

John Fodera's Tuscan Vines

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Passionately Pursuing Italian Wine and Food

July 31, 2018

A DAY AT VAL DELLE ROSE: GEMELLI PART 3

by John Fodera (<http://johnfodera.com/author/johnfodera/>) — in WINE REVIEWS ([HTTP://JOHNFODERA.COM/CATEGORY/WINE-REVIEWS/](http://johnfodera.com/category/wine-reviews/))

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~ The sweeping, gently sloping sun drenched vineyards of Val delle Rose in Maremma. These are Merlot vines that provide fruit for Aurelio ~

After a long day of meandering casually through different parts of Tuscany, we stopped in at lovely local spot in Castellina to wind down and relax with a spritz. The day had begun in Carmignano, Northwest of Florence, with tour, tasting and [lunch at Piaggia](http://johnfodera.com/focus-on-piaggia/) (<http://johnfodera.com/focus-on-piaggia/>). We were treated to a grandiose lunch and were both still fairly full. Perhaps putting too much faith in the digestive powers of the Spritz, we were waiting to meet Andrea Cecchi for dinner. Unfortunately for us, his new trattoria, the [Foresteria Villa Cerna](http://foresteriavillacerna.it/en/) (<http://foresteriavillacerna.it/en/>), was closed that day. But no worries, Andrea told us, “Ah, we’ll just go out to eat somewhere”. After the short drive to Andrea’s office, he greeted us warmly and asked “Are you hungry?” Not really knowing how to respond, my delay gave him the opportunity to add “because if you can wait a while longer, I know the perfect spot where we can go.” Of course we can wait! Sounds great... About an hour and a half later and we were standing at the entrance to Famiglia Cecchi’s estate in Maremma, Val delle Rose.



~ The Val delle Rose winery is a modern marvel. With underground cellars, a professional kitchen, library, ballroom, dining room and reception area, this is a destination unto itself. Completed in 2015, further enhancements are planned. ~

Upon arrival we refreshed ourselves briefly with a glass of the **2016 Litorale Vermentino**. I've written about this wine many times and most recently [reviewed the 2017 \(http://johnfodera.com/new-release-litorale/\)](http://johnfodera.com/new-release-litorale/) before its official release. This 90% Vermentino wine is redolent of white peach, wet stones, gardenia blossoms and citrus notes on the nose and palate. Vibrant, zesty and refreshing it's just what we needed before heading out to tour the vast vineyards of the estate.



~ Litorale 2016. Behind you can see the Val delle Rose extra virgin olive oil that we used liberally with dinner ~

Refreshed, we piled into Piero's Jeep and began cruising the dusty vineyard roads. We began by touring the Poggio al Leone vineyard, where the estate's fruit for the excellent Morellino Riserva is grown and then the adjacent vineyards where the Merlot for the "gemelli" part of this article is grown. The expanse of land in the Maremma really stands in stark contrast to the central part of Tuscany. Whether it's near Montalcino or closer to Siena and Chianti Classico, there are towns and villages everywhere. It's easy to find things whether it's a bar, a Coop or even a small town with a pharmacy. Here, there is nothing. Here, there is Grosseto and then sprawling landscape from the hills to the sea.



~ Wild scrub, vines, and sienna colored dusty earth. This is the Poggio al Leone vineyard. In the foreground you can see the metal grate housing access to the irrigation system and in the front row of vines, the black hose to deliver water to the vines. Irrigation is a must here whereas in many areas of Tuscany, it is forbidden by law except in the case of “dire circumstances” ~

After stopping in and around the vineyards to get a sense of the terroir; feeling the heat, the dirt, the aromas from the scrub and flowers, even the dirt itself, we piled into the Jeep and ascended to one of the highest points on the estate. Once arrived we walked under the shadow of a large cork tree. Andrea looked at me and with arms outstretched widely proclaimed: “Giovanni, welcome in Maremma!!”



~ Andrea Cecchi (right) with Estate Manager Piero near the summit of the Val delle Rose Estate ~



~ In this picture from the summit, you can see the straight blue line on the horizon. I asked Andrea if that was the ocean. He

said no silly, the Sea! To the right is the shadow of the island of Elba ~

After breathing in the aromas and the view – mozza il fiato – we headed back down to the winery. Here near Grosseto the Cecchi's make wines for their Val delle Rose labeled wines which are crafted to be premium Maremma wines. They also make their value line "La Mora" which though inexpensive, are every day wines that many Italians themselves drink. In fact, they are the wines with the highest production and the largest sales volume. All of Cecchi's whites are vinified in stainless steel while the reds are aged in a variety of different size barrels. Precision is the key, with all of the processes computer controlled to ensure accuracy in terms of both time and temperature.



~ The new stainless steel fermentation tanks in the Val delle Rose winery. They are pristinely clean. It's cool in here, not as cool as the lower barrel cellar, but you certainly get the sense that you are beneath ground ~



~ This is the view down into one of the fermenters from above the catwalk. Although it doesn't look that deep, it's probably about 10-12 feet deep. Visible is the door which they use to assist in cleaning the tank ~



~ The new barricaia at Val delle Rose. Cool and damp in this dimly lit cellar is exactly what you'd expect and receive, yet the

air is punctuated by the aroma of sweet red fruit mellowing into aged red wines. Here we barrel tasted the 2015 Aurelio, the 2015 Ciliegiole (<http://johnfodera.com/do-you-know-ciliegiole/>) and the 2015 as yet unnamed Cabernet. More on that later ~

It was now approaching 8:30 in the evening and even though we were in Tuscany, tonight we would eat like Romans! After some antipasto and some lovely Vernaccia from Cecchi's Castello di Montauto estate, we began the meal; an amazing homemade pasta with meat ragu.



~ The 2013 Aurelio (from magnum) is the inaugural vintage of that wine. There was no 2014 made. Then and there I knew this wine had a special future, especially with 2015 and 2016 in the books. The 2013 Poggio al Leone was also very good. Maybe better than my [previous time](http://johnfodera.com/new-release-poggio-al-leone/) (<http://johnfodera.com/new-release-poggio-al-leone/>) with the wine ~

With dinner completed and the night waning, it was time to make the trek back to Castellina with all of us keeping a dutiful eye peeled for Cinghiale and Capriolo on the winding country roads. The Val delle Rose estate is as gorgeous as its name implies: “Valley of the Roses” and the vineyards are spectacular. This terroir is unique down in Southern Tuscany and I firmly believe the wines from this estate will get better and better. That is already at least partly evidenced as we fast forward to our coverage of Gemelli, Part 3.

The **2015 Val delle Rose Aurelio** is 100% Merlot and a deep violet to purple color in the glass. The drips with sex appeal. Penetrating aromas of crushed black berry, mocha, crushed stones, Tuscan scrub and flowers are complex and harmonic. On the palate, the wine displays wonderful balance between ripe fruit, substantially moderate tannins and refreshing acidity. Deftly crafted. The flavors are simply intoxicating. Loads of ripe black berry coat the midpalate and are surrounded by dark cocoa powder, ripe tobacco, lavender, Tuscan underbrush and espresso. This is nothing short of fabulous and an outstanding value outright and relative to what other Tuscan Merlot cost. Bravissimo! Yes, I have more. 95 points. About \$25. [Find this wine](https://www.wine-searcher.com/find/val+rose+aurelio+maremma+tuscany+italy/1/usa) (<https://www.wine-searcher.com/find/val+rose+aurelio+maremma+tuscany+italy/1/usa>).



~ We served the 2015 with pinwheel flank steaks rolled with prosciutto, sage and fontina ~

As great as the 2015 is, it's younger sibling is no slouch. Still unreleased as of this writing, the **2016 Aurelio** makes for a very interesting side by side comparison. While 2015 was a textbook vintage, the slightly warmer 2016 vintage presents itself differently in this wine. On the nose the wine displays deep aromas of black fruits, crème de cassis, mocha, cedar, and vanilla with a slight hint of dusty pepper. On the palate, the wine is smoother than a newborn's backside. Velvety round with crushed black fruit flavors, warm terracotta, Christmas cake spices and ripe pipe tobacco. Slightly lower in acidity but not flabby by any means. Give this some time to come around. Definitely plenty of stuffing to last. 92 points. Should also be about \$25 once released.



~ The 2016 vintage presented some interesting challenges for winemakers but this Merlot is ripe, round and seductive. Will drink well for 8-10 years at least ~

The Cecchi brothers are doing exciting things. From their creation of Coevo to the revitalization of Villa Cerna and Villa Rosa to their recent purchase of an estate in Brunello, this dynamic team is one to watch. It may very well be that Val delle Rose could emerge as their best property. Time will tell and I will be thrilled to follow along on the journey.

Salute!

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John Fodera has been writing about Italian wines since 2010.

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