

Uvaggio Vermentino 2008 Lodi/ Aschero Pigato

4 Aug 2009 by Jancis Robinson

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One of many heartening things I noticed on my recent trip to the west coast of North America is how keen everyone is on the more obscure grape varieties. I think perhaps the thing that is most dated about our DVD [Jancis Robinson's Wine Course](#), even though I'm quite proud of how it looks, is that I ended it expressing my concern that it looked then (in the mid 1990s) as though the wine world was headed towards being dominated by Chardonnay and Cabernet. In fact nowadays, there is a real fascination all over the world with a genuine variety of varieties. While in North America I tasted, for example, Oregon Dolcetto, Canadian Ehrenfelser and this, a Vermentino from Lodi and the northern end of California's Central Valley.

Lodi is a seriously interesting location for growing grapes, as [this entry](#) in the *Oxford Companion* demonstrates. And **Uvaggio Vermentino 2008 Lodi** made from Vermentino grapes grown there is seriously good value. Only 12% alcohol and a modest price, it over-delivers in terms of flavour and refreshment. Uvaggio di Giacomo is a project devised by Jim Moore (aka Giacomo) who used to look after the Italian varietals program for Robert Mondavi Winery, and barrel broker and frequent forum poster Mel Knox.

I tasted the 2007 vintage almost exactly a year ago and found it rather tart and bland but the 2008 is looking lovely now: bursting with fruit like a slice of juicy pear and with quite enough acidity to make it a good drink without food. It is only 12% alcohol and the Lodi grapes were apparently fully ripe at 21 Brix. Unlike most Cal-Ital varietals, which seem to bear pretty little relationship to the Italian prototype, one mouthful of this was enough to remind me of a lunch in Liguria (pictured here, courtesy of Mick Rock at Cephas) high above the sparkling blue Mediterranean. (Vermentino has been shown by DNA analysis to be the same as the Pigato grown around Genoa, and the [Favorita of Piemonte](#).)

I'm not sure I agree with the claim on the back label that Vermentino is 'where Pinot Grigio meets Gr ner Veltliner', although you have to credit whoever wrote it with extreme cunning in citing these two extremely popular varietals. I was hugely impressed by the round mouthfeel, however. The wine is bottled with the Diam cork, advertised with such enthusiasm by Jason Lett of The Eyrre Vineyards in [this video](#).

For the moment the Uvaggio Vermentino is available only in the US and Canada, I'm afraid, so Europeans will have to console themselves with the finest example of the prototype to have come my way. **Laura Aschero Pigato 2007 Riviera Ligure di Ponente** is a seriously vibrant native Ligurian with really intriguing scents of fresh herbs and lush vegetation and then real tension on the palate. Made by Laura Aschero's son Marco Rizzo in Pontedassio, it can be found in Germany for  16.80 chez the redoubtable K & U of Nuremberg. The 2008 is imported into the UK by Enotria, who advise that Swig ([www.swig.co.uk](#)) will offer it at  21 a bottle, which seems a tad steep, though so is the terraced hillside on which this beauty is grown.

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