

TENUTA SAN LEONARDO

Trentino

San Leonardo (Avio), Province of Trento

Established: 1770

Owners: Carlo & Anselmo Guerrieri Gonzaga

Winemakers: Carlo Guerrieri Gonzaga & Carlo Ferrini

Production: 145,000 bottles

Hectares under vines: 21

Viticulture: Conventional



When you visit Trentino's Tenuta San Leonardo, described by Gambero Rosso as one of the "fifty wineries that changed Italy", it is impossible not to be captivated by its sheer beauty. Tenuta San Leonardo is located midway between Verona and Trento, with the Dolomites serving as an imposing backdrop to its breathtaking landscape. The lovingly tended 300 hectares include manicured lawns, parkland, a stunning villa, a museum, the original Roman road to Austria and a cellar to rival any Bordeaux chateau. The comparisons with Bordeaux do not end there, for the wine could easily pass as cru classé left bank, but this is no insurance company owned chateau. Tenuta San Leonardo has soul, and you can feel it: in the place, the wine and the people.

Founded in 1770, grapes were grown here as early as 900 AD, when monks from a monastery on the estate made wine for mass. Part of the ancient monastery survives today and has been incorporated into the winery and its old hospice is now used as a cellar. One would need to write a book on San Leonardo's history to do it justice, as the Tenuta has witnessed some extraordinary events. The history of the property dates back 1500 years to when a group of prisoners from Trentino, captured by the Frankish army, erected a chapel nearby dedicated to the patron saint of prisoners, Saint Leonard, following their release. In the First World War, it was here that Austria made a formal request for an armistice and, during the Second World War, the family's villa was the headquarters of the counterespionage section of the German high command.

It wasn't until Carlo Guerrieri Gonzaga took over the Tenuta in the 1970's that San Leonardo began to make viticultural history. The estate has been in his family since 1724. Following his extensive experience in France and at Bolgheri's Tenuta San Guido, Carlo set about replanting the vineyards to craft a wine that would become a Trentino, and Italian, classic. The blend in 1982, as it remains today, is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc and 10% Merlot, selected from the best barriques and only made in the finest vintages.

San Leonardo IGT

Antonio Galloni rates the current vintage as their best yet: "2004 San Leonardo is probably the finest wine I have ever tasted from this property. Gorgeous, well-defined aromatics lead to layers of sweet dark fruit, grilled herbs, cassis, plums and blackberries, all framed by finessed tannins. The wine remains quite primary, muscular and in need of serious aging, but even at this early stage it is clear that the 2004 San Leonardo is awesome juice".

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