

TORRE DEI BEATI

Adriana Galasso and her husband Fausto Emilio Albanesi have been Sommeliers since 1992. In 1999 Adriana's father gave her, as a gift, a ten hectare (24.7 acre) vineyard he planted himself in 1972. The couple immediately set about managing the vineyard and restructuring the old farmhouse that was in the middle of the vineyard to accommodate a winery. They implemented a program of biological farming, whereby one works in full respect for the environment.

They took on the masterful assistance of enologist Giancarlo Soverchia, who helped them to plant some new vines and rig the new winery with only the finest equipment available. The vineyard yields are kept extremely low, and the selection process at harvest time is nothing short of rigorous: the 2000 vintage (their first) was completed after six passes through the vineyard, in order to only harvest the most perfectly ripened grapes. The grapes are then subjected to the sorting table, tended to by four people, two per side (see picture below), who pick out any berries that look anything less than perfect. During the wine-making process the production is further limited in the interest of quality by a saignée, or a drawing off of some of the must during maceration to increase the red wine's concentration. The drawn off must is not wasted, but used to make one of the most attractive rosés we have ever tasted.

This is a very serious winery, only in its nascent stages. Fausto and Adriana are currently busy redesigning the farmhouse that holds the winery so that it will be able to accommodate fruit from an additional, newly acquired seven hectares of vineyard. We have no doubt that this property is destined for stardom.

In the Santa Maria in Piano church near the Torre dei Beati vineyard there is an old fresco, the artist of which remains undetermined, depicting the Universal Judgment according to a vision experienced by Alberico da Settefrati at the age of seven, while in a coma. The experience inspired him to join the order of Benedictine monks, who recorded the vision in what became known as the "Codice Cassinese 257". It is said that this parchment even inspired Dante Alighieri in his preparation for the Divine Comedy. The fresco is one of the most important on this theme in all of Italy, and at 11 meters long by 6 meters wide, it is the largest fresco in Abruzzi. In it, naked souls of the deceased are subjected to a series of tests to prove their worthiness of heaven. Only the most virtuous are able to pass through to paradise, and are depicted dancing in festive robes atop the "Torre dei Beati" (Tower of the Blessed). It is obviously from this fresco that they chose their name, and the reason is obvious: their grapes go through a similarly severe selection process.



Left, below: A detail of the "Torre dei Beati" of the famous fresco in the Santa Maria in Piano Church. Left, above; A view from the vineyards of the Gran Sasso Mountain Chain - These mountains are responsible for the tremendous swings in temperature from day to night that lend such structure and acidity to the Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. Above; The sorting table at Torre dei Beati at harvest time.