. Repeated tastings revealed that the best interpretation of Franchetti in 2011 is a 50:50 blend of the two varietals. It made it possible for all of the wines to turn out plump, rich and undiluted. Dark and mysterious, this has great potential – yet there are barely 300 cases for the entire world.

Guardiola 2011, 100% Chardonnay, was harvested between the 7th and 16th September and 18,000 bottles were produced.

Guardiola, Tenuta di Passopisciaro 2011

Corney & Barrow Score 16.5 - 17

100% Chardonnay

Pale straw in colour, this presents an extraordinarily aromatic nose, a medley of lemon sherbet, orchard fruit and candied pineapple initially, giving way to more mineral notes. The palate is similarly complex, refusing to conform to any one particular style but with lots of energy and drive. Once again, high altitude defies the general climatic conditions and Andrea and his team are able to fashion a vibrant, fresh wine with real personality.

Recommended drinking from 2012 - 2015+

£98/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

Franchetti, Tenuta di Passopisciario 2011

Corney & Barrow Score 17+ - 18+

50% Cesanese D'Affile and 50% Petit Verdot

This vineyard is planted at 1000m above sea level, on lava flows just above the vines which produce the eponymous Passopisciario itself. Production is very limited. We are often faced with wines with a minimal amount of Petit Verdot added to the blend, characterised as 'seasoning'. It is fascinating to taste it from barrel (100%) though in 2011 Andrea has elected to blend with 50% Cesanese D'Affile, an aromatic varietal. The blend simply worked better over successive tastings. This is one of the things which we admire about Andrea – proof if proof were needed that there is nothing systematic about his wines. Everything he does is dictated by the ingredients the vintage provides. Here Petit Verdot provides colour and spice and Cesanese offers very lifted fruit character. This exhibits an abundance of ripe blackcurrant, blackberry and cherry compote on the nose and palate, attractively spiced - appetising and with an upbeat freshness.

Recommended drinking from 2013 - 2022+

£350/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

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.

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