



**SCHIOPPETTINO VERTICAL:
PROVING IT AGES BETTER THAN PEOPLE THOUGHT**

By Ian D'Agata

I know for a fact that Schioppettino ages. I still have in one of my four different cellars, scores of Schioppettinos for the late 1980s. I am not sure it is ideal to hold on the wine quite that long, but keep in mind I do so purposely to establish timelines on the maturation behaviours for Italian wines in general. It is precisely these, albeit empiric, studies that have led me to conclude that Schioppettino is usually best drunk within fifteen years of the harvest, and is usually most enjoyable anywhere from five to eight years after the vintage.

The following is a description of wines tasted once in July 2009, and again in December 2009.

La Viarte 2003

Dark ruby. The knock-out nose is remarkably fresh with plenty of delicately spicy aromas (white pepper, cloves, cumin) that nicely round out notes of fresh blackberry and blueberry. Fresh and clean on the palate, with high but harmonious acids chiselling both red and black berry fruit flavours. Finishes rather long and with a mineral edge and a hint of cracked green peppercorns. If I had tasted this blind, I doubt I would have recognized this as a wine from 2003. Warrants an outstanding score.

Petrussa 2001

Dark ruby but with a hint of brick at the rim. There seems to be a hint of premature oxidation on the nose, with dry leaf, rosemary and hazelnut aromas dominating those of black plums and coffee. More coffee and dried herbs on the palate, this finishes short and with a strong aromatic, earthy component. My least favourite wine of the tasting.

La Viarte 1999

Medium ruby-red. Initially aromatically compressed, then opens up to reveal pretty ripe red cherry and bay leaf aromas. Plump and juicy on entry, with ripe red cherry and raspberry jam flavours buffered by harmonious and lively acids. Finishes with a hint of saline minerality. Almost merits an outstanding score here.

Petrussa 1999

Medium ruby with a light brick rim. Very pretty nose that has richer, riper aromas than the La Viarte bottling from the same vintage, with ripe red cherry and strawberry aromas complicated by bay leaf, coriander and cinnamon. Rather elegant and lightly built on the palate but with considerable definition and depth to its red cherry, raspberry and plum flavours. Finishes long and with a hint of coffee. A ninety or so point wine.

Petrussa 1998

Ruby red with a slightly brick rim. Initially austere nose opens up to reveal complex aromas of red cherries, sweet spices, crystallized ginger, green pepper and sandalwood. Suave and luscious on the palate, with considerable depth to its fleshy red fruit flavours, this finishes with a complex, rich red berry cocktail and tarry quality. Perhaps my favourite of all the wines in this tasting, it easily warrants a mid to high range outstanding score. Very impressive.

La Viarte 1997

Ruby red with brick at the rim. Pretty, floral red berry aromas mix nicely with hints of mint, earth, balsamic vinegar and pine needles. Full bodied but rather tight thanks to high acids that give its red and black fruit flavours definition and verve. Very long and considerably mineral on the finish, this wine is still developing and changing and will remain at the current wonderful drinking phase for at least another 8-10 years. Another 90+ points wine.

Ronchi di Cialla 1995

Medium deep purple-ruby with a crimson rim. Slightly earthy, mushroomy notes at first, then fresher blackberry and blueberry jelly notes emerge. Medium bodied on entry, with fresh, still bright flavours of small black berries, with an underbrush and rhubarb note picking up steam on the finish, which is only of average length. Well done, but I expected more. Perhaps it was an off bottle (this is the only wine in the tasting I unfortunately had only one bottle of).

La Viarte 1994

Red with a very brick rim. The nose is considerably tired at first, but offers pretty notes of faded roses and violets, earthy mushrooms and some chocolaty tobacco with air. Considerably better on the palate, this has a sweet, creamy set of red cherry and strawberry flavours that finish a little short. There is a lingering, very pretty, floral quality at the back.

Ronchi di Cialla 1990

Medium deep ruby with a pale rim. Perfumed, deep, elegant nose of black cherries, slate and green peppercorns. High but balanced acids give this an edgy quality, with the ripe soft black fruit standing out on a long mineral finish. Very well done.