



wine review: Contrada Palui Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG

February 2024

I love discovering a new wine that leaves a lasting impression, a wine that stands-out in a sea of premium wines given its unique characteristics, a wine that you find yourself reflecting on weeks after tasting it. Let me introduce you to Contrada Palui, a relatively new Valpolicella producer that has entered the market with one of the most elegant and expressive terroir-focused wines you'll find in all of Valpolicella, and it's an Amarone!

Proprietor Hannes (Hans Karl) Pichler established his naturally organic vineyard perched high up on a hill in a valley north east of Verona. This greenfield vineyard sits at 500m elevation and given its location it receives sun all day long while the Lessinian Alps immediately to the north provide cool mountain air preserving the vibrant acidity in the grapes. Although the 180' aspect and high elevation play important roles in the vineyard, it's the clay-limestone soils with flint and black basalt that impart such important characteristics in the wine. My first time tasting the wine I was impressed with the flinty-minerality characteristics it displayed. I wasn't surprised to learn the geological composition of the vineyards. I also wasn't surprised to learn that a highly skilled up-and-coming Valpolicella-based winemaker, Marco Signorini, was working with Hannes Pichler to realize this terroir-focused project.

Terroir-focused wines in Valpolicella isn't a new trend. Each of the valleys host seemingly countless unique vineyards of every shape, aspect, elevation, and soil composition, all producing distinct wines. There have been incredible single vineyard appassimento wines produced for decades throughout Valpolicella too, however, the process of drying grapes can often push those wines into a category perceived to be more of a technique wine than a terroir

often push those wines into a category perceived to be more of a technique wine than a terroir wine. Perhaps this is where the talent and craftsmanship of the winemaking team shines brightest. The challenge of producing expressive terroir wines whilst employing a winemaking technique that literally transforms the grapes before they're pressed, some would say potentially masking the nuanced aspects of the terroir. So when you discover a 100% appassimento wine, such as Contrada Palui's Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG, that shows such distinct terroir characteristics, it's a prime example of talented winemaking highlighting the unique terroir to deliver expressive and balanced wines.

Contrada Palui 2019 Amarone della Valpolicella (pre-release sample, the second vintage of this Amarone) – Remarkably light colour, very faint ruby red with a garnet hue. First appearance would suggest this isn't a 16% abv Amarone, then the aromas confirm in fact it is. Very intriguing and complex bouquet of dried red fruits, dried cherry, herb garden, floral, sweet tobacco, and distinctive flinty-minerality. The palate shows refreshing bright berry notes, dried fruit, spice and herbs. It's elegant, with tart dried fruit, spice, distinctive flint, and great structure. Lean with impressive concentration, one of the most elegant expressions of Amarone I've tasted. Youthful well integrated tannins will support medium term cellaring where the wine will appreciate further complexity. Anticipated commercial release May 2024. Enjoy over the next 10+ years with charcuterie and creamy pasta dishes. Tasted February 2024. 95+ points. Matt Steeves – <http://www.quercusvino.ca>

