

## VIGNE DEL PELLAGROSO & ANDREA MARCHETTI (Italy, Lombardia, Garda Lake)

**THE STRANGE COUPLE:** Antonio Camazzola (Vigne del Pellaroso) and Andrea Marchetti have something in common: an authentic passion for drinking good wines, an incredible curiosity and a professional background non related to vineyards and cellars! Basically two wine lovers looking to have as much fun as possible. In 2018 this strange couple started to develop together some wine projects.

**VIGNE DEL PELLAGROSO AND THE BIODYNAMIC PRACTICES:** Let's start from Antonio. Well ... many people call him by the nickname Billy and we'll stick to that. Born in the



80s, while he was still a restaurant owner, he began in 2011 to recover 7 old vines rows, planted with mixed grapes (mainly Merlot) ) near Monzambano (in the Mantova's province) by the Mincio river on the Morainic hills of the Garda Lake. The Southern shore of Peschiera del Garda it's only 7 km away. The soils of the Morainic hills are characterized by a stratification of compact calcareous clay and high salinity due to a mineral sedimentation left by an ancient glacier present 500,000 years ago.

This tiny plot was in difficult conditions, having been abandoned by human beings (and maybe even by God) for many years and, after a severe pruning, Billy decided to avoid any chemical treatment. His first amateur vintage dates back to 2012 with just few bottle of wine produced to share with his family and friends. Officially it's Lombardia and actually this area is a real crossroad to the Verona district in Veneto, allowing a constant interchange of wines' experiences, grapes cultivated and adopted training systems.

This tiny plot is adjacent to an ancient small county side building (also in a state of neglect) in which the Il Pellagroso newspaper was printed. Billy came across the story of this independent popular media which was devoted to the peasants' cause. Published in Castel d'Ario from December 1884 to March 1885 and founded and directed by Tito Melesi, after the thirteenth issue, the Il Pellagroso sheet was forced to permanently suspend the publications due to the arrest of its' director, accused of having helped organize the strikes of the local farm workers. The sheet was very critical of the working conditions and overall of the society's iniquities, and at the same time striving for human justice.



Billy was so fascinated by this publication's scratchy contents and hence decided to name his wine project Vigne del Pellagroso after it. His viticultural methods are radical and completely reject the use of chemicals and his wine vision refuses to compromise with any form of agricultural manipulations.

in 2016 decided to leave his main working activity by investing a good amount of time and money renting a vineyard (less than 2 hectares) near Monzambano (in the Mantova's province) on the hills over of the Garda Lake.

His professional debut dates back to the 2017 vintage, coming from this small organic certified plot cultivated chemical-free since 1985 and trained according to biodynamic methods since he started to manage it.

In 2018, the vineyards' hectares increased to 7 coming from 6 different plots, all farmed and converted to biodynamic regulations, through the use of the classic preparations, micro organism, compost, green manure planted during the fall season, etc.

Biodynamic wine is made by farming all components of the vineyard as one whole entity, eliminating the use of chemicals and using natural materials and composts. Following the biodynamic calendar is another integral part of the process. Sometimes, these farming practices, from pruning to harvesting, are controlled by the biodynamic calendar. It breaks all the tasks associated with farming into four kinds of days: root days, flower days, fruit days, and leaf days. Each of these days has certain tasks associated with it that are reflective of Earth's four classical elements: Fruit days are meant for harvesting, leaf days for watering, root days for pruning. On flower days, the vineyard is left alone.

Guess what ... Billy Camazzola has invested so much time in viticultural research and biodynamic methods that, beginning from the 2020 harvest, he will be granted of the



official certification released by Agribio. All the wines produced start with the spontaneous fermentation triggered by indigenous yeast, are unfiltered, without the use of temperature control technology. The wines are barely sulfited just to provide a constant stability.

Nowadays Billy cultivates many grape varieties. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Molinara, Rondinella among the reds, while for the whites Pinot Grigio, Riesling, Chardonnay, Garganega, Malvasia, Malvasia di Candia and Moscato.

Billy's wines are all deliberately declassified and not belonging to any specific DOC. Had his wines however part of a specific one, it would be the Garda Colli Mantovani DOC (for more info check the last chapter "The Garda's lake wines")

The grapes are harvested by hand in plastic bins and promptly carried to the cellar in order to be immediately processed. According to the specific wine Billy wants to elaborate, grapes are destemmed (or not), pressed, pressed with or without maceration and fermented in different type of tanks (fiberglass, stainless steel vats and concrete) or wooden barrels. In 2019 Vigne del Pellagroso has carried out the harvest in its own property cellar.

In addition to the vineyards, Billy farms ancient grains, barley and potatoes.

**ANDREA MARCHETTI:** Passionate about wine since he was a kid, Andrea Marchetti (born in 1970) lives in a small town at the border between Emilia and Romagna, in a an amazing sweet landscape, not only because this is where he is from, but also for the important historical, cultural, gastronomic, and enological richness.

Started by simple curiosity, his continuous desire to explore and "thirst" for the wine's knowledge, pushed him to embrace a long journey by mingling and hanging out with the most disparate communities of enthusiasts.

Initially it follows a "classic" path, earning the AIS (Italian Sommelier Association)



diploma, participating for two years in the tasting panel for the Marche region for a famous guide and collaborating as an editor for three years with a renown blog, launching the thought provoking manifesto of the #nogomma wine (wines with no plastic ... literally, meaning the refuse of any industrial compromise in the vineyard and in the cellar)

After approaching any type of drink obtained from grapes, from the supermarket brick to the rarer oenological gem, he realized that

wine cannot be just an object to review on a guide and stopped performing in juries of the old school wine competitions. Meanwhile he increasingly considered wine as the result of the agricultural management in the vineyard and a "creative" act in the cellar and consequently embraced the world of "natural" and artisanal wine, admiring growers elaborating small productions in an environmentally sustainable landscape.

Andrea's next step was pretty fancy: he established ex novo a couple of wine fairs along with some local friends and partners. Vinessum took its first steps in 2014 in the magnificent cloister of the Antico Convento San Francesco in Bagnacavallo near Ravenna from an intuition of Andrea Marchetti to promote an idea of wine that is the combination of craftsmanship related to honest representation of the terroir. Not a classic wine fair, Vinessum is more like a spontaneous informal gathering of wine aficionados and growers.

The second wine fair established is Back to the Wine, always hosted since the 2016 first edition in Faenza during the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of November.



The next step? Andrea wanted to co-produce some wines and therefore launched in 2017 his first version of the G-Ray with fruit sourced from a small sized vineyard surrounded by an uncontaminated forest, near Arzignano in the province of Vicenza, in Veneto. Located at 400 mts above the sea level, the old vineyard averages from 30 to 40 years of age, marked by volcanic soils' elements. The training system is an old school Pergola (high trained vine system) managed according to uncertified organic techniques and the lunar calendar. Low levels of sulfur and copper are sprayed during the growing season.

This successful rendition of the ramato style Pinot Grigio has inspired him to give consistency to this viticultural project by partnering, for the 2018 vintage on, with his friend Billy Camazzola of Vigne del Pellagroso. The philosophy is just the same: producing an authentic natural wine. In

2019 Andrea Marchetti has launched his United Colors of Wine project by starting different partnership with cult natural Italian wine makers.

**THE WINES IMPORTED:** Steep Hill imports so far the following wines: the Light White and the Light Red by Vigne del Pellagroso, the G-Ray and the Luci Rosse in partnership between Andrea Marchetti and his buddy Billy Camazzola.

**Light White 2019:** Light White chemical free grapes are grown in the Via Sale and Monte Oliveto tiny plots with the same type of soil characterized by a stratification of compact calcareous clay and high salinity due to an ancient mineral sedimentation. It's a field blend of different varieties (Garganega, Riesling and Moscato) co-harvested and



processed all together with 3 days of skin contact. The must ferments in concrete vats with indigenous yeast avoiding any kind of external additive. Bottled roughly 10 months after the harvest.

It's a perfect thirst quencher enhanced by awesome aromas, a fruity palate with some earthy notes, following the old school tradition of Garda's lake winemaking. The Light White is a minimal wine with no cellar manipulation. Unfined and unfiltered. Only 2.000 bottles have been produced from this harvest. Serve it slightly chilled but not too cold in order to enjoy the

awesome aromas. Regulations don't allow for the name of the grape varieties to appear on this label.

**Light Red 2019:** Light Red's grapes are chemical free (no pesticides, no herbicides, etc.) and come from Vigne del Pellagroso estate vineyard (only 5,5 hectares) near Garda's lake in Lombardy. The soils of the Morainic hills are characterized by a stratification of compact calcareous clay and high salinity due to a mineral sedimentation left by an ancient glacier present 500,000 years ago. This wine is a field blend of different varieties co-harvested and processed all together (40% Merlot plus Cab Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Pinot Grigio, Molinara and Rondinella). The must ferments in fiberglass tanks with indigenous yeast avoiding any kind of external additive. Bottled roughly 10 months after the harvest.

The short skin contact (2 days only) makes this wine the perfect thirst quencher, displaying some earthy and grippy notes, following the old school tradition of Garda's lake winemaking. The Light Red is a minimal wine with no cellar manipulations. Unfined and unfiltered. Only 2.000 bottles have been produced



from this harvest. Serve it slightly chilled but not too cold and let it breathe for a while.

**G-Ray 2019:** 100% Pinot Grigio. Surrounded by an uncontaminated forest, this tiny vineyard (1/2 Ha.) is near Arzignano in the province of Vicenza, in Veneto, located at 400 mts above the sea level. It averages from 30 to 40 years of age, marked by volcanic soils' elements. The grapes are chemical free (no pesticides, no herbicides, etc.). The Vineyard is trained with the old school Pergola method (high trained vine system). All the

vineyard's management is done according to uncertified organic techniques and the lunar calendar. Low levels of sulfur and copper strayed during the growing season.

The must ferments in stainless steel vats with indigenous yeasts avoiding any kind of external additive. The extended skin contact (10 days) gives the wine its' typical Ramato style, following the local north-east Italian tradition. After ageing for a few months in used barrels, the wine is bottled roughly 10 months after the harvest. G-Ray is a minimal, naked wine with no added sulfites. Unfined and unfiltered. AbV: 12%. Only 2.500 bottles have been produced from this harvest. (released approx the summer following the harvest). No cork used, just a simple stelvin screwcap closure.



**Luci Rosse 2019:** From the back label: *“Tell your friends - we don't produce many bottles of the Luci Rosse wine (1.500 bottle per year on average or 125 cases). I try to elaborate skillfully crafted wines that explore traditions beyond the mainstream. The grapes sourced for this wine are chemical free (no pesticides, no herbicides) and come from an area in south Lombardia near the Garda's lake. It's a field blend of different varieties (Merlot, Cabenet Sauvignon, Rondinella) including some white varieties*

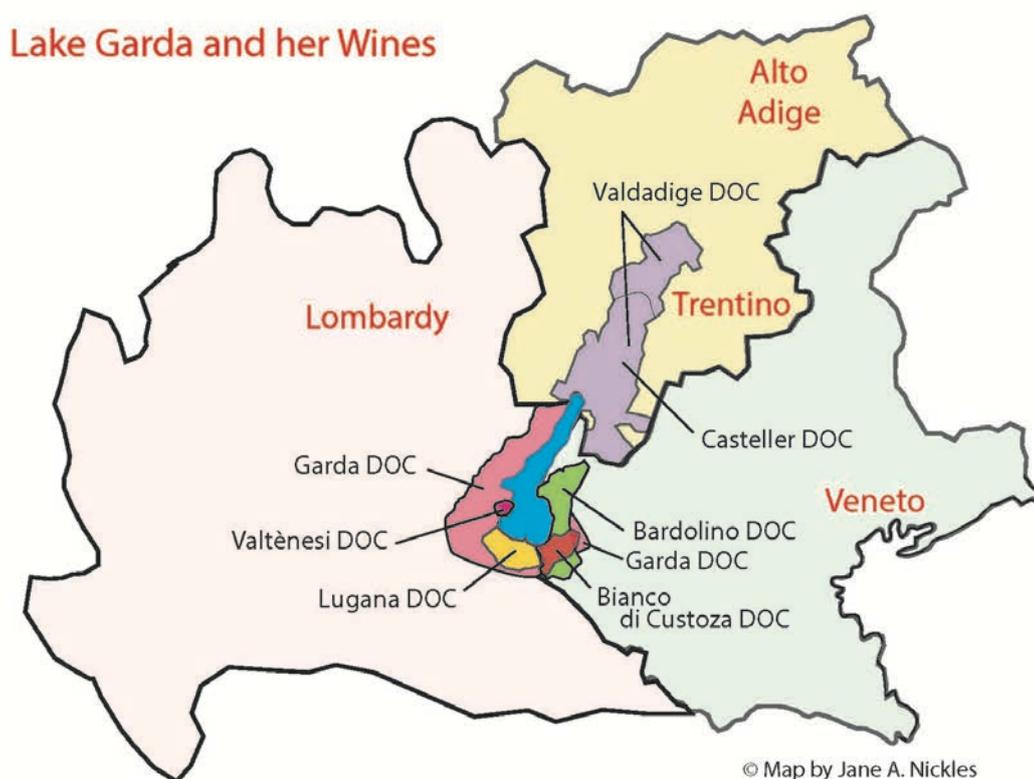


*(Garganega and Trebbiano) all processed together and shortly macerated in order to offer a light bodied wine, following the path of the local tradition. The must fermented with the indigenous yeast only (avoiding any kind of external additives) in concrete tanks where the wine, once racked, continues to age for 6 months. If the vinification presents minimal intervention, well . . . the wine is fruity, marked with red cherries and freshness leading to a lip-smacking bright finish. Unfined and*

*Unfiltered. Yes, you can chill it a bit and drink it in a cheerful gulp! Luci Rosse is a nice food companion and can be enjoyed also as an aperitivo's option. It's a viticultural project carried out with the help of Antonio "Billy" Camazzola (Vigne del Pellagroso). Thanks guys and enjoy the wine. Andrea Marchetti”*

**APPENDIX, THE GARDA'S LAKE WINES:** The Garda's Lake (Lago di Garda) is the largest one in Italy, and a popular destination for travelers searching for deep blue transparent waters, wind-in-your-hair yachting, and *la dolce vita* the area is known for. The rich and famous may head for the northern resorts towns of Riva del Garda and Torbole, while families and backpackers head for the farmhouses of Bardolino, Castelnuovo del Garda, or the fortified town of Sirmione in the south.

Formed by the movement of glaciers thousands of years ago, Lake Garda is tucked between the regions of Trentino, Veneto and Lombardy. Its upper half, shaped somewhat like the handle of an axe, reaches into the Italian Alps, while the southern section, shaped like the blade of the axe, stretches down into an undulating plain. Such a shape is typical of a moraine (glacier-formed) valley.



The lake is 32 miles (51 km) long from north to south, and about 10 miles wide at its widest point. In addition to lovely towns, ferry boats, orange orchards, and olive groves, the shores of Lake Garda are host to a variety of vineyards, which including several DOCs and one DOCG. These wine districts are overwhelmingly overlapping, interlocking, discontiguous, and straddling the boundary lines of cities, towns and regions.

A lot of wine lovers are familiar with the **Bardolino wines** which is located in Veneto only and is undoubtedly the most famous of the Lake Garda lakeside DOCs. Bardolino produces mainly red wines and some rosé (a much-beloved Chiaretto) from a blend based on 35-80% Corvina Veronese grapes (a portion of which may be replaced by Corvinone). Small amounts of Rondinella are required, and small amounts of Molinara, Rossignola (Gropello), Barbera, Sangiovese, and Garganega are allowed. Many different versions are allowed by the regulations, including the chiaretto (rosé) which may be

released as *normale*, *classico*, or sparkling. Bardolino is known to be a light to medium-bodied, fresh-tasting red wine.

**Bianco di Custoza DOC:** The Bianco di Custoza DOC, tucked below Lake Garda on her southwest side, is located within the Veneto region. The DOC overlaps with the Bardolino DOC quite a bit, but also extends past the boundaries of Bardolino a bit as well. Bianco di Custoza, sometimes simply called “Custoza,” is a white-wine only DOC, but does allow for sparkling wine, sweet wines made via the passito method, and a *superiore* version, in addition to the *normale* dry, still wines.

All of these versions of Bianco di Custoza may be made using the same palette of grape varieties-but from there things get a bit complicated. The basis of the wine starts out with at least 20% (and a maximum of 40%) Garganega. Next, it includes a minimum of 10% (and a maximum of 40%) Trebbiano Toscano (otherwise known as Ugni Blanc). Another 5% to 30% is an interesting grape known as Trebbianello, which is a local clone of the grape alternatively known as Tai or Friulano. Other grapes that are allowed in varying amounts include Bianca Fernanda (a local clone of Cortese), Malvasia, Riesling Italico, Pinot Bianco, Chardonnay, and Manzoni Bianco.

**Lugana DOC:** The Lugana DOC straddles the Lombardy-Veneto border at the southern edge of Lake Garda. The name *Lugana* is as picturesque as its surroundings; the word is derived from the Latin for “Lake in the Woods,” reflecting the dense woodlands that existed here not-so-long ago. Lugana is a white wine-only DOC, producing wines in a range of styles from a minimum of 90% Trebbiano di Lugana grapes. The Trebbiano di Lugana variety is also known as Trebbiano di Soave, Turbiana, or Verdicchio Bianco. The DOC produces mainly fragrant, dry white wines (often compared to Soave in style), and also allows for *superiore*, *riserva*, late-harvest, and sparkling versions.

**Valtènesi DOC:** Located in Lombardy’s Brescia province, the Valtènesi DOC produces both red and rosé (*chiarretto*) wines based on a minimum of 50% Groppello (Gentile and/or Mocasina). The remainder of the blend may include any of the red wines approved for use in Lombardy, with Sangiovese, Marzemino, and Barbera most often used. The Groppello grape is native to this area of northern Italy, and is grown in very small amounts, mainly in Lombardy and Veneto (where it may be known as Rossignola).

**Garda DOC (and the rest of the Garda family):** The Garda DOC extends along the western shore of Lake Garda (in Lombardy), and continues on to the Veneto side, overlapping portions of the Lugana, Bardolino, and Bianco di Custoza DOCs along the way.

Two small portions on the Lombardy side overlap with smaller *Garda* DOCs: **Garda Colli Mantovani DOC** overlaps a small section at the southern end of the lake, and a small section near the northern edge overlaps with the **Garda Bresciano DOC**. All of these regions produce a wide range of wines, including red, white, rosé, sparkling and *novello* versions, from a range of grapes representing the typical varieties of the area.