

Amici,

As I write this letter, we've just completed the third day of *vendemmia*, the grape harvest. Our hands are dark purple from prolonged contact with the grapes, anticipating the final color of the wine they're creating. Typing intensifies the small fingertip cuts and scratches from these days in the cellar, while my body rests heavy on the couch.

Sharing sweat and laughter, the interns and I have been picking grapes in the vineyard, harvesting the fruit of their predecessors' labor, fulfilling the legacy that this internship program embodies. In the cantina, we manually de-stem every bunch, and then together we listen to the bubbling fermenting tanks, slightly warm from the energy produced by the yeast. That yeast—naturally present on the grapes—is as active as we are during these days of constant work.

Three years ago, we started to shift our approach to winemaking, moving from “just” organic to natural/low intervention. Our philosophy is that wine is a beverage that connects: it connects the forces of nature that create the grapes, the microorganisms that make fermentation possible, and those who enjoy it. By not adding or removing anything, we are part of this connective process—not protagonists, but facilitators. Our goal is to encourage a deeper connection among the people who share a bottle.

I invite you to reflect on the connection and joy that this philosophy has brought to your life, at Spannocchia and back in your own home. **It's your generous annual support that helps to keep that magic alive for all who come to Spannocchia.**

Throughout *vendemmia*, I imagine this fall's harvest being shared around the table in years to come. With our stewardship, the wine will emerge; with your generosity, the program participants and guests will be here to enjoy it. **Please make your year-end membership gift today to be part of the process, the connection, and the joy of Spannocchia—where ecology meets conviviality.**

Grazie mille,

Niccolò Merighi
Spannocchia's Farm Education Director

P.S. 2025 marks big anniversaries for Spannocchia (100 & 800 years!), full of opportunities for celebration! Learn more and join the festivities at www.spannocchia.org/2025.

Donate online at www.spannocchia.org/membership



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Natural Winemaking at Spannocchia

1



Spannocchia has two vineyards, growing a mix of Sangiovese, Canaiolo, and Colorino grapes. One of these vineyards will be replanted this winter, producing its first grapes in 2028. Planting a new vineyard includes not only acquiring high-quality organic grafted plants, but also applying manure, shelters, cardboard weed barriers, and a lot of care.

2



Annual vineyard care starts in the winter and continues throughout the spring, when we prune offshoots, hoe the earth, trellis the vines, and more.

4



During the dry, hot part of the summer as the harvest approaches, we continue to prune offshoots, water newly-planted vines one-by-one, and hoe to keep the weeds at bay.

3



As an organic and natural producer, we do not add any synthetic pesticides or fertilizers to the plants or the soil. To minimize mildew during rainy or humid weather, we apply an organic-approved copper treatment as needed throughout the season.

5



Vendemmia! Generally in mid-September, it's all hands on deck to harvest the grapes. First, we pick the red grapes to be used for rosato (rosé), followed by the white grapes for bianco (white). Lastly, we harvest the remaining red grapes to make vino rosso (red).

6



In the cantina, most grapes are manually de-stemmed using a special "net" we built, and then pressed the old-fashioned way—with our feet! This is a more gentle method than the mechanical alternatives. From here, they are transferred into the stainless steel vats where they will ferment for a couple of weeks.

8



We save 200kg (almost 450 lb) of clusters to dry on racks for three months, to then be processed into passito, sweet dessert wine.

7



Fermentation occurs thanks only to the wild yeasts on the grapes. We prepare a *pie de cuve* (like a sourdough starter, for wine!) and add it to the smashed grapes to boost fermentation. New this year, we're making some wine using semi-carbonic maceration, through which pressure applied to whole clusters produces carbon dioxide and triggers intracellular fermentation. This results in a low tannin, fruit-forward wine that can be consumed in as little as two months—similar to French *beaujolais*.

9



In the months following the harvest, we rack the wine (transfer it to different vessels) to separate the sediment, without filtering or clarifying. The bianco and rosato will be ready to drink the year after the harvest, while the rosso needs at least three years to express all of its flavors and aromas.

Cin Cin!

Did you know?

The difference between producing rosato versus rosso is **maceration**, or skin contact. The juice for rosato does not have contact with the skins, whereas red does. For white wine, we allow some time for the pressed grapes to macerate with their skins.