

# PORTOVINO

## VIGNETI MASSA 'PERTICHETTA' CROATINA 2013

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 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.

This is a serious Croatina from the leading producer in the Colli Tortonesi (southeast Piemonte). Croatina — also called Bonarda in the Oltrepò Pavese — grows widely in northern Italy but is taken seriously by few producers. Jancis Robinson mentions only two, including Walter Massa, in her definitive book, *Wine Grapes*. Jancis is wrong, however, about Croatina best being drunk young — at least Massa's Croatina! This is structured, serious wine that takes a couple of years to unwind and continues to evolve for at least several years after that. This wine, along with Barbera 'Monleale' and Freisa 'L'Avelenata', demonstrates that Walter Massa is an able and versatile *rossista* (red wine maker), in addition to having the magic touch with Timorasso.

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**REGION:** Piemonte **GROWING AREA:** the village of Monleale, in the Colli Tortonesi DOC **FARMING:** organic, not certified **VINEYARD:** from two plots totaling 2.5 hectares **ALTITUDE:** 240-260 m (785-855 ft.) **SOILS:** clay **VARIETIES:** 100% Croatina **VINE AGE:** 17 -20 years **YEASTS:** Native **FERMENTATION & ELEVAGE:** Spontaneous fermentation with a week of maceration in cement vats for three weeks, then *élevage* for six months in old barriques (225 L) followed by two years in stainless steel vats **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:** 1500 cases

**VINTAGE:** 2013 showed excellent seasonal development until August 20th, after which there was rain until the end of harvest. As a result, ripeness was lower than in many vintages of the 2000s, with good structure and balance.

