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PERNICE 2015, THE PINOT NOIR ACCORDING TO CONTE VISTARINO

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The Pernice cru wine is grown in a vineyard that legendary Luigi Veronelli, back in 1961, already recognised as the cradle of a "*superb Pinot Noir (...) with a lovely pale ruby and intense nose...*"

Lying at 350 metres' elevation and planted in largely limestone soils, the south-southeast-facing Pernice has been yielding Pinot Noir grapes that since 1997 have been vinified as a separate cru. Harvest after harvest, they have consistently produced an elegant, complex Pinot Noir that boasts a near-endless, spice-laden finish that embodies the quintessence of Conte Vistarino.

The 2015 growing season was characterised by an unusually warm spring. Contrary to the previous season, rainfall was not particularly heavy (about 600mm in total), but groundwater reserves that had been previously charged allowed the vines to cope well with the hot, dry months. The vineyards are managed according to sustainable, low environmental-impact viticulture, and yield never exceeds 6 tons of grapes per hectare. Following the harvest on August 31—obviously completely manual—, the grapes went through a chilled pre-maceration, and fermented part in oak and part in steel. The wine then matured in small oak barrels, and was released about 40 months after the harvest as Pernice, IGT Province of Pavia.

A proud ambassador of the Oltrepò Pavese, Pernice 2015 Provincia di Pavia IGT Pinot Noir has always played a leading role in the history and current reputation of its growing area.

It was, in fact, Conte Augusto Giorgi di Vistarino who, in the mid-1880s, imported the noble grape directly from France, and it flourished to become today one of the main grape varieties planted in the Oltrepò area. For Conte Vistarino Pinot Noir is a true passion, planted on 140 hectares and produced in a variety of styles.

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di Henry Borzi

“Our objective,” states winery director Ottavia Giorgi di Vistarino, “is to bottle the finest selections of Pinot Noir that we grow in our estate vineyards, wines that will continuously improve the reputation of the Oltrepò denomination, whose beckoning natural beauty and simply stunning wine quality, have the potential to carve out a high reputation in the Italian and international wine world.”

Conte Vistarino’s new wine cellar, “**La Casa del Pinot Nero**” (The Home of Pinot Noir), has everything to give the winery’s iconic grape the finest vinification technologically possible, through use of cutting-edge equipment, micro-vinifications, and gravity-fed transfers. This modern temple of wine, which evidences as well a meticulous sensitivity to its environment, welcomes visitors, who, struck by the contemporary-keyed complex of glass, light, and steel, can follow the entire course of winemaking, as well as a small rural museum. Following the visit is a tasting of a broad portfolio of Pinot Noirs in a suggestive tasting room surrounded by stacks of barrels.

Conte Vistarino is one of the truly historic wine producers in the Oltrepò Pavese growing area. The wine estate extends over 826 hectares, of which more than 200 are in vineyard (140 just in Pinot Noir). Pinot Noir, its main grape, is produced in a number of styles. Costa del Nero is the house standard-bearer, while Pernice, Bertone, and Tavernetto are renowned individual cru wines, and Saint Valier stands out as the grape’s white version. Equally prominent are the sparkling wines, which include Metodo Classico 1865, Saignee della Rocca rosé, and Cépage brut. Conte Vistarino also pays homage to traditional expressions of its growing area, with Bonarda or Buttafuoco, and it makes an intriguing White Riesling, Ries. The soul of the estate is the historic Villa Fornace, still today the family’s private residence; as of a few months ago, alongside it now rises the new winecellar, the fruit of a radical re-structuring of the old farmstead complex dating back to 1904.