

# PORTOVINO

## IL SASSO 'ARUIT' [declassified Amarone] 2019

From Verona, walk up Negrar's valley until you reach a 'Rock' of Limestone – this is Il Sasso (*sasso* is 'rock' in Italian). It's here that the grape varieties Corvina, Corvinone, and Rondinella grow deep into the terraced limestone in search of water. Soon enough, the interaction of roots, water and limestone<sup>1</sup> soils will bring a palpable tension to the bottled wines. And, as we'll see below, Il Sasso's young owner Stefano Bellamoli focuses on preserving this tension. He tracks and knows the terracing here (soil, sun exposition, water retention, grape variety) like the back of his hand, because he has it in his notebook; he eschews wood (and its spice) in favour of unlined cement diamonds and ceramic eggs. All of this is done with the backdrop of an exacting viticulture that also happens to be certified organic. This is Valpolicella for minimalists.

### **Amarone as Amore**

And, without the drum roll, Il Sasso's Amarone. We don't know if it's because there are cool looking ceramic eggs used instead of barriques, or if it's the spontaneous fermentation, or the terraced limestone vineyards, or some Amarone whispers Stefano is doing here, but we've fallen head over heels with Il Sasso's Amarone (and we are Amarone haters!). With its spine-tingling acidity and impasto style fruit, it could mark a new style for the whole of Valpolicella looking to make Amarone wines that have more poise, and match better with the food on the table.

When we talk about an impasto style fruit, it's important to underline that Il Sasso does this with a dry or *secco* Amarone, in other words, under 2gr/l of residual sugar<sup>4</sup>. To have an Amarone that is *secco*, and fulfills the three Amarone DOC mandated 'taste' requirements of "full-bodied (*pieno*), plush (*vellutato*), and giving warmth (*caldo*)," is incredibly difficult without having exquisite grapes, dried and vinified exquisitely. Limited bottles but each one and vintage has a story to tell. Here are a few notes on current vintages:

Il Sasso 'Aruit' [declassified Amarone della Valpolicella] 2019:

The Languished Vintage. The wine was rejected by the Amarone DOC, thus it's named 'Aruit' ([The wine] languished). The declassified Amarone's oxidative (not oxidized) notes, along with the dried fruit, bring an interesting dark-yet- bright chiaroscuro aspect to the wine.



# PORTOVINO

---

**REGION:** Veneto **GROWING AREA:** Valpolicella Classico

**FARMING:** organic certified (ICEA # E1967)

**VINEYARD ALTITUDE:** 300 m / 980 ft

**SOILS:** yellow limestone, rich in seashell fossils

**VARIETIES:** 50% Corvina, 40% Corvinone, 10% Rondinella

**VINE AGE:** 13 years old **VINE TRAINING:** guyot

**HARVEST DATE:** beginning of September

**YEASTS:** native (spontaneous fermentation) **FERMENTATION & ÉLEVAGE:** manual harvest of selected grapes which are let to dry naturally for up to 4 months. Then, fermentation starts with a pied de cuvee and all the grapes co-ferment in big cement tanks for 1 month. 75% of the grapes are destemmed and 25% is whole cluster. Temperature under 25°C. When the fermentation is finished, the must macerate in cement for 2 months and then soft pressing. Élevage for 2 years in ceramic barrels of 400 ml. Additional élevage for 6 months in the bottle. No filtration and gravity natural decant

**SULPHUR:** 25 mg/L total SO<sub>2</sub> added at bottling **ALCOHOL:** 16% **ANNUAL PRODUCTION:** 120 cases