

Degrassi Terre Bianche Cuvee Blanc 2009 - white blend



Malvazija 30%, Chardonnay 30%, Viognier 20%, Sauvignon blanc 20%

Degrassi was the first to introduce elegance in Istrian wines. This fact is maybe more important than anything else Moreno has done in his outstanding winemaking career. He was brave enough to decide he is not going for massive, ripe fruit wines which are, with their extremely high extract and characteristic taste, easily recognizable as exclusive and expensive products even among people who are not notorious wine geeks. Instead, he insisted and still insists on elegant wines with moderate alcohols, always profoundly fresh and crisp. His mission has finally started to pay off. In fact, in the last ten years or so, due to the “antiparkerization” movement, Western European wine market has become very sensitive to the amount of wood aromas and doesn’t receive well excessively structured wines. It seems Degrassi is the first Istrian winemaker who is, thanks to his beliefs, completely compatible with European trends year after year.

But Degrassi’s pioneer spirit left a mark in other fields, too. He was the first in Istria to introduce blending of different grape varieties to create wines of utmost quality. Already in the early 1990s he started to blend Bordeaux varieties in a classic Bordeaux style. Today, thanks to his new vineyards in which he planted many different varieties, he uses the same practice with white wines, as is the case with the object of this review.

The presence of Malvasia in the blends is usually quite pronounced. Nevertheless, at first sniff it is hard to spot it, but as the wine opens up, its presence gets stronger and stronger. In the mouth quite the opposite happens. The flavour is easily recognizable and to most blends it gives the unique footprint of Malvasia and Istria - here mostly felt in a slightly bitter finish. The abundant banana flavour that dominates in the beginning is also very typical of Malvasia, but here it doesn't come from Malvasia but probably from Viognier.

Indeed, in Malvasia, banana is often found in the nose, while it's hard to find it in the mouth. Here the opposite is true, a fact that is so typical for Viognier. Aroma is predominantly Sauvignon-like, with fresh herbal notes, but of course intertwined with plenty of other aromas like acacia flowers, citrus in traces and peach, the latter very typical of Malvasia from Buje area. The aroma, or more precisely the flavour of peach, remains in the finish. This gives the impression that Malvasia is, after all, the most dominant in this rich and brilliantly balanced blend. Chardonnay is not recognizable in the nose but, in general, this is a variety whose aromas are hard to define. Here its role is to fill up the body of this elegant wine.

Finally, the story wouldn't be complete without mentioning this wine's pronounced minerality. It's expressed through mild salinity, together with a slightly bitter finale another typical feature of Istrian Malvasia. Although it doesn't always have to be that way. Minerality in Istria, like everywhere else in the world, is the expression of terroir and primarily depends on the soil composition. In some varieties it is more pronounced, in others a bit less, but in Istria all varieties thriving on good positions should have this beautiful mineral accent.

90 pts

