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Posted on [June 15, 2017](#)

Guado al Melo – Expressive Wines from Bolgheri



Vineyards at Guado al Melo, Castagneto Carducci

(All photos from the Guado al Melo website)

The Bolgheri district, located along the western coast of Tuscany in the province of Livorno, has become, in the short time frame of 35-40 years, one of the most celebrated of all wine territories in Italy. There's more than a touch of irony here, as the leading varieties are not indigenous, but rather ones imported from France, namely Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Yes, Sangiovese is grown in Bolgheri (this is Tuscany, after all), but this variety takes a back seat to the cultivars from Bordeaux.

The names of the most critically acclaimed red wines of Bolgheri (there are some notable whites produced here as well – more on that later) are quite famous, names such as Sassicaia and Ornellaia. Less well-known, but as impressive (arguably, even more so) is Grattamacco. These estates have made Bolgheri a household name and today they continue to craft stunning wines.

Of course, as with any wine zone, there are numerous excellent producers that are not as well known. One of the best of this category is **Guado Al Melo**, property of the Scienza family. Michele Scienza, who had spent time in Bolgheri, learning the land alongside his father Attilio, moved to the small town of Castagneto Carducci in 2000, and opened Guado al Melo soon after.

Michele had a wonderful education in wine, thanks to Attilio, who is one of Italy's most knowledgeable personalities when it comes to viticulture and grape varieties. One of the features of the winery today is a library of wine books, one of the most exhaustive in Italy, or the world for that matter. If you need to know anything about what varieties should be planted in which soils throughout Italy, ask Attilio Scienza. Believe me, you will get a thorough answer!



Inheriting such a vast wealth of knowledge from his father, it was only natural that Michele would become a bit adventurous in his work. Along with crafting his versions of Bolgheri reds – and one impressive Bolgheri white – Michele produces a special red known as Jassarte. The name is that of a river of the ancient world; together with the River Indo, these bodies of water separated East from West several thousand of years ago. Together with his father, Michele planted a separate vineyard at the estate that would be a field blend, with a mix between Mediterranean (current Western Hemisphere) and Caucasian (Asia Minor) varieties. The vineyards themselves are trained in ancient Etruscan methods, and the wine is a bit of a tribute to Etruscan winemaking from centuries past, while implementing current technology in the cellar. Jassarte is a blend of at least 30 varieties, which includes a few from Portugal, as well as Caucasus and the Rhone Valley; while there is little information given out regarding the exact varieties used in this wine, the dominant one is Syrah.

Here are a few brief notes on the wines of Guado al Melo:



2015 Criseo (Bolgheri Bianco) – This is one of the top two wines of Guadl al Melo, and of the current releases, it is the finest. A blend of Vermentino (80%) with smaller percentages of Verdicchio, Manzone, Fiano and Petit Manseng (how’s that for an unusual mix of varieties?); aged in stainless steel and given several months of aging on its lees. Aromas of lemon zest, guava and a hint of apricot. Medium-full with excellent depth of fruit, and a rich mid-palate. Impressive persistence, very good acidity and a light minerality. Excellent complexity, this is well made and engaging now, but will display greater complexities over the next 3-5 years. **Excellent**

2015 Antillo (Bolgheri Rosso) – Sangiovese-based, this offers aromas of black cherry, tobacco and menthol. Good acidity, with a slight bite to the tannins. Fresh and fruity, but lacking complexity. Enjoy over the next 2-3 years. **Good** (Antillo means “sunny place.”)

2015 Rute (Bolgheri Rosso) – Primarily Cabernet Sauvignon with a small percentage of Merlot. Bright ruby red; aromas of black cherry, myrtle, plum and mint. Medium-bodied, with ideal ripeness, good acidity, medium-weight tannins, very good persistence and impressive harmony, though perhaps a touch too much oak. Enjoy now and over the next 2-4 years. **Very Good** (Rute is an Etruscan word meaning “red.”)



2015 Atis (Bolgheri Superiore) – Atis is the name of a legendary Etruscan king. Cabernet Sauvignon-based, this has aromas of black plum, violet and thyme. Medium-full with very good to excellent concentration. Ripe and somewhat forward, with medium-weight tannins, good acidity and impressive persistence. This needs several years to settle down and display its finest qualities. Best in 10-12 years. **Excellent**

Bravo to Michele Scienza for his consistently excellent work at Guado al Melo. He was recently recognized for being one of the up-and-coming wine estates in Italy by a prestigious wine publication in that country, and I personally admire his Criseo Bianco quite a bit. I think you will be hearing more about his wines over the coming years.