

Porto Vecchio hosts grande dame of Tuscan wines on fifth anniversary

Porto Vecchio celebrated its fifth anniversary on 22 June with a Notte Sangiovese, an exclusive event in which proprietor Chris Cassar's son, Walter John Cassar, paired some great wines with five equally mouth-watering dishes prepared by the restaurant's young chef Matthew Sammut and his team.

Among the guests were the grand dame of Tuscan wines, Donatella Cinelli Colombini, owners of the Casato Prime Donne and the Fattoria Del Colle, who was accompanied by her husband Carlo Gardini. They are dear friends of Chris Cassar, who opened Porto Vecchio in 2007.

The occasion was also the official launch in Gozo of the DOC Orcia and Brunello wines of Ms Cinelli Colombini, where she has a house and feels very much at home. She comments on her blog at www.cellinicolombini.it about some of the guests: "some Danes from a boat moored not too far away, an English ex magistrate, a super wine expert who has a home here, an Australian with vines down under..."

Since it first opened, the reputation of Porto Vecchio Restaurant and Vinoteca, situated at the seafront in the Yacht Marina in Mgarr Harbour, Gozo, has grown steadily. Its varied menu features the best in Mediterranean cuisine, with the finest ingredients, both local and imported directly from the Friuli region of Italy.

The concept of the night was to show the difference in blends of the Sangiovese grape when paired with different foods. Following a welcome prosecco and finger food, for starters there was a ham hock and chicken terrine, a confit of chicken wings, artichoke and chicken tortellini and a sundried tomato veloute. This was accompanied by a Leone Rosso DOC Orcia from the Fattoria Del Colle. This ruby red 'lion' is a blend of 60% Sangiovese and 40% Merlot. It has a fragrant aroma with floral and fruity components. It has a full, warm, immediate taste.

The entrée consisted of a ceviche of king prawn in a tomato and basil salsa, a crab cake with red capsicum purée, oak smoked scallop with saffron cream and fennel foam. This was accompanied by Cenerentola DOC Orcia, also from the Fattoria Del Colle. Certainly no Cinderella, this is a blend of 65% Sangiovese and 35% Foglia

Tonda aged for a year in oak barrels, resulting in a dark ruby red wine. The fine, full aroma recalls ripe red fruits and the taste is intense, harmonious, smooth and robust. Main course included wild boar loin, parsnip purée, a Dauphinais pot with vichy carrots and gastrique beetroots, butter poached pears and port jus. The Casato Prime Donne wine was a Brunello di Montalcino DOCG Selezione Prime Donne made entirely of Sangiovese grosso. After being aged for two and a half years in large oak barrels, the colour is intense and brilliant ruby red. Similarly intense is the aroma, which is fine and spicy, with a warm, dry taste that is robust, harmonious and lingers at length in the mouth.

Next came a sesame seed crusted gorgonzola cake with port figs, parmesan crisp, Marsala zabaglione and frozen red grapes. This came with a Fattoria Del Colle Chianti Superiore made of 90% Sangiovese and 10% Canaiolo Nero that is refined for a year in cement vats. It is a dark and brilliant cherry red with a fruity and floral aroma that has a clear reference to violets. It is dry and sapid to taste, suitably tannic evolving in time into great softness.

Dessert consisted of a dark chocolate and orange mousse, almond tuile, with chocolate vermicelli, an almond and raisin crunch with white chocolate purée and nougat ice-cream. Departing from the Sangiovese theme, the wine with this course was a Michele Chiarlo Barolo Chinato with Nebbiolo grapes that produce an amber red wine with an ample, complex aroma with pleasant spice. It is full and delicate to taste while pleasantly bitter.

To round off the evening there was espresso amarettini and Grappa. Ms Cinelli Colombini is full of praise for the food “worthy of the best Tuscan tradition” and the young chef “who has lightened the traditional recipes, enriching them with new, aromatic hints. In other words, the Maltese cuisine in the new millennium”.

Commenting on her red wines, she describes them as “elegant, harmonious to be matched with great meat dishes in a perfect marriage. Both the Cenerentola and the Brunello “were a great success! Even with the mid summer temperatures, the refined balance of my wines overcomes and convinces. They are liked mostly by the more demanding, who follow new trends and privilege elegance compared to powerfulness.”

All wines during the evening were from Abraham’s Supplies Ltd, the Gozo distributor of agents Attard & Co.

Captions:



Donatella Cinelli Colombini and her husband Carlo Gardini (first from left) with (from left) Marco Vella, Wines and Spirits Division Manager at Attard & Co. Foodstuffs Ltd, Abraham Said of Abraham Supplies, Porto Vechhio proprietor Chris Cassar and his son, Walter John Cassar (Photo: Julian Calabrese)



The main course served during Porto Vecchio's fifth anniversary event, Notte Sangiovese, last month (Photo: Julian Calabrese)



Donatella Cinelli Colombini addressing the guests during Porto Vecchio's fifth anniversary event, Notte Sangiovese, last month (Photo: Julian Calabrese)