

Transcript of interview with Alberto Antonini and Pedro Parra on Ramiisol's first decade Terroir, Climate and Vertical tasting 2014-2021 Vintages

Robert Hefner Alberto, Pedro, it is so great to have you here again after Covid and it's propitious, because this is the 10th year since we bought this property and began our project here and began to be organic. So now you have had a chance over the past couple of days to be here and look around and taste all our wines, tell us where we are, where are we going? What is happening?

Pedro Parra So we are in a great terroir first. What is important to me and what impressed me a lot is that we are in these rolling hills of very ancient mother rock, called gneiss and it comes from a granitic terroir. So basically, you have the granitic soil in this property that normally makes fantastic wines. You can see everything is very green, because you get this rainy, cloudy weather – it's a weather that is more difficult to work, to learn about and to have precision that is needed to become a great viticulturist but at the same time, it makes wines that make me dream, because the wines are focused on complexity. Complexity in terms of flavours. The wines can be described as humid wines, you know this means wines that are ethereal, fruity, but not only fruity also the underbrush and many, many flavours and none of them are big, so it's about finesse and elegance; bright acidity; tension. And then when you try the wine, on the palate the wine has what the mother rock is bringing, this energy, finesse, something light but complex. Not simple. So the only way that you can do this is through a holistic process. You need to firstly have a good place, but you then need to plant it properly, in this case with Cab Franc. You need to be a good viticulturist, because you need to raise the grapes in the best way, fighting in some years with the weather. And then you need to be a very connected and sensitive winemaker in

the winery – it's the only way that you get something outstanding. So, it's a difficult and complete process and I think that after these 10 years, we are starting to achieve something that is unique in the US, I haven't seen something like that in other places. Basically, I love the wines. So holisticity to me is the main word.

Robert Hefner Well our dream was the same as Jefferson's dream, to create a world class wine here in Virginia and of course in those days all wines were organic, if you were going to do it, so that was his dream and I think we've taken our first big step forward to that dream. And now with a number of vintages we can begin to see where we are heading, so talk a little bit more about that would you Alberto?

Alberto Antonini I've been involved in this project since day one and I've been very happy to work with you both because you have always shown a very clear long term commitment, you have always shown a desire to farm as we should farm, without using any synthetic chemicals, which I call a very traditional way, because until the 1940s the world was set in its ways, it was holistic and farming was done as it should be. And I think this is what encouraged me to be a part of the project. And then coming here I discovered an environment that is very complex, and therefore it's exciting because I believe that all the greatest wines in the world are coming from very complex environments which here is represented by a lot of biodiversity. At Ramiiisol there are not only vineyards as you see in some more industrial wine regions but there is plenty of forest and bushes, hedge rows and animals, a lake, ponds and natural springs, so the complexity of this environment has always inspired me a lot and I believe that this is reflecting into the wines.

When it comes to making the wine, I think it's important to understand where to do what and in that regard I think that Pedro has been a huge help to us because we could split up the process of understanding where we should focus in the farm. Wherever you are in the world, the soil is very heterogenous, so when you walk through a property, you see great variation in soil types and so gaining an understanding of that has meant we had the right start to the project. In the end, we also developed the proper approach to the making of micro-terroir driven wine because these are, thank God, not winemaker's wines. In this world there are many rockstar winemakers but I believe the stars are very nice to look at in the sky but down here on the earth you have to understand what you are doing and be a part of mother nature's environment and therefore from the beginning, we thought about developing a proper vineyard management that was organic/biodynamic and the winemaking was about understanding how to do less in order to get more and obviously to do less, you had to be more knowledgeable, to be closer to what you are doing and you had to have confidence in what mother nature can provide you with.

At the end of the day, the experience has been to deliver through the wine to the consumer what I call the magic combination of 3: which is the earth, the plants and the climate. So what we had to do was to try to understand how to preserve the integrity of the three and bring them from the vineyard to the bottle. Obviously it has been challenging to develop this farming in this environment but at the same time I think it's the only way to achieve what we like in wine, which is complexity, many layers of aromatics and flavours and that only comes if you gain confidence and you really want to respect the integrity of the place where you are growing the grapes. That has been my experience, which has been fantastic!

Ten years in the development of a premium wine is nothing, because we are at the

beginning and only now starting to understand a bit more, but I see a great future from the commitment of the family first and for the beautiful environment that we are in.

Robert Hefner Well here we are on this visit and it is the first time you've been able to taste so many vintages at Ramiiisol. So can you tell us what you're finding and what your experience is of our wines and specifically what you have tasted?

Alberto Antonini I think, going through all the vintages we have made so far, there is something very clear, which is that every year, depending on the growing season, you feel the character of the Ramiiisol wine. And that is important to me and that means that we are doing things right. Obviously there are vintages when the growing season has seen better climate and less rain, but still in the more difficult vintages maybe the wine doesn't have the structure of other vintages but it still has the beautiful layers of aromatics and flavors, which reminds me of walking in a forest after the rain, which is kind of a complex example of aromas which is very exciting. And also, what has excited me is to be in a wine region which is very different from most of the other wine regions in the new world that are dry, sunny and warm, this is more humid and more rainy but that generates this complexity of environment, which to me, translates into very interesting, multi-layered complex wines. So, I think that the multiple years of the vertical tasting we have done is really reflecting the purity of wines that we want to achieve so that there is no masking the character and the origin of the wines in the cellar because we really did very little. And the diversity of the different vintages is something very positive to me, because it means that we are not in a very standard type of climate but very variable, very interesting.

Robert Hefner Well as you know, we decided to follow Gianfranco Soldera's idea of letting the wines age longer than anyone has here or most anywhere, so we released our first wine, which was our 2014 vintage in 2020 and we are all familiar with that, but where have we gone since then?

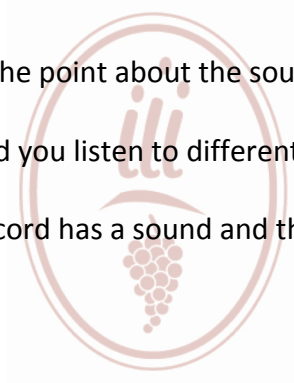
Alberto Antonini Well that's also something that has impressed me a lot and that made me think we are in a very special place because when we made the '14, and we started the ageing process in large casks as we don't want to have oak aromas and flavors and then we use a neutral large cask and what was amazing was that after one year, the wine was evolving and then two years and after three and four and I said *Wow, this is amazing*, because in most of the other projects in the new world, I've never been able to age a wine for so long, because the wines started to decline a bit during the oak ageing and here they were growing! So, it worked the other way. And obviously if you want to compare this type of ageing and evolution of the wine, it's very much what you see in a very prestigious wine region like Montalcino or Barolo where really the wines are so good and so much energy that over time they really develop well and by keeping the wine in oak for more time, it creates a more complex aromatic profile.

Robert Hefner Pedro, do you want to add anything to that?

Pedro Parra I think that Alberto was saying something that is very important. To me what is so appealing is that you have many great wines in the world, but what many people don't have is a wine with a *sound*, a personal *sound*, you know? There are great musicians but only a few have sound. There are great wines but only a few have true typicity. That typicity

makes, in time, the style and reputation of the house. Some people are looking for their whole life for that and they never get it because the site is not strong or they have a bad interpretation of what it can do. But in Ramiiisol's case, it came naturally, like *whoom, I'm here!* The wine wanted to say I'm here and I have a sound. And that is the most important thing to me. When we did the vertical tasting, all of the wines had a line, a clear line. It's like they are young but wise. And that is important. The site and the interpretation of the site has been going super-fast because you have achieved something that many people never achieve in life making wines. And you have achieved typicity and that is the most important asset for the winery --- it's crystal, pure, complex elegance of the wine.

Alberto Antonini I think that the point about the sound is good because it's like a musician, he has got a sound and you listen to different records and you may like some better than others, but every record has a sound and that's the feeling we both had during the vertical tasting.



Robert Hefner We really look forward to our future with you two guys.

Alberto Antonini Thank you Robert and MeiLi for giving us this amazing opportunity.