

# WINE ENTHUSIAST

## April 2007

### The Emerging Wine Regions of Italy

#### UMANI RONCHI



"We are distinguished by a very particular location," says Michele Bernetti (left), director of Umani Ronchi, one of the most important producers of Cònero wine. "We enjoy good light and excellent maturing potential despite being the northern-most area in Italy for growing the Montepulciano grape," he explains.

"The results are wines with good structure and acidity and particular elegance." And, according to Bernetti, the future looks even brighter. Starting with the 2004 vintage, the word "Cònero" can be used to distinguish the DOCG wine. "This should help clear consumer confusion," he says. Another positive trend is that winemakers are increasingly making Cònero wines with 100 percent Montepulciano: "Having a pure expression of the grape will make our region and our wines more identifiable and visible."

#### Rosso Piceno / Cònero

Most people would be hard pressed to identify the exact location of the Marche in central Italy, much less pinpoint the Cònero and Rosso Piceno wine zones. It's actually very easy: the entire Adriatic flank of the Italian peninsula, from Venice to Puglia consists of a continuous elongated strip of sand beach, with one exception: the little stub of rocky land known as the Cònero promontory that jets into azure seas and gets its name from the ancient Greek word for "elbow."

Located in this geographic anomaly is one of Italy's most precious – albeit virtually unknown outside Italy – wine production areas. Cònero is a wine of profound character and concentration that has been compared to some of the country's best reds, including Brunello di Montalcino. Its formula consists of 85% Montepulciano grape (giving structure, power and tannin) and no more than 15% Sangiovese (lending delicate aromas of cherry, blue flower and Mediterranean herbs;) the riservas age up to 28 months in oak.

A second, bigger area known as Rosso Piceno is a swath of land both north and south of the Cònero promontory. These are approachable wines often prized for their excellent value. The composition here is 30 to 50 % Sangiovese with 35 to 70 percent Montepulciano and small amounts of Trebbiano and Passerina.

This single area of the Marche offers a high-quality emerging wine (Cònero) and a more informal red (Rosso Piceno) that is well suited for everyday dinners.

Producers to watch for include: Boccadigabbia, Fazi Battaglia, Santa Barbara, **Umani Ronchi** and Velenosi.



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