

Monastero Suore Cistercensi



Fate can have lovely consequences. Our fortuitous encounter with the Bea family of Umbria of course led to the unearthing of one of the great domains of Italy. But, we have been additionally blessed as we marched together with Giampiero Bea as he made the acquaintance of the Sisters of the Cistercian order living and working at their monastery in Vitorchiano, ninety minutes or so north of Rome in the Lazio district. Here at this quiet religious outpost eighty women of this religious order work vineyards and orchards and gardens organically.

Led by Adriana and Fabiola (pictured left), this convent of 70 Cistercian nuns has been organically farming their five hectares of vines in Vitorchiano, Lazio, since the early nineties, but it wasn't until Bea began advising them in the early 2000's that their wines gained a larger audience. Today, a ravenous US audience eagerly awaits each new release of "the nun wine," and we at Rosenthal Wine Merchant cannot even come close to satisfying the huge demand. Even before Giampiero began helping them gently refine their approach and commercialize their wines—only to the US and Japan, it should be noted—he was struck by the frankness of a white wine produced with almost no technology. In a region rife with highly controlled, highly sulfured concoctions, here was a wine of real character, an unadorned expression of healthy grapes grown in a fascinating volcanic-soiled terroir. Each time we visit with the sisters, we are amazed by their warmth of spirit, their serene energy, and the shockingly spartan nature of their operation. The "winery" is nothing more than a toolshed packed to the gills with old steel tanks, fiberglass containers of various sizes, and glass demijohns tucked here and there—proving yet again that it takes the barest minimum to produce a wine of character and truth.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Certified organic by the Associazione Suolo e Salute since 1993
- **Treatments:** Copper-sulfate only
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to maintain vineyard health
- **Soils:** Volcanic
- **Vines:** Trained in Cordon, oldest vines date to 1963.
- **Yields:** Controlled through severe winter pruning, debudding, and green harvesting
- **Harvest:** Entirely manual, usually late September
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit



Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** Following total destemming, wines ferment spontaneously in stainless-steel and fiberglass tanks
- **Extraction:** Wines see pumpovers during fermentation.
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Hydraulic press
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, in tank following alcoholic fermentation

Aging:

- **Élevage:** 12 months in stainless-steel and fiberglass tanks
- **Lees:** Wines remain on their lees until assemblage prior to bottling.
- **Fining and Filtration:** Unfined, plate filtered if necessary
- **Sulfur:** Applied at harvest and at bottling, with 80-90 mg/l total sulfur