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Baglio di Pianetto and the De Bartoli revolution

This Sicilian wine estate turns 20 and consolidates the changes made by CEO Renato De Bartoli with two new wines. It has been 20 years since Count Paolo Marzotto acquired the vineyards on the old Via Francia where the Baglio di Pianetto Estate was created in the town of Santa Cristina Gela. While not far from Palermo, it sits at an altitude of 650m above sea level in an uncontaminated spot, a magical and lush domain that once belonged to Baron Raimone. The estate is a consolidated reality in Sicily with 90 undivided hectares of land, 65 of which are employed for wine production. It has been totally organic since 2016 and is currently being completely overhauled, a project led by a famous name for Sicilian wine, De Bartoli. Renato De Bartoli, the Baglio di Pianetto CEO, gave me a tour of the winery during which he explained to me the revolution that he has been carrying out since 2016 and their future projects. De Bartoli uses grapes from two totally different Sicilian terroirs. Aside from the Baglio di Pianetto estate, in fact, the company also owns a 60-hectare one in Noto with 40ha of vineyards. The first estate practically practices mountain winegrowing benefitting from distinct diurnal temperature variations, with the humid, continental climate favoring the cultivation of white wine grapes and early ripening red ones like Merlot. Noto, on the other hand, has arid climate and the vineyards are by the sea with their roots in a sandy and chalk soil. In Baglio di Pianetto, on the other hand, the soil is clay and full of gravel. The subsoil is composed of granite, rich in silica and rich in minerals, which here is called ficiligno. The attention paid to sustainability is maniacal and the estate is a virtuous microcosm with significant environmental biodiversity and, aside from vineyards, the estate also has olive and fruit trees and Mediterranean shrubs. Energy is 100% supplied by solar panels and all the waste water is collected in an artificial reservoir situated next to the winery to be used for other agricultural purposes. The winery develops vertically, on four floors, to reduce the use of pumps and electricity as well as to exploit the geothermics of the ground to have natural humidification and refrigeration. De Bartoli initiated his overhaul in the winery focusing on a new line of wines, progressively yet significantly eliminating the use of barriques in favor

of less complicated maturing methods to obtain products that are fresher and lither, closer to his ideal of the wine of the future. In the vineyards, his revolution involved planting hectares of new vines, while in the winery new and sophisticated machinery was brought in for bottling and new tractors and other machinery were also acquired. This has been possible thanks to the Marzotto family that has not limited itself to maintaining the estate but continues to invest in projects it strongly believes in. The 20th anniversary of the renewal of the vineyards coincided with the creation of two new wines, both made in the French style and with French varietals but filtered through the Sicilian terroir: a red blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, which replaces their three earlier reserves, and a white made from Viognier grapes, including those grown by the old rock formation called Ginolfo.

Sicilia Bianco Viafrancia Riserva 2016 91/100 - € 20 Made from Viognier grapes and matured separately on the lees in new and second-use barriques for nine months after which the different cuvée are blended together and the wine matured for another year in stainless steel vats. The wine has an intense, straw-yellow color and a bouquet of orange blossom, citrus, prickly pear and pineapple followed by toasted and spice sensations, pepper and flint. The mouthfeel is rich and bold yet at the same time has a nice freshness and a great salinity. The finish is of fruit, aromatic herbs and smoky sensations.

Sicilia Rosso Viafrancia Riserva 2014 93/100 - € 22 A blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon that has a full, ruby color. The aroma has floral scents of violet and lavender, notes of fresh prune and black cherry, cinchona spice, tobacco and leather and balsamic nuances. The mouthfeel has nice body, evident but nicely integrated tannins, a nice freshness and a finish of currant, blood orange and raspberry jam.