

Montefalco... Not Just Sagrantino DOCG. My Adventures at Vino 2011

Charles Scicolone (February 16, 2011)



Sangiovese and Sagrantino the Two Most Important Red Grapes in Umbria

During the three days of [Vino 2011](#) [2], I had some interesting experiences, among them the honor of interviewing Ambassador Umberto Vattani, President of the Italian Trade Commission (ICE). The next day, I attended the press conference on "The Future of Italian Wines: as Seen from the point of View of Leading American Wine Professionals. I also attended seminars on Soave, the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Montefalco and attended the Grand Tasting. I also interviewed Aniello Musella, Italian Trade Commissioner in NY and the Executive Director for the US, on the state of Italian wines in NYC.

The moderator for the panel: "Montefalco... Not just Sagrantino" was Lisa Granik MW.



The panel was made up of representatives from the 5 wineries presenting their wines.

Wine writers and wine buyers made up the audience.

Professor Attilio Scienza Head of Enology Studies at the University of Milan was the main speaker and he talked about the terroir in terms of geography and soil composition. The principal grape in Montefalco Rosso is Sangiovese and Professor Scienza said that Sangiovese comes from a combination of grapes some of them from Southern Italy: Calabrese di Montenuovo, Mantunico Bianco and Gaglioppo from Calabria and Nerello Macalese from Sicily. Ciliegliolo was the only one from Tuscany.

Sangiovese has been a traditional grape variety in Central Italy and Umbria. It is the basic grape in Montefalco Rosso and Montefalco Rosso Riserva. Both of these wines are a blend of several grapes: 60/70% Sangiovese, 10/15% Sagrantino and the rest Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon with some other varieties like Colorino.

The five producers that presented their wines used stainless steel, barriques, tonneaux and botti (large oak barrels of 25hl) in different combinations to age their wines. Only one producer, Antonelli, does not use barriques. All the producers agreed that the two vintages that we tasted, 2006 and 2007 they were very good vintages. The harvest for the Rosso takes place during the second and third week of September.

Montefalco Rosso Riserva

Montefalco Rosso DOC Riserva 2006 [Antonelli](#) [3] Made from 70% Sangiovese, 15% Sagrantino and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. Zone: Montefalco. Soil composition is clay, calcareous. Vineyard is 1250 ft above sea level. The vine density is between 3300 and 5000 per hectare and the training system is cordon spur. Vinification takes place in stainless steel for 6 months and the wine is aged for 6 months in 500 liter-tonneaux and then for 12 months in 25 liter carati. It is aged another 12 months in the bottle before it is released. The wine has flavors and aromas of red fruit with hints of cherries and strawberries, good acidity and a nice finish and aftertaste. Fillippo Antonelli said that one of the problems they have in the zone is sugar. The alcohol level of the wine is 14.5%. All of the wines were between 14/14.5% alcohol. Antonelli is one of the oldest producers in the zone and I like their style of wine.

Montefalco Rosso DOC Riserva 2006 [Signae Cesarini Sartori](#) [4] 65% Sanviovese, 15% Sagrantino, 15% Merlot and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Zone: Gualdo Cattaneo and Montefalco. Soil composition is clay limestone and sea deposits from a natural lake. The vine density 5,208 per hectare and the training system is cordon spur. Vinification is in botti, tonneaux, and barriques and the wine is unfiltered. It is aged in the cellar for 36 months and aged in bottle for another 12 months before release.

This was a bigger more tannic wine with aromas and flavors of cherry, vanilla and a hint of black pepper.

Montefalco Rosso DOC Riserva "Campo Della Maesta" 2006 [Podere Casale Di Montefalco](#) [5] I found it to be even more tannic with hints of red fruit.

Same grapes and vinification as the wine above but it was said that they have only a "few" barriques. Same Zone also.

Montefalco Rosso Doc Riserva 2007 [Perticaia](#) [6] 60% Sangiovese, 15% Sagrantino, 15% Colorino and 10% Merlot. Zone: Montefalco Soil composition Clay, with lake and sea deposits of pebbles.

Vine density 5,000 per hectare. Training system bilateral cordon spur. Vinification- cold soak for 24 hours, spontaneous fermentation at controlled temperatures and prolonged maceration on the skins. It is aged 12 months in French barriques and eight months in stainless steel. I had visited the winery a few years ago and do not remember seeing any new oak for the red wine. The wine had



dried fruit aromas and flavors with undertones of dried prunes. If I understood correctly when Guido Guardigli the owner of the winery was explaining his vine training system Filippo Antonelli said that with the bilateral cordon spur the grapes ripen two weeks earlier.

Some of the members of the audience did not see the need for a Montefalco Rosso Riserva. They felt that there was not much difference between the regular and the riserva. They are both made from the same grapes and aged in the same way, the only difference is that the regular is aged for 18 months and the riserva is aged for 30 months of which 12 has to be in wood. The wine buyers in the audience felt that the consumer would be confused by having two types of this wine.

Montefalco Sagrantino

For more information on Montefalco Sagrantino and what is going on in Montefalco see my two articles

<http://charlesscicolone.wordpress.com/2009/12/01/363/> [7]

<http://charlesscicolone.wordpress.com/2009/12/16/> [8]

Montefalco Sagrantino is a very big wine. It has a very deep color and a lot of tannin. All of the wines are between 14/14.5% alcohol. The harvest takes place the second and third week of October.

Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG 2006 **Novelli** [9] Zone is Montefalco and it is 100% Sagrantino. Soil composition is clay with a good amount of pebbles. Vine density 5,000 per ha and the training system is Cordon spur. The wine is fermented in stainless steel for three weeks and aged for 18 months in selected new oak barriques. It is aged for another six months in bottle before it is released. This is a big rich wine with good fruit flavors and aromas of blackberries, black currants and a touch of vanilla from the oak.

Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG 2006 **Perticaia** 100% Sagrantino Zone Montefalco, vineyards 1080 ft above sea level, soil composition clay, 5,000 vines per hectare and the training system is Bilateral cordon spur. Cold soaking takes place for 24 hours, spontaneous fermentation at controlled temperature with prolonged maceration on the skins. The wine is aged first in barriques for 12 months, then in stainless steel for 13 months and finally in bottle for 12 months before release. The wine had aromas and flavors of cherry with hints of spice and cinnamon.

Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG 2006 **Antonelli** 100% Sagrantino. Vinification and aging, same as the Rosso. This wine is rich and powerful but elegant at the same time. It has aromas and flavors of fruit, blackberries with a touch of prune, and a great finish and aftertaste.

Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG 2006 **Signae Cesarini Sartori** 100% Sagrantino. Vinification and aging, same as the Rosso except it is aged for 48 months. This wine was a little different with aromas and flavors of coffee, cacao with some vanilla. There were also hints of spice and pepper.

Montefalco Sagrantino DOCG 2006 **Podere Casale Di Montefalco** Zone Gualdo Cattaneo. 100% Sagrantino Vinification and aging, same as the Rosso. This had many of the same flavors and aromas as the wine above except for a hint of balsamic.

One of the wine buyers in the audience told the producers that they were making wines that were too big and too tannic and that they should make wine that were more consumer friendly and could be drunk sooner. I felt that this was the wrong message.

They should not be making wine that is going to taste like many other wines on the market. They should not make a wine because they are told it will sell. They should keep their unique quality and make the best wine that they can and it will sell.

Charles Scicolone On Wine every Wednesday at 6:05 [Valerie's NY](#) [10]



[11]

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- [1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/16713sagrantino-2011-0011297895553jpg>
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- [3] <http://www.antonellisanmarco.it/>
- [4] <http://www.rossobastardo.it>
- [5] <http://www.hotfrog.it/Societa/Podere-Casale-Di-Montefalco-Ss>
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- [7] <http://charlesscicolone.wordpress.com/2009/12/01/363/>
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