

Moris Farms

At separate locations in the province of Grosseto, this is really two estates owned by the Moris family, who have been practising agriculture here for generations (though the primacy of viticulture is relatively recent) and who, by the way, are not of British but of Spanish origin, if rather distantly. So, no: Moris with one "r" is not a typo.

The original farm, Fattoria Poggetti, is near the medieval town of Massa Marittima and boasts its own boar enclosure; a view of Elba and Corsica on a clear day; 3,600 cypress trees, planted from 1937 by grandfather Gualtier Moris; and some 37ha (91 acres) of vineyard, about two thirds Sangiovese (almost all replanted with clones since 1990), but with a healthy representation (15 per cent) of Cabernet Sauvignon, which they claim was in their vineyards from unspecified times past. They also have around 10 per cent Syrah, which they say works well in the clay-based soils of Massa but less well in the sand-dominated terrain of Podere Le Mozzine, purchased with remarkable foresight (or good luck, or both) by Gualtier in Morellino di Scansano in 1971.

For the past 30 years, the farms have been run not by a Moris but by a husband of a Moris, Adolfo Parentini, aided and abetted since 1988 by consultant oenologist Attilio Pagli, since 1996 by viticulturist Andrea Paoletti, and more recently, on the sales side, by his son Giulio. For the past 20 years or so, Moris Farms has been recognized, with Fattoria Le Pupille, as one of the founders of quality production in the Maremma, with judicious use of the "improving" grapes of France and the technology of barrique management. They are canny enough to recognize that the lighter wines of Le Mozzine should get less or no barriking compared with the sturdier, more tannic products of Monteregio.

Straddling the "before" and "after" stages of southern Tuscan wine development, they make the point that the transition from the quantity to the quality mind-set was not easy. As recently as the

early 1990s they had difficulty persuading pickers to undertake bunch-thinning in July and to take two or more passes through the vineyard at vintage time. Today, modern practices are in place, and there is even harvesting by machine (around 80 per cent)—something yet to catch on in traditional Tuscany.

FINEST WINES

Avvoltore IGT Toscana

This top cru (from Poggetti) is named after a hill that is named after a falcon-type game-bird. The first vintage was 1988, making it, with Saffredi, the first Maremma Super-Tuscan. The *uvaggio* is 75% Sangiovese, 20% Cabernet, and 5% Syrah (25% Cabernet until 1995). It spends 12 months in barrique—a wine of complexity and character, rich but rounded, a Tuscan modern classic. [2004★]

Morellino di Scansano

The mainstay of production (from Le Mozzine) is 90% Sangiovese plus "others". This light, fruity, easy-drinking wine sees no oak. In better years there may be a riserva, aged a minimum of two years.

Monteregio di Massa Marittima DOC

A wine of greater substance than the Morellino, but also of much lower sales. Sangiovese 90% plus Cabernet. Acceptable but not particularly exciting.

Scalabreto Passito Rosso VDT

As a *Vino da Tavola* it is allowed no mention of vintage, variety, or provenance, but between us it's a blend of Syrah and Montepulciano picked late in November and December. Now this is exciting: a vibrant pink, intense sweetness cut by firm acidity.

Moris Farms are also experimenting with a grape native to the hills north of Massa Marittima called Gorgottesco—one to watch.

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Total area: 476ha (1,176 acres)
 Area under vine: 70ha (173 acres)
 Average production: 400,000 bottles
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