

Soave Albare Umberto Portinari 2004

Umberto Portinari inherited the family vineyards in Brognoligo outside of Monteforte d'Alpone in Soave Classico in 1990. Always interested in raising the profile of his beloved Soave, he works his 4 hectares with a unique method in the vineyard: rational dual ripening. This labor-intensive technique allows part of each vine shoot to dry naturally in the vineyard, while the rest continue to ripen normally. They are harvested and vinified together, and in the Albare vineyard produces a wine with a complex aroma of honey and almonds, a creamy palate, but balanced by fine acid and mineral intensity.

Regional History

The ancients believed Venetians were directly descended from the survivors of the Fall of Troy. Like the Trojans they were tremendous artisans, and their agricultural ability was particularly admired. More likely they came from the vast Diaspora of peoples out of the Carpathian Mountains around 1500 BC. It was homage to these people that prompted the Romans to name the Tenth Imperial Region after them: the Veneti. Pliny, Virgil, Suetonius and Martial all refer to Reticum and Acinaticum, the direct ancestors of modern Veronese wine. Directly east of the city of Verona you find Soave, a series of gentler hills of maritime origin. The wines here are softer and redolent of straw and nuts with an undercurrent of clamshell-like minerality.

Veneto touches the Adriatic Sea at Venice and runs north through the Dolomites to the Austrian border. Its southern and western limits are the large alluvial plain formed by the Garda basin and the valley north of the Po River. This tremendous variety of landscape has provided Veneto with an equally varied cuisine: seafood from both Lake Garda and the Adriatic; game, mushrooms and mountain herbs from the Dolomites; the Po Valley provides the best vegetables of Northeastern Italy as well as its two staples: corn and rice. Polenta was introduced in the 17th century and was prepared in much the same way as other grain flours that preceded it. It can be plain, grilled or fried; paired with meats, game and fish. Rice, introduced by the Venetian traders as early as 1400, is the inspiration for as many as forty different risottos. Rice is also prepared with fish and vegetables. One of the fonder pairings of rice and vegetables is, *Risi e Bisi*, or rice and fresh young peas.

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