

Piero and Lodovico Antinori - together again

11 Sep 2001 by JR

After 20 years of black sheepery well outside the Antinori family fold (based in the Palazzo Antinori, Piazza Antinori for the last six centuries or so), Lodovico Antinori is now planning a joint venture with his brother and head of the family's pre- eminent Italian wine business Piero Antinori.

The new estate Campo dei Sassi is being planted with 60 hectares of the two Cabernets and Merlot north of the Bolgheri DOC towards Bibbona. (Piero Antinori meanwhile is busy planting all over this Maremma region on the Tuscan coast.) Lodovico had a vineyard in Bibbona, possibly for his Le Volte label, when running Ornellaia, his own special Bolgheri baby which was set up to rival their uncle's Sassicaia and Piero's Solaia. The Campo di Sassi estate (too late for the new World Atlas of Wine, dammit) is just north of the village of Bolgheri and directly inland from Marina di Bibbona. The original owners of the vineyard, the Mannoni family, also have a share in this new enterprise, as does their nephew Niccolo Marzicchi Lenzi.

This zone, hillier and stonier than most of Bolgheri, will be part of a planned new DOC to be called Terratico di Bibbona and Italian wine guru Daniel Thomas tells me that two small estates, Villa Caprareccia and Elisabetta, are already making very decent wine here.

Perhaps even more interesting than all this rapprochement is what is going on at Ornellaia. It was announced some time ago that Robert Mondavi had taken a stake in it, but the Californians have moved their Languedoc winemaker in there (now that he no longer has the Aniane project to work on) and according to local gossip the Mondavis are very much the dominant force in the operation now. Signs are too that the strange Sauvignon Blanc which has emanated from Ornellaia for many a year, Poggio alle Gazze, may have breathed its last. Sic transit, well not exactly gloria.