

Tommaso Bussola

When Veneto legend Giuseppe Quintarelli was asked years ago to name the region's next superstar, he didn't hesitate: Tommaso Bussola.

Quintarelli's prediction began to be realized in 1999, when Tommaso's 1995's were released. Among the countless accolades he received, *Gambero Rosso* gave him the first of many *Tre Bicchieris* for his majestic Recioto TB.


Learning on the Job

Originally trained as a stone mason, Tommaso took over over his uncle's Valpolicella estate—with its prized old vineyards in the heart of the Classico zone—in the mid-1980's. While vineyard work came naturally to him, he experimented relentlessly, and absorbed information and ideas from every source available. With each passing vintage, his wines came to show more polish, finesse, intensity, and personality.

By the late nineties, his style had matured, and his wines had become world-famous for their incredible intensity of fruit. Like other top Veneto winemakers, he uses new barrels, but any hint of new wood is hidden by cascades of lush, opulent fruit.

Ancient Clones

The key, we think, is not only the age of his vines but the fact that they are nearly all naturally low-yielding ancient clones: Corvinone (40%), Corvina Grossa (25%) and Rondinella (20%). Corvinone, in particular, is quite rare today because of its low yields and finicky growing habits. Yet, Tommaso claims it is the Corvinone that gives his wines their depth. He calls it the "Super Corvina," saying that it produces stronger, denser, richer, more perfumed wines.

 "Tommaso Bussola has an insatiable thirst for experimentation: he has a burning desire to see just how much he can draw out of his beloved Valpolicella area, and especially to know if he will be able to make the wine of his dreams."
Gambero Rosso (1999)

Small percentages of old vine Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Dindarella and Pindara round out the *cépage*, along with new experiments like Teroldego.

"TB"

Tommaso produces two levels of wine. Those labeled "TB" are his finest, made from a ruthless selection from his best sites.

Valpolicella Classico Superiore TB

While the Amarone and Recioto garner the most accolades in the press, the Valpolicella "TB" may be Tommaso's greatest achievement.

Amarone Classico TB

Fantastically hedonistic, offering great velvety richness on the palate and exotic notes of black cherry, cocoa and ash. **94** rating from Parker in 1997.

Amarone Classico TB "Vigneto Alto"

A limited selection made only in the best vintages. Amazing Amarone. The 1997 earned **96** points from Robert Parker.

Recioto Classico TB

Incredible in nearly every vintage. This wine has won multiple *tre bicchieris*, and the 1997 & 1998 earned **98** points from Robert Parker.

"BG"

Despite being Tommaso's "standard" wines, the quality of his BG selections rate near the summit of the Valpolicella pyramid. All of the production comes from estate fruit— including declassified wine from top vineyards like Alto, Soto el Barbi, Casali and Quarer Longhe.

Valpolicella Classico — A Beaujolais-styled quaffer for early drinking.

Amarone Classico — "91 rating" *Wine Spectator* on the 2000

Recioto Classico — Tommaso is the master of Recioto, and even his BG wine can challenge the region's finest.

TOMMASO BUSSOLA

Veneto, Italy

HISTORY

Established: 1985

Winemaker / Viticulture: Tommaso Bussola

Marketing: Daniela Bussola

History: The self-taught Bussola took over his uncle's domaine in 1985. He aims to make the best *normale* wines possible in each vintage. In many years, he is also able to make limited quantities of his elite TB line, selected from the best grapes at harvest.

VINEYARD INFORMATION

Soils: Toar (basalt) & chalky gravel. Terraced steep hillside vineyards

Fruit Source: 9 hA in Valpolicella Classico.

Estate Plantings: 40% Corvinone*

25% Corvina Grossa, 20% Rondinella

5% Molinara, Cabernet Franc*, Pelara*

Cabernet Sauvignon, Dindarella. * Tommaso specializes in finicky, heirloom varieties.

Corvinone, in particular, is difficult to grow, but is largely responsible for the depth of fruit in Bussola's wines.

Vine Age: 35% 14+ years old, 40% 30+ years old, 20% 60+ years old, 5% New plantings

RECENT VINTAGES

2006 – Early indications are for a strong, classic, structured vintage.

2005 – A mildly challenging vintage, with some spotty rain around harvest.

2004 – A classic vintage, with beautifully balanced wines. Similar to 2001.

2003 – Atypical heat and drought led to abnormally high grape sugars, and less need than usual for raisining.

2002 – Difficult year, with rain at harvest. No TB wines made.

ADDITIONAL WINEMAKING NOTES

Bussola uses different barrel sizes, woods (oak, cherry, chestnut, acacia) and aging for each wine, and is always experimenting.

Because of Bussola's demanding standards, production of each cuvée varies dramatically from vintage to vintage.

THE WINES

Valpolicella Classico

Grapes: 40% Corvina and Corvinone, 40% Rondinella, 10% Molinara, 10% Others

Production: 1,500 cases

Amarone della Valpolicella Classico

Grapes: 65% Corvina and Corvinone, 30% Rondinella, 5% Other varieties

Production: 2,500 cases

Recioto della Valpolicella Classico

Grapes: 50% Corvina and Corvinone, 30% Rondinella, 20% Other

Production: 800 cases (6x500mL)

L'Errante IGT

Grapes: 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet (both)

Note: 75% is partially dried, and 25% is done in the *ripasso* style before *assemblage*.

Production: 1,000 cases (2003 vintage)

TB Valpolicella Classico Superiore

Grapes: 50% Corvina and Corvinone, 40% Rondinella, 10% Other varieties

Note: 100% *ripasso*

Production: 4,000 cases

TB Amarone

Grapes: 75% Corvina and Corvinone, 20% Rondinella, 5% Other varieties

Production: 650 cases (2001 vintage)

TB Amarone "Vigneto Alto"

Grapes: Alto is selected from the best barrels of TB Amarone.

Production: 400 cases (2000 vintage)

TB Recioto della Valpolicella

Grapes: 60% Corvina and Corvinone, 10% Rondinella, 15% Cabernet Franc, 15% Other

Production: 300 cases (6x500mL)