

Bringing A Vision To Life

An Interview with Massimo Piccin, Founder, Sapaio

EDITORS' NOTE In 1999, Massimo Piccin was working in Vittorio Veneto as an engineer in the family construction company when he decided to follow the great passion that he always carried, a love of gastronomy and wine. At the root of his love was a strong determination and a respect for the earth and his surrounding environment. He pursued a dream project, attainable with perseverance and tenacity. Like a mosaic, the path was paved one stone at a time. The first step was the search for a potential real estate investment in a cellar. Piccin included his father, Dario, who not only listened enthusiastically to his son's project, but also supported him alongside business partner and family friend, Roy Bernard. The search led them to Tuscany, in Bolgheri. The Piccin and Bernard families decided to acquire a property that was at that time a small, share-cropping farm, mainly cultivated on arable lands, with few rows of vines.



Massimo Piccin

WINERY BRIEF Sapaio (sapaio.com) was born in 1999 in Castagneto Carducci, Bolgheri in Italy, from the will of Massimo Piccin, a Venetian engineer moved by a grand passion for wine. A courageous and visionary choice was to invest in a property in Bolgheri, where there was already a small farm, managed by share-cropping of principally arable lands, with few rows of vines. This became an example of how a great passion can bring about the realization of a prestigious project with the intent to grow and pursue excellence in an unparalleled territory, home of a grape designation celebrated all over the world. Today, the winery boasts more than 25 hectares of vineyards and the production of two labels: Sapaio and Volpolo.

Will you discuss the history of Sapaio?

Sapaio's journey began in 1999, born from a blend of passion for wine and the desire to invest in a dream project. In those years, I embarked on a quest to find the perfect location to bring my vision to life. After exploring various wine-making regions in Italy, my encounter with Bolgheri was serendipitous. What captivated me about this corner of Tuscany were its light, welcoming atmosphere – akin to a maternal embrace, the rolling dunes, and the nearby sea. It felt like the ideal place to call home. Thus,

in 1999, I acquired our first property, started planting in 2000, and by 2002, I had relocated from Veneto to Sapaio.

Will you provide an overview of Sapaio's winery and wines?

Sapaio's winery and wines have evolved significantly since the initial purchase of 8 hectares of vineyards in 1999. Today, our estate spans 40 hectares, with 27 dedicated to viticulture. From the outset, our goal has been to follow the path laid by the pioneers of Bolgheri's exceptional wines. We focus on just two

wines, each a unique expression of Cabernet Sauvignon blends. Volpolo Doc embodies the essence of Bolgheri, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Petit Verdot. Sapaio IGT Toscana Rosso, on the other hand, represents the convergence of two territories,



The village of Castagneto Carducci, Italy, home to Sapaio

Bolgheri and Bibbona, blending Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot.

What have been the keys to Sapaio's industry leadership?

At the heart of Sapaio's industry leadership lies our commitment to remaining a small, artisanal operation. We believe that meticulous care and attention to every aspect, both in the vineyard and the cellar, are paramount. For us, agriculture isn't merely a mechanical action, but a conscious dialogue with the land.

How critical is innovation to Sapaio's culture?

Innovation is ingrained in our daily ethos, a constant drive to evolve and explore new horizons. This innovative spirit inevitably shapes our approach to business, challenging conventional market norms.

How has Sapaio balanced the use of new technologies in its winemaking with its focus on the human touch?

While we keenly embrace new technologies and the latest scientific advancements in enology, we adhere to a winemaking philosophy that prioritizes simplicity and sensitivity. Winemaking, as we see it, is a process intimately connected to nature, requiring a delicate touch rather than excessive technological intervention.

Sapaio has a major commitment to sustainability. Will you discuss this focus and how it is ingrained in Sapaio's values?

Our deep commitment to sustainability reflects our acknowledgment of the pressing climate crisis and its impact on agriculture and our lives. We implement sustainable practices aimed at reducing CO2 emissions and mitigating damage to the planet, though I question whether these efforts alone are sufficient. In viticulture, the introduction of resilient grape varieties and adaptive strategies represents a response to climate change. However, I believe that addressing the climate crisis necessitates a fundamental shift in our relationship with the environment – moving away from exploitative and destructive attitudes towards harmony, respect, and balance.

Where did your passion for the wine business develop?

As for my passion for the wine business, it's less about the business itself and more about the wine. Growing up in the Prosecco region, wine has always been a joyful part of daily life for many of us. ●