

# PORTOVINO

## VIGNETI MASSA 'MONTECITORIO' 2022 [TIMORASSO]

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 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 del Timorasso* — he rescued it from obscurity and near-extinction and now leads a 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.

For Timorasso as a variety: It's native and unique to the Colli Tortonesi (southeast Piemonte). Timorasso is one of those grapes 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 to serve as a counterpoint to 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, including Montecitorio, separately.

Montecitorio is from a cooler, northeast-facing site and produces wines that are leaner, more mineral, and more taut than the south- and southwest-facing crus Costa del Vento and Sterpi. 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, Riesling, or Chenin Blanc.

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**REGION:** Piemonte **GROWING AREA:** the village of Monleale, in the Colli Tortonesi DOC **FARMING:** organic, not certified **VINEYARD:** Montecitorio, 1.6 Ha **ALTITUDE:** 300 m (985 ft.) **SOILS:** marl and limestone **VARIETIES:** 100% Timorasso **VINE AGE:** 20 years **YEASTS:** Native **FERMENTATION &**



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**ELEVAGE:** Spontaneous fermentation in stainless steel vats with skin maceration at 10°C for 30-40 hours, 40 days of fermentation at 22°C, and élevage on the fine lees for a minimum of one year with battonage every 10-15 days, all in stainless steel tanks

**SULPHUR:** 20 mg/L added only at bottling (maximum 40 mg/L total SO<sub>2</sub> in the finished wine)

**ALCOHOL:** 14-14.5% **ANNUAL PRODUCTION:** 500 cases

**VINTAGE:** 2022 was a very warm year in which the Massa team had to harvest quickly in order to avoid overripeness. It's a riper vintage with good quality.