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**About wine, gastronomy & travel**

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## RICCI CURBASTRO: AN EFFERVESCENT HAPPY END

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In September 2011, I had the great pleasure to visit a few wineries during a press-trip organized by **FEDERDOC** in Northern Italy. After **VALDO** in Valdobbiadene, the next visits were in the heart of the Veneto wine history, around the city of Verona. **MASI** was the first 'Valpolicella' winery we visited, followed by **NICOLIS**, **TEDESCHI** and **VALENTINA CUBI**. On our last day of visits we moved on from Verona to Capriolo in Lombardia. After the powerful reds from the four Valpolicella wineries, it was time for something refreshing. It was a great pleasure and honour to meet **RICCARDO RICCI CURBASTRO**, owner of the **AZIENDA AGRICOLA RICCI CURBASTRO** (winery, annex museum, park and agriturismo in the **FRANCIACORTA** region) but also president of **FEDERDOC** and of the **EFOW** (European Federation of Origin Wines). The visit and the fantastic lunch were indeed a great and 'effervescent' happy end of our short trip to Italy.



© Ricci Curbastro

### RICH HISTORY

The Ricci Curbastro family has centuries of rich history in the farming industry. Not only in Franciacorta (Capriolo), but also in Romagna (Lugo) and Brisighella (Rontana). Sparkling wine was already produced and bottled in Capriolo at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The first known labels date from 1885! The family company was transformed in a modern wine company in 1967 by Gualberto Ricci Curbastro, Riccardo's father. That was the year in which the DOC Franciacorta became reality. The winery cellars are located under the century old green park where the family house Villa Evelina can be found. The whole family domain has an extension of 32 hectares of which 27 are covered with vineyards.



© Ricci Curbastro

A visit to the property will lead you to the underground cellars, but also to the museum of Agriculture and Wine with thousands of old work instruments, the tasting, events and conference room, the Granaio Verde antique shop and the Acinello, a discovery path of the 5 senses, the wine and winemaking culture for schools. The whole project, including the park with all kinds of animals, is absolutely worth a long visit! The holiday farmhouse has 8 apartments, recently renovated, all in very cosy style. A great place to stay at, near the heart of the picturesque (and gastronomic!) city of Capriolo. You can find more information on the [website](#).



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## THE TASTING

Here too, our group was not unanimous about the tasted wines. This is mainly a question of what one expects in a glass of sparkling wine. Some like it fresh, fruity and dynamically bubbling; others would prefer a more yeasty, classic, ripe vinous type while the rest will opt for elegant, softly bubbling, mineral wines. Regarding your preferences and if you stick at it or not, you will have a unique, personal interpretation of each sparkling wine that you will taste. Nothing wrong about difference!



*Riccardo Ricci Curbastro during the tasting © Christian Callec 2011*

**For me, the style of RICCI CURBASTRO is all based on elegance, softly bubbling, harmonious and pure taste, easy drinking and above all, enjoying life. I like this style very much too.**



*How the fine lees find their way to the bottle-neck... © Christian Callec 2011*

But I have no problems at all with the other types. All is a question of moment, company, place, mood... I have been a few times earlier to Franciacorta and discovered many different styles that I liked, depending of the momentum. Some of my favourites until now were: **Bellavista, Ca'del Bosco, Monte Rossa, Berlucchi, Majolini, Il Mosnel, La Montina** and **Contadi Castaldi**. All of them with an own style and personality. So, what about **RICCI CURBASTRO** wines?

**RICCI CURBASTRO FRANCIACORTA BRUT:** 60% chardonnay, 30% pinot bianco, 10% pinot nero. Fermented in stainless steel tanks. Second fermentation and aging for 30 months in the bottles on the fine lees. 7 to 8 g/l residual sugar. Good, fine and persistent mousse and cordon. Elegant, floral and finely mineral (from the lees!) with a hint of fresh bread crumbs. Light and elegant, fresh and delicately fruity, delightful and easy drinking. A perfect aperitif wine with just enough structure to let fish swim again with pleasure on your plate. **Good wine!**



**FRANCIACORTA SATÈN BRUT 2006:** 100% chardonnay, fermented in French oak barrels for 8 months. Second fermentation and aging for 36 months in the bottle on the fine lees. Very nice, soft and creamy bubbles (1 bar less than the previous one). 7 g/l residual sugar. Beautiful, attractive and delicate fruity and floral nose with mineral tones (fine lees) and nutty aromas on the back. Fresh, vinous, round, juicy, creamy, silky (NB: Satèn means ... silk!), simply **LOVELY WINE!** Perfect as aperitif wine for the colder evenings and fabulous with shortly baked scallops, crispy caramelized outside and smelting raw inside... **Very good, classic Satèn wine!**



**FRANCIACORTA EXTRA BRUT 2006:** 50-50% chardonnay and pinot nero grapes, fermented in stainless steel tanks, then re-fermented and matured in the bottle on the fine lees for at least 40 months. This Extra Brut has only 2 g/l residual sugar... really Extra-Dry! Beautiful and soft creamy mousse. Elegant, fresh and complex, fruity and slightly spicy with subtle tones of fine lees and fresh bread crumbs. Very fresh, dry, perfectly balanced, elegant and easy drinking. A great stereotype of an elegant Franciacorta. I would try it with light raw fish dishes like 'branzino' (European sea-bass, spigola, ragno, lubina, róballo, bar... ) shortly marinated in pink grapefruit and lime juices and served with a light dressing of top-quality fruity olive oil and pomegranate juice, decorated with some pomegranate seeds and pink peppercorns... And when it is the season, fresh wild funghi porcini very finely sliced and shortly marinated in great olive oil (Carso!) with a dash of lemon or lime juice, and served just with some coarse sea salt...

**Outstanding, elegant style Franciacorta wine!**

**FRANCIACORTA EXTRA BRUT 2003:** 50-50% chardonnay and pinot nero grapes, fermented in stainless steel tanks, then re-fermented and matured in the bottle on the fine lees for at least 40 months. This Extra Brut has only 2 g/l residual sugar... really Extra-Dry! Very nice and soft bubbling, a little more ripe tones on the nose, bread, yeast, nuts... Very fresh, light, elegant, easy drinking, structured like a kind of exquisitely executed fine thread lace work... **Very good, elegant style Franciacorta wine!**

**FRANCIACORTA 'GUALBERTO' ZERO DOSAGE-UNDOSED 2004:** 70% pinot nero, 30% chardonnay. Crispy fresh (granny smith apple) on the nose and in the mouth. Quite tensed, subtly fruity, mineral, very dry but soft and full bodied. Surely not an 'everybody's friend' wine, it is much more a serious but very delectable wine for aficionados. Not so easy to match with food, but should go quite good with salads of seaweed, raw fish and/or raw shellfish, and a ponzu dressing. I would also try it with some fresh albacore (tuna!) steak, coated with white and black sesame seeds, and quickly baked 'fondant' inside, served with a dip of classic ponzu, adding a drop of good sesame oil and some extra mirin. **Very good, a Franciacorta for initiated foodies!**



During the fabulous lunch at the **Trattoria Antico Mulino** in Rovato, we tasted some more wines:



Inside the Antico Mulino – © Antico Mulino

**FRANCIACORTA ROSÉ BRUT:** pinot nero 80%, chardonnay 20%. Very fresh and fruity. On the palate, perfect balance between freshness and vinous body, between power and elegance. A very nice wine, widely interesting for gastronomy uses. **Surprising nice and tasty rosé Franciacorta!**



Ricci Curbastro produces also non-sparkling wines. All of them are technically very well-made, but for me, just a little bit too 'international' in their style. However, I surely recommend the **SEBINO ROSSO IGT PINOT NERO 2007**... Different, authentic and quite serious, a wine which needs aeration and time; try it and tell me what you think about it! I liked it...



A second wine that I would like to recommend is the **BROLO DEI PASSONI CHARDONNAY PASSITO IGT 2007**... I tasted a few chardonnay late harvests before; this one was really different in a positive way. Its mineral undertone, the great balance and the subtle aromatic nuances did convince me. The combination with the dessert was not ideal but both dish and wine were really good.



All bottle pictures © Ricci Curbastro

**For the foodies, the lunch menu:**

**Salumi nostrani misti con giardiniera di verdura fatta in casa** (all kinds of delicious cold cuts with home-made vegetables and pickles side dishes) \* **Franciacorta rosé brut** \*

**Casoncelli alla Bresciana con burro, salvia e pancetta** (absolutely irresistible fresh pasta with butter, salvia and pancetta, fantastic!) \* **Curtefranca DOC Vigna Bosco Alto 2007** \*

**Manzo all'olio con polenta** (a typical dish from Rovato, stewed beef with olive oil and aromatic herbs, served with polenta) \* **Pinot nero del Sebino IGT 2007** \*



Manzo all'olio con polenta © Antico Mulino

**Gelato alla crema con salsa calda di fragole** (superb ice-cream with a warm strawberry sauce and strawberries) \* **Brolo dei Passoni Chardonnay passito Sebino IGT 2007** \*

NB: I visited this fantastic place a few times earlier when it was very well known as **DUE COLOMBE** with the young and very talented

chef **Stefano Cerveni**. The young star got an irresistible chance to start a new restaurant under the same name **DUE COLOMBE** in the fully renovated **Borgo Antico San Vitale** in **Borgonata di Corte Franca**. The old family restaurant is now back in the hands of Stefano's father **Giuseppe Cerveni** and his wife. To avoid any confusion, the name of the family restaurant has been changed from **DUE COLOMBE** into **TRATTORIA ANTICO MULINO**. The two restaurants are working in a different level but both are highly recommended!



I would like to thank **Riccardo Ricci Curbastro** for this very interesting visit, the great lunch and the tasting. Thanks also to **FEDERDOC** for inviting us and of course, **Lucia Boarini** and **Silvia Agnoli** for chaperoning us during this wonderful trip, and all the producers who took the time to receive us.  
**Molto grazie a tutti!**

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