

Ep 103: Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Livio Felluga: the man who reestablished the wine culture of this Italian region with Laura Felluga (Part 1)



Janina Doyle 00:00:07 Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just can not get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier. So, stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving, wonderful world of wine and wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you!

Hello, to all you wonderful wine lovers of the world. On today's episode, I'm taking us over to the Northeast of Italy to a wine region called Friuli-Venezia Giulia, where I am talking to Laura Felluga of quite possibly the best known Friulian winery in the world. They are certainly one of the most important producers in defining the quality of the wines that have come out of this area. And so Laura is gonna be taking us back to the beginning of it all with her grandfather Livio Felluga. If you are not too familiar with this area, the region, the terroir, the climate, Laura will be romantically and poetically describing it all. So you're gonna hear the passion and the love she has for her family winery and this part of the world. Now, for all of you listening, I just wanna take one second out to say how grateful I am for your support. And if you are enjoying these podcasts, now is the opportunity that you can support me just that little bit more by voting for this podcast on The People's Choice Podcast Awards. Now I'm gonna leave a link on my show notes, but if you can take a few moments out, just go to www.podcastawards.com. You're gonna be asked to verify your email, with your email being deleted after the awards are announced. You have the choice to enter your biggest podcast influencer. Of course you can choose Eat Sleep Wine Repeat at this point, should you wish. But then there are loads of different categories. So you can also vote for your favorite comedy podcast or, or fiction podcast. I am in the Arts category. So just find Eat Sleep Wine Repeat and click "Save nomination". Done. Voting is just for July 2022 only. So if you are getting any value out of these podcasts and you're enjoying listening, I'll be very grateful that you can vote. And maybe just, maybe I can make The Slate, which determines who takes home the win. Now thank you all in advance for those of you that can do that. And now back to this exceptionally educational episode with Laura Felluga.

Janina Doyle 00:02:51 Laura, thank you so much for joining me. I would love for you to start by actually just telling me where were you before? What's your backstory quickly?

Laura Felluga 00:03:00 Thank you, Janina. It's um, it's lovely to be with you. And, um, it's a privilege. My story is related to wine because I was born, uh, as a granddaughter of this very strong and brave man who gives his name to our winery. Livio Felluga was my granddad.

Janina Doyle 00:03:19 You just didn't have a choice.

Laura Felluga 00:03:20 Exactly. I didn't have a choice. So I was born with wine and then I grew up, you know, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, that is the region in the Northeast of Italy, where the winery is based. Uh, always, you know, living in a small town, close to the vineyard, which is called Udine. And, uh, you know, my dad would be working for the winery and we would visit my grandparents very often. So the vineyard was always part of my, was part of my, my upbringing and, uh, and you know, my childhood memories, would spend plenty of time with my grandparents, uh, over the hills. And then when I grew up after, you know, graduating for my first, uh, university degrees, where I studied economics and management in Trieste, and that is the capital of the region, a beautiful town on the Gulf of Trieste, on the Adriatic Sea. Um, I decided to leave and, um, I wrote my thesis on wine simply because I had a feeling that wine was part of my identity and I didn't know enough about it. So you know, when you, you reaching point in your life, when you are, you know, asking yourself, what am I gonna do? And so you start from, from the roots and that's what I did. So I started, you know, traveling the world, starting and working while exploring the industry. And then it wasn't only, and I was so lucky I could, um, live in China. I could live in the US. I went to New Zealand. I ended up in France, in Bordeaux. So I got this, you know, very, very broad idea of what the industry of wine is, it's different declinations and different roles and different, you know, uh, part of the chain. And so what I did, like it wasn't sure that I would've gone back home, but, and then in 2018, um, there was an opportunity for me to join my dad and my uncles and, and auntie. And so I went back and I started working for the family and, uh, and that's it. And now a few years have passed and, uh, it's brings us so much joy and pride to be able to contribute to our family estate. So now I'm, I'm basically representing the family and, you know, being the keeper of the values of the brand. That has been always, you know, it's always been represented by my granddad, but my granddad fortunately passed away a few years ago. It was 102. So now it's really, yeah. It's...

Janina Doyle 00:05:46 That's fantastic. Yeah. It's all that wine. So quite clearly, you know, the wine is producing. Yeah. Okay. Everyone, there you go. Health tip: definitely drink Livio Felluga if you wanna live past a hundred. So, so tell me, I can say this, you will agree, but I can easily say that Livio Felluga is one of the best white wine estates in Italy. It is, full stop, no arguments.

Laura Felluga 00:06:14 That's very kind. It is not for us to judge.

Janina Doyle 00:06:17 Well, it is.

Laura Felluga 00:06:18 It is not for us to judge.

Janina Doyle 00:06:18 I knew you would be very humble, which is why I'm saying it now. I want everyone to know that this is true. So tell me a little bit more about the incredible story of your granddad, um Livio and how he started this whole journey.

Laura Felluga 00:06:33 Absolutely. So I'll start from the very beginning. The business that we know today Livio Felluga was, was founded by him after the second world war in 1956, when he created our label, the geographical map label, that is representing...

Janina Doyle 00:06:49 It's beautiful.

Laura Felluga 00:06:50 ...the winery today. For, for many decades has been representing the wineries and, you know, representing our values. But wine has been running in the family from six, for

six generations. So he was born in another area of the Northeast and our family was already cultivating the vine there. So he learned viticulture from his grandfather when he was a child and, uh, that was essentially in, you know, defining his identity. And so, uh, when part of the family moved is that moved and started selling the wines that his granddad was producing in Grado. There's a tiny island in Friuli-Venezia Giulia on the Adriatic Sea. So he grew up with wine. Uh, wine was part of his heritage and he knew how to cultivate the vine. Unfortunately, uh, you know, historical events hit. When he was a young man, he had to leave his family and was gone for about eight years because of the second world war. I assume he had a couple of years of training that were organized by, by, by, by Italy. And then he fought Aleman in North Africa was then captured by the alleys as a prisoner of war. He spent, I think, three years in Scotland, in the Highlands, picking potatoes as a prisoner. And then in his, late in his thirties, um, he managed eventually to go back to Friuli-Venezia Giulia, uh, and to pursue his dream of founding his own estate in the hills of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. That is where the company is based now. And it's an area, uh, this little strip of hills that stretches between the, you know, the Alps and the Adriatic Sea. And, um, and that had a long history in viticulture and millenary history in viticulture, since, you know, Julius Caesar came to Friuli to expand the Roman empire. So, um, it was the, in Friuli, there was the limits and Julius Caesar came to Friuli and expand the empire. The, the Romans brought the vine and civilization in, uh, in my region. So in that specific strip of hills, we have a long, long history, uh, for viticulture. But after the second world war, when my granddad came a few kilometers away from Grado and to pursue his dream, viticulture was a little bit forgotten let's say. You know, um, a lot of people that had been forced to work, uh, as farmers in the land for, for, for generations, uh, at a wish to leave the land and, uh, started working in the, you know, there was an economical boom in Italy, uh, in the factories that were, were blooming around the town of, of Manzano, Rosazzo. So the farmers started leaving the, the land because it wasn't considered, uh, of value, working in the land, being a farmer. Now, I, I see there's a wave of redeeming, a lot of dignity, uh, to anything related to agriculture, the knowledge of working the land, craftsmanship. And, uh, but after the second world war, there was a little bit of a shift away from that. My grandfather with his vision and his dreams went a little bit against the current. So what, what he did was, you know, starting to, he recognized the great potential of those vineyards, historical vineyards around the town of Rosazzo, because he knew about viticulture already. And, um, he, without a dime, a dime, I say a dime without a lead, without money in his pockets, because, you know, after the world he had lost everything. Um, he started asking for loans which were refused because there was it wasn't seen a true economic potential and value in his dream, right? Eventually he made it. And he started, you know, restoring some of the, the most traditional and, uh, you know, plots around the village of Rosazzo and to live his dream. That was to bring our family back to Viticulture, bring our family back to winemaking and build a fam uh, future for himself and us, um, in the hills of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. So he was this very, very, you know, brave, um, intuitive, stubborn, uh, charming, fiery, uh, eventually after the years became also a very wise Grandpa. But when he was younger, I mean the fiery side, I bet was a little bit stronger in his personality and he succeeded. And he was, he's considered, you know, the, the father of, of modern Friulian Viticulture, let's say because, uh, with other very smart and, uh, you know, intuitive entrepreneurs of wine, in different regions that kind of triggered this change a new vision in their own regions. Then they really were able to trigger what created the modern Italian wine landscape, the way we know it today, somehow. And so, uh, in a moment where shifting, uh, from a moment after the war where wine was simply, uh, food, was a source of calories, was produced in bulk, very easily oxidized. Uh, he decided to really bottle, label the wines and speak about and produce wines of quality, starting from viticulture and the vineyard that could speak of our territory in our, in our land.

Laura Felluga 00:12:11 And so he put the land on the bottle and he put a map on the bottle. The map was actually his creation. I don't know if he physically drew it. This I'm not quite sure, but he was his idea and was drawn by, um, taking inspiration by a map that he had bought at an Antique shop in the town of Udine from, from a friend of his, that sold him a map of the, the times where the French invaded Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the hills, um, leaving also plenty of incredible varietals that we've been growing for centuries in the, in the hills and we'll talk about it this later. But most of the international varietals that we grow, uh, in that area are actually very traditional, have been grown over the hills for centuries and had the time to adapt and to really, you know, change and to gain specific characteristic to that specific territory. And so they, we considered them traditional. But so this map was, uh, was a map with all of the, you know, the name of towns around the hills, where we, where we have the vineyards. And there was one of those, um, you know, crests where ancient maps would have all of the indications that would allow you to read the content of the map. And so these idea was to take, to take a map, put it on the label, because he wanted to explain that these wine would speak about the territory and use this Crest to put the information about the wine. In the fifties, in the fifties, it really started with the single varietal wines, like Pinot Grigio, Friulano, Merlot. And, um, he would put the name of the varietal in the crest. And then later on in the eighties, we really became famous for our, uh, white blend, collectible blends. And, uh, and so he would put the name on the blend in the crest. Uh, in the very first label, his name was at the bottom of the, of the map, because his idea was not estate centered, in a way that in his vision, the winemaker would be the facilitator. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:14:28 So it's all about region and not about him. It's rather, again very humble for the rebuilder of the Friuli wine tradition, right? It's incredible.

Laura Felluga 00:14:37 So it's this idea of really serving your land, serving your people, serving your territory, serving your family. That feels really is represented by the label and, uh, and it's what drives us in, you know, in the, in the choices that we made and in the strategies that we make, uh, at the winery. And this is one of the privileges of being a family own and run winery, because really your goals are set to pursue your values, and then you earn to fuel again and, uh, to really, to really empower your, your strategies to, to pursue those values in the end. And it's something that we feel very privileged to, to, to do.

Janina Doyle 00:15:19 I, I certainly would. I only wish I was born into a wine family. Maybe next time, next life. And so tell me, you know, considering Livio Felluga, and specifically Livio himself was all about the terroir, can we talk a little bit more about Friuli-Venezia Giulia? Can we talk about this region? I know you mentioned the Alps, you've mentioned the Sea. How does this all affect? I mean, we're in Italy, hilly terrain. Can you talk a little bit more about the area?

Laura Felluga 00:15:49 Friuli as a region from an historical and geography, geographical perspective is, uh, you know, even more diverse and eclectic than the average Italian region, which is already very rich and diverse because it's been a land of borders since forever. So this border have been shifting. We have been invaded by many, in many times throughout the history. Each invasion, each change in history and culture brought, um, was integrated in our, in our identity, that is very eclectic, sometimes difficult to convey. So on one hand, I wanna speak about this. And this also resulted in a very, very large number of varietals being cultivated, um, on the hills. And we try to keep on researching and, and going deeper in the knowledge about these varietals and then the combination of them. And on the other hand, it's a very eclectic, also from a geographical perspective, because it's a tiny, tiny region in the

Northeast of Italy. We border Austria to the north. Slovenia, to the east. The Adriatic Sea, to the south and the Veneto region to the west. So the easiest way to get us would be probably to fly to Venice. And then drive up to the Northeast an hour, hour, hour, and a half.

Janina Doyle 00:17:13 Okay. That's not too far. Okay.

Laura Felluga 00:17:15 Not too far, but we're the very last region making us, uh, so we're not a very stereotypical Italian region because we're in the north and we have these very, we are heavy, heavy influences from the Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia. Part of Friuli was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. We've been invaded by Napoleon, um, Slovenia, all this Slavic population and Slavic tradition are part, are right at our border. So we have plenty of minorities that are Slovenian speaking, uh, population. Uh, we, you know, the, even geographically, nowadays Rosazzo, it's few kilometers away from the Slovenian border. So this is like a, it's like a tiny melting pot. Also from a geographical perspective. It's tiny. So from north to south, you would drive maybe a couple of hours. I would from the, from the winery, I see the Alps and I would reach Slovenia in an hour, an hour and a half tops. And then, uh, I'm about 40 kilometers away from the Adriatic sea as the Crow flies. So it's tiny, but you have, you go from the Alps to the sea and the Alps are between, our Alps and, and we get to the Dolomites and then you have, and it's about a third mountains cover about a third of the region. And then they have this flat pebblestone, flat lands that end up in a coastal line, a sandy coastal line that is basically connects Venice to Trieste, which is the capital of, of Friuli. Uh, so, and then these coastal lines become karstic, become rocks, karstic rocks around the town of Trieste. In, all of this happens in a very small geographical area. The, the, the area where we're based is this tiny, tiny strip of hills that runs for few kilometers between, uh, the provinces of Udine and Gorizia, and our estate it's, it's an estate that has, we've been growing since my grandfather started, you know, restoring the, those vineyards around the Rosazzo, um, is now between, you know, vines and, and forests. It extends to around, I would say 250 hectares. And it really stretches in on this tiny, tiny strip of hills that from DOC regulation perspective is split between the DOC Friuli Colli Orientali in the province of Udine, around the town of Rosazzo, that I was mentioning earlier. And the DOC Collio that is in the province of Gorizia, falls under the province of the town of Gorizia. And it's closer to the town of Cormons. We're speaking about a 10, 10 minutes drive and this extent. And so our property is not like, if you think of some of the, you know, French properties, you would imagine the Château at the center and then the vineyards all around it. Whereas for us, it's more, the house of my grandfather became our cellar around the, the town of, round the town of, of Cormons. But then the core of the vineyards is around the town of Rosazzo and it's now, uh, and through the years expanded throughout the entire strip of, of hills, which are having in common, the terroir, because this, the basic soil that we have on both of the DOCs Friuli Colli Orientali and Collio is Ponca.

Janina Doyle 00:20:47 Yes. Ponca soil. What is Ponca soil?

Laura Felluga 00:20:50 Yes. Ponca is actually the traditional name in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The, the, the farmer's name, the dialect name for a soil that in geology would be defined as "flysch of Cormons". Cormons from the town of Cormons, that I was mentioning earlier. And it's nothing but a stratification of Marl and Sandstone.

Janina Doyle 00:21:17 Marl and sandstone. Okay.

Laura Felluga 00:21:19 Yes. Correct. And so it's a stratification of these two that became, that solidified throughout the centuries and this happens over thousand of years and a thousand of years ago, also our hills were actually covered by that Adriatic Sea.

Janina Doyle 00:21:35 Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay.

Laura Felluga 00:21:37 And so, and, and there's definitely a relation between the fact that the hills were traditionally always considered in the history, the epicenter of viticulture in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, because this Ponca allows for less fertile soil, which we all know is very, very useful when it comes to viticulture. But also this translates into the wine in a very peculiar minerality trait that I would consider to be kind of the “fil rouge” the thread that you can recognize in all of the wines, if you happen to taste them blind. And that is that very savory, almost salty minerality that is really connecting, speaking about our terroir. If there is one, if you would ask me Laura, tell me one thing that would make our wines recognized and recognizable, that would be it. Um, that would be also the very, very intense, aromatic profile, very complex and intense aromatic profile, for sure. Uh, so in general terms Ponca is all over the hills, but then Ponca itself is a versatile matter because not in every spot Ponca was stratified and solidified in the same proportion, I would say. So this is probably one of the things that contributes to the eclecticism of the territory. Sometimes we simplify saying our soil is Ponca, but Ponca means so many things.

Janina Doyle 00:23:06 It's a great name.

Laura Felluga 00:23:08 Yeah. One thing I wanna, I'd like to say something, a compliment my grandfather. Another way in which he was very forward thinking. Yeah. He started speaking about territory and the importance of terroir and the importance of produce quality wine in the vineyard that now became a standard for anybody that is producing quality wine, uh, in a moment where DOCs weren't even on the table yet.

Janina Doyle 00:23:35 Yeah, of course.

Laura Felluga 00:23:36 So he created the map label and started speaking about terroir before DOCs were even created in Italy. So this is something that I really always made me very proud and, uh, and made me realize how brave and forward thinking he was. And so this, we, now we have this, historically, we have been having these two DOCs. Going back to Rosazzo and the particular, uh, and the specialty of Rosazzo. So this specific village, there is the home of the Abbey of Rosazzo representing a thousand years of viticulture in the region. Finally in 2011, became a DOCG for white wines. It's a very, very tiny DOCG, and tries to represent this, the peculiarities of the territory of Rosazzo at its best. And these wines also were, uh, produced in order to, um, show how great white blends have nothing to, um, nothing less than the great reds of the world when it comes to, uh, complexity and aging capabilities. So we'll speak about it a little, little bit later, but going back to Rosazzo. So there's this beautiful Abbey, uh, that you can visit. There's Belvedere* (*panoramic viewpoint), where you can really appreciate the territory and the landscape of Rosazzo. So you go on the Belvedere, um, and, uh, you turn back and on mid days, are really are framed by the Alps. Sometimes when the, the vines start crying, you know, we say the pian della vite in italiano.

Janina Doyle 00:25:14 They start crying?

Laura Felluga 00:25:15 I don't know how we say this in English. You know how, when the, the it's the moment where spring officially starts. When the lymph goes back, goes, uh, goes flows back in the plant. You really see those little drops coming out of the, of the areas that were pruned, right?

Janina Doyle 00:25:33 Ah, yes. Okay. The sap. Yes. So the sap, all the energy and the sap kind of comes out. Where it's starting to wake up. Okay. When the vine is crying, I've never heard that. Okay.

Laura Felluga 00:25:45 Exactly. We say Pian della Vigna. And so that's official moment where the, the cycle starts in the spring starts for us. And sometimes, you know, uh, and then sometimes you have the hills, which are very, you know, gently sloped. We're only about 200 meters above sea level. And, you know, spring starts blooming and we have a lot of, you know, cherry trees and, um, and a lot of fruit trees, a lot of, you know, it becomes very, very green and, and, you know, flourish, we say flourish, no?

Janina Doyle 00:26:17 Yeah. If everything is flourishing, yeah.

Laura Felluga 00:26:19 Everything flourishing. And sometimes you, you still see the snow on the Alps. It's very dramatic. I wish, I, I hope I will send you some pictures later on. And then on mid days from the same Belvedere, you can actually see the sea sparkling around the town of Grado, the island of Grado, uh, that I was mentioning, and this is the place where my grandfather was brought up.

Janina Doyle 00:26:38 Right. I'm coming. I'm coming.

Laura Felluga 00:26:40 Yeah. So this, you know, the Ponca, the very generally sloped hills that are terraced traditionally to keep the vines in place.

Janina Doyle 00:26:50 They're quite steep in some...

Laura Felluga 00:26:51 Yes. And this is also one of the reasons that had made our viticulture very much related to craftsmanship. And so most of the work that we do in the vineyard and harvest happens by by hand. And so you have this, you know, I'm trying to give you like an image of it. So you have framed by the, the mountains, you're on this gently sloping hills that you can oversee from these beautiful belvedere, with all of these statues. I call them my warrior statues, but are these beautiful statues that were brought to the Abbey from a Villa, Um, that used to be the home of the Doge of Venice, uh, one of the leaders of Venice, and they're now, uh, at home, in the Abbey of Rosazzo, surrounded by olive trees, by this beautiful rose garden that, you know, Rosazzo, Abbey of Rosazzo is the Abbey of the roses because on the cliffs of the Abbey, historically were grown this rose garden, that is now, um, collecting very different species of roses. And it's really representative of the Abbey. And it's probably one of the reasons why, um, around the crest, my grandfather, on the label decided to draw some flowers. I don't know if you noticed on the map now. Also, if you mean to speak about the territory, so everything goes back to, to its land, honestly, everything, every little detail and that's it. So a lot of Cypress hills, uh, there's a huge, a very beautiful biodiversity that we try to cultivate and protect. Uh, when I was a kid and we used to take walks in the, in the property after, you know, especially on Sundays, we would have this family reunions when we, where we ate a lot and then we would go for a walk and my uncle would always make fun of me, um, saying there were, um, wild pigs, uh, coming, coming up. Uh, and it's true. There's plenty of, of like flora, but also fauna. So there's a lot of, um, wild rabbits and, you know, the baby deers, uh, wild pigs that would definitely sometimes be of harm for our vineyards. Um, Tac, I dunno how you say about Tasso, these, these animals that would live underneath the earth. They don't see very well, lot of...

Janina Doyle 00:29:09 I don't know. Moles? Mheh. Them. Underground animals.

Laura Felluga 00:29:12 But so it's very alive and we try to, you know, make, make it our mission to protect that too, because, um, everything is, uh, starting and ending, uh, starting at the estate. And, uh, and we try to provide the service both to the territory and to the wine lovers. And actually that would actually be interested in exploring the territory. So for the ones that, that I would like to, to come and visit us, please know, um, this land is very eclectic, very middle European. Uh, it's very charming, but it's nothing like the more stereotypical, um, uh, the more, what became stereotypical, because it was more known of Italy that is mainly related to the Southern and beautiful south south of Italy. This is a little different, still very charming and worth exploring also because we are, um, very central with respect of Europe, but kind of remote with respect of the rest of Italy. So, um, it stayed very much untouched and it's one of the most, um, yeah, most interesting things it's, it's really worth exploring.

Janina Doyle 00:30:20 Now you say most interesting thing. I have my nose stuck in a glass of the Terre Alte, and I can tell you that is the most interesting thing of this region. So I happen to have, thank you very much for sending this, a 2019. And can you tell everyone listening about this wine? I mean, this is definitely considered probably one of the most prestigious white wines of Italy. This is an amazing white blend. This is your flagship, your icon. I'm gonna have a little sniff and a little taste. Can you just tell everyone a little bit about this wine?

Laura Felluga 00:30:56 Absolutely. So, um, this wine really is the, I mean, a wine that is maybe one of the wine, the wine that is most associated to our family name. Um, it was first created in 1981, and I give you a little bit of a family anecdote around it. When it was first created, was thanks to, um, the idea of my uncle Maurizio, who the oldest of the children of my, of my grandfather Livio. So imagine my grandfather, having starting his dream from scratch, having struggled through going against the current, having managed to put together the beginning of our estate, having managed to, uh, you know, establish his vision, having seen finally the system following his lead, creating the DOCs, protecting his territory. And then his younger son comes in. He starts working very, uh, very, when he was very young, he starts, you know, expanding our market that was originally basically the town of Udine and the small towns around Friuli to, you know, Venezia, Milano, Roma. We're now, you know, present in over 80 countries, but in the, in the seventies, my, my really, my uncle started selling the wines in the rest of Italy that was already revolutionary. And he came back saying, uh, Dad, I think we should upgrade our offer, uh, also, and include, uh, a great white blend that could show how our territory, our estate could provide wines of great complexity, uh, a synergy of the varietals that are present in the estate.

Janina Doyle 00:32:44 Yeah. Cause I think really was single varietals before that, at that point, you said wasn't it?

Laura Felluga 00:32:48 Exactly and uh, you know, make it smaller selection of some of the oldest vineyards around the town of Rosazzo. Different passages, let's, you know, vinify it in a way to make it a wine that could age and show a different side to our, to our estate. And, and so they started thinking about it, but then, you know, blends were not allowed in the DOCs. So my grandfathers said there's no way after all of my, all of my efforts that we will produce a wine with my map label that is not included in the DOCs, regardless of the quality and your vision, and so do whatever you want, but you won't have my label. So the first vintage of Terre Alte was actually 1981 and it was a vintage where it came out without the map label on the map. It was a plain label stating Terre Alte and the age of the wine. Because my grandfather said, I'm not gonna do this, just do your thing, but leave me alone.

Janina Doyle 00:33:48 Yeah yeah yeah. I understand.

Laura Felluga 00:33:51 So it had such a success that eventually the vintage afterwards, my grandfather surrendered to, um, including it in the map label collection. And it became like our iconic wine ever since. So there's a bit of a family struggle beyond the story of the wine.

Janina Doyle 00:34:10 Well I love it.

Laura Felluga 00:34:11 So that is to say that, you know, you know, uh, we always need to, you know, follow your, your instinct. My grandfather did, my uncle did. And this is really what made the story of our family and wine, always fighting at home and then pursuing our vision and then, you know, striving for trying to strive for success. But it was honestly, everything starts from intuition and, uh, and we tried to follow that and this happened for Terre Alte, it was a great success. So as I was saying, it's a synergy. So there's three varietals present in the blend. The majority of the blend is Friulano, it's a grape, one of the most traditional grapes that are grown in the region. It was traditionally called Tokai. And I will tell maybe later on when we taste the single varietal Friulano, why it had to change its name and, um, when the DOCG Rosazzo was created, it was kind of tailored on Terre Alte. So the majority of the wines of Rosazzo and the majority of Terre Alte is Friulano. On the top of that we have a combination, fairly even combination of Sauvignon and Pinot Bianco. So a base of Friulano and then a combination of Sauvignon and Pinot Bianco. Sauvignon, as I was saying, Sauvignon has been part of our tradition for a very long time. So, uh, it's identity is very much, um, linked to the, the qualities of the hills. And it's the, Sauvignon from that specific spot of land is quite recognizable versus other beautiful, but very different Sauvignons that we have all over the world. I'm thinking New Zealand, I'm thinking France, which are two places where I lived. And so I would like physically be able to experience the wide range that these varietals can assume while growing in different spots of land. All of these varietals are picked of course, in different moments. So each vineyard, we're over the hills. So not only the Ponca has different kind of composition in different areas, but there's also, uh, different exposures, uh, different, different age of the vines. Some of our oldest vineyards of Friulano were acquired by my granddad, and we think they could go back to before the, the second world war. So they're very old vineyards. And in older vineyards, we can find not only age, which always helps with complexity, for sure, but also a huge diversity in the identity of the same varietal. So this brings also a great complexity and, uh, we sometimes different exposures, different microclimates that are very characteristic of the area of Rosazzo. And so most of the times these Terre Alte, um, vineyards that are surrounding the Abbey are sometimes also harvesting different moments because it happens that we and harvest an area of, of the vineyard that is exposed one way and then the other. Of course, each varietal is also harvested at different times because varietals get mature at different moments throughout the harvest period. And what we do is these very small selection are then vinified separately in these small oak casks. Um, that some of them are barriques, some of them are little botte and they are generally neutral oak because the idea is really to allow them to be in contact with the lees and, you know, stabilize. And you do as much as we can also not only through malolactic and aging, but also, and over the vinification process, the first modification process. And then only at the very end, we make the final selection of which of these batches would be included in the final plan. So it's a process that is very much leaded, led by my father, who's the director of, you know, the, the manager of the winery, yes, and is in charge of production. So going back to Terre Alte, and, but this is true for all of the estate. Everything is about micromanagement, um, of, of the plots, of the vinification, both in the vineyard and in the, in the cellar, right? And making a, a final selection that will allow us to sustain and maintain the standard that we promised to our clients.

Janina Doyle 00:38:29 And this is absolutely divine. The aromatics are just jumping out of the glass. There's such intense, ripe, like tropical fruits. So I get like all this mango, but then, and everyone's gonna love this. It's like Crème brûlée, you know, on the nose, there's some vanilla beans. There's, there's some honey in there, but that doesn't take over the fruits. And it's almost, you know, it's almost a little bit hedonistic. There's so much flowers in there. So along with it, there's Jasmine and like some Lilys and even basil. So there's this, the complexity of this wine, even on the nose is so high. Um, the palate, what I love about it, there's very definable, uh, fleshy, peachy, stone fruits. There's a very, it's quite a, it's a rich style. There's a glycerol feel. So a lovely creamy mouth coating, but at the same time, there's elegance and lightness and it kind of finishes with this lovely sweet almond finish, but then it's a bit spicy and a little flinty too. So it's like, how, what kind of tasting note is that? It's, it's so long, this, this, this is beautiful and this is why it's your flagship. So for anybody who wants something very, very special and, and very different and taking, you know, people talk about Burgundies all day long. This is something that you may not have ever even thought about and the, the power, but the elegance and the finesse in this is, is stunning. Um, just quickly for everybody, I have managed to find this for you for £79 a bottle at Petersham Cellar. So this is not a Monday night wine, but this is definitely something when it is your birthday and your anniversary that you want to get your hands on. It is very special. Indeed. It's beautiful. Well done.

Laura Felluga 00:40:29 Thank you so much for these beautiful words. I would also recommend for the collectors or, you know, uh, maybe those wine lovers that are into aging wines, these wines. I invite you. If it's your birth, if it's gonna be your birthday wine, just, you know, save one bottle for, uh, each birthday and see how these wines change over the years. Um, they have a capability of aging for, uh, 20 plus years.

Janina Doyle 00:40:56 Oh my gosh. Really? Okay. So I'm born in '87. For anyone who could do their maths, That's 35 years. Do you think, if I got hold of my birth year, would that still be holding on or could that maybe, is that a bit too much?

Laura Felluga 00:41:14 I don't know. I think that would be too much, but we'll never be able to...

Janina Doyle 00:41:16 That might be bit too much.

Laura Felluga 00:41:17 We would never be able to know because, because I'm quite sure that we, that everything that was produced that year was drunk, is gone,

Janina Doyle 00:41:24 It's gone. It's only been a few. Yeah. There was only a few years into production wasn't it? Oh dear. Nevermind. Okay.

Laura Felluga 00:41:31 I would say a window between 5 and 10 years, but could go on to 20. The, the oldest I've tasted was '97, last year. And we have this bad habit of drinking most of them. So this is, there's very few around, but I invite you to like, to, uh, take on this project yourself. And maybe if you have, if you're patient enough and you have a little cellar, if you wish, these are wines that could easily be collectible. Both Terre Alte, Abbazia di Rosazzo. So that is the second wine we produce in, uh, in Rosazzo. It's a very similar process of vinification and it's a selection of the four plots that surround the Abbey. The blend is basically the same. The, the wine making is basically the same, yet these two wines are drastically different in the aromatic profile. And this is a testimony of the eclecticity of the terroir of Rosazzo. So the same Friulano, Friulano that is growing from of two plots facing each other, could

provide two complete different expressions of the same varietal. And this is why we do what we do basically. So I'm glad, I'm glad you could, uh, we could taste this together.

Janina Doyle 00:42:40 Well, I'm we, we decided that that wine was gonna be for me privately, but I did just take a sip of it because I have it, sorry, everyone. And I have to say it's much more citrusy, um, and very fresh and, and more herbacious this second wine. But anyway, everyone go to my Instagram. At some point, I'll be talking about this delicious wine. So I leave you in suspense on that one.

Janina Doyle 00:43:04 So that's it for part one. Next week, Laura will be taking us further into the wine region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. We'll be looking at the grape variety Friulano in more detail alongside the grapes, Ribolla Gialla, Picolit and Refosco. And of course, you can't have an Italian podcast without talking about some delicious food pairings. Now, to finish off today's episode, I bring you an Italian proverb of which there are many, which makes my life rather easy. And this one's origin is specifically from Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Now, hopefully I've got my Italian pronunciation correct on this one. It is:

“Anni e bicchieri di vino non si contano mai”.

Which means age and glasses of wine should never be counted, which is an invitation to fully enjoy life. And on that note, I hope you've enjoyed part one. I look forward to you tuning back in next week for part two. Please don't forget to vote on the people's choice awards, if you can. And the link is in my show notes at the top. Like, share, subscribe to the podcast, leave a review if you're feeling super generous and until next week, cheers to you.