



Vigneti Massa Timorasso 'Derthona'

Why Be Curious? So you hear it bandied about: "There are thousands of native grape varieties in Italy!" That's true, but a lot of them are merely cute. The most serious native variety Timorasso deserves another category (and it's white to boot). It's utterly unique, complex, capable of aging, and transparent to where it's grown. Walter Massa is the *contadino straordinario* who brought the grape back to life in the early 1980s. He remains the leading producer and go-to grower for Timorasso.



For Timorasso as a variety: It's native and unique to the Colli Tortonesi (southeast Piemonte). Before 1980s, most growers were ripping out Timorasso and planting Cortese, as the latter produces more and Gavi was all the rage, so they could sell the grapes easily. Timorasso is one of those grapes (unlike, say, Cortese) that really is delicious and refreshing to eat right off the vine, due to its high sugar content and acidity. When Timorasso is vinified, you get lots of complexity and structure (from alcohol and from tannins – skin contact and thick skins!). Yet there's plenty of acidity to keep things fresh and a definite counterpoint of what we call 'honeyed minerality.' When Timorasso is young, it can be really tight. As it ages, it loses some of its baby fat, and riesling-ish, petrol-like notes emerge. As far as terroir, Walter vinifies each vineyard separately (or tries to if he has enough tanks) and bottles a small portion of three of the vineyards separately.

Produttore / Producer: Walter Massa is the real deal: a *contadino* (farmer) with deep family roots in his native Colli Tortonesi who's usually plowing his vineyards or buzzing around his cellar when someone arrives for a visit.

He'll then stop to spend hours showing around, pouring wines for, and talking with the continual waves of journalists, sommeliers, importers, buyers, and just plain fans who make their way to his village of Monleale in the southeast corner of Piemonte. Massa is universally known as the Maestro of Timorasso — he rescued it from obscurity and near-extinction and now leads a mini-renaissance of the variety in the Colli Tortonesi. But he also produces amazing and distinctive reds from the local varieties Barbera, Croatina, Freisa, and Nebbiolo. Besides being one of Italy's truly great producers, he's a stellar example of what the Italians call a *personaggio* — a real personality. We are lucky to have him *and* his wines.

Vigna / Vineyard: From several plots around the village of Monleale.

Cantina / Cellar: Native yeasts. Maceration with skins 48-60 hours. Fermentation 18-22°C. Batonnage. Light filtration. Minimum six months bottle aging before release.

Il Vino / The Wine: Derthona is the ancient name for Tortona, the town in southeast Piemonte after which the appellation Colli Tortonesi (Tortona Hills) is named. We often say that Timorasso is like Ali: "Float like a butterfly (baroque fruit and honeyed minerality) and sting like a bee (lots of well-integrated acidity)". Timorasso is one of the longest-aging white varieties in Italy. In fact, the wine often needs an extra year or two in bottle before it becomes expressive and fun to drink. Good vintages easily age five to 10 years, and we've had bottles going back to the 1980s that remained alive. It's especially fun to pour this wine blind for your friends who love aged white Burgundy or Riesling — after which you can point out that it costs half or a third of what a village-level white Burgundy would cost.

A Tavola... / At the Table... This is not your typically light and simply refreshing Italian aperitivo white wine. It's got substance and structure and deserves substantial food, such as richer fish, poultry, and pork dishes. Use it as you would an Austrian or (dry) Alsatian Riesling. It's also an excellent *vino da meditazione* at the end of a meal.

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Vigna / Vineyard

Nome / Name: Several plots around Monleale (Colli Tortonesi DOC), including:

Costa del Vento: 1.40 hectares, planted 1990 and 2004, clay and calcareous soils, western exposure.

Costiolo: 0.50 hectares, planted 1997, calcareous soils, southern exposure.

Sterpi: 1.5 hectares, 280 m elevation, planted 1996 and 2006, loosely packed stone and chalk soils, southwestern exposure.

Quota / Altitude: 250-280 m / 920 ft.

Suoli / Type of soils: Various and complex soils.

Esposizione / Exposure: Mostly southern and southwestern.

Vitigni / Varieties: 100% Timorasso.

Allevamento / Trellis system: Guyot.

Metodo di vendemmia / Harvest technique: Hand harvested.

Metodo agricolo / Agricultural technique: *Lotta integrata* (sustainable).

Cantina / Cellar**Lieviti / Yeasts:** Native.**Fermentazione alcolico / Alcoholic fermentation:** In stainless steel. Maceration with skins 48-60 hours. Fermentation 18-22°C. Batonnage.**Élevage:** In stainless steel and concrete tanks. Minimum six months bottle aging before release.**Chiarificazione, filtrazione / Clarification, filtration:** Light filtration.**Zolfo / Sulphur:** 20 mg/L added at bottling.**Altri prodotti aggiunti? / Other products added?:** None.**Produzione annua / Annual production:** 5,000 cases.**Gradazione alcolica / Alcoholic %:** 14%.**Tappo e bottiglia / Closure and bottle:** Natural cork, 750 ml Burgundy bottle.

Vigneti Massa