



Winemaker: Marco Fantinel
Generation: 3rd

TENUTA SANT'HELENA

Ribolla Gialla Venezia Giulia IGT

With snow-capped Alps on one side and the Adriatic Sea on the other, Tenuta Sant'Helena sits in a pitch-perfect zone for mineral-driven whites like Ribolla Gialla. Thanks in part to the calcareous ponca soils, this grape exhibits high acidity, lending it a respectable 3-4 year shelf life. Likewise, proximity to the sea lends it a fascinating salinity, making it the ideal companion for all manner of frutti di mare.

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

Together with his siblings, Marco Fantinel took his grandfather's small winemaking legacy and converted it into an Italian institution. Today, he oversees the Fantinel and Tenuta Sant'Helena estates, with a focus on Friuli's unique terroir and native varietals.

ENOLOGIST

Alberto Zanello



TASTING NOTES

- Color** Straw-yellow
- Nose** Ocean-air minerality, with lemon oil and zest
- Palate** Medium-bodied, with just hint of tannin
- Finish** Long, satisfying finish



VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

- Vineyard Location** Venezia Giulia IGT, Friuli-Venezia Giulia
- Vineyard Size** 50 ha
- Varietals List** 100% Ribolla Gialla
- Farming Practices** Sustainably farmed including dry-farmed, no manmade pesticides or fertilizers; grapes picked by hand
- Elevation** 100 m
- Soils** Marly of eocenic origin
- Maturation Summary** Bottled for 0 months
- Alcohol** 13.0 %
- Acidity** 5.7 g/liter
- Residual Sugar** 2 g/liter
- Annual Production** 240,000 bottles



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TENUTA SANT'HELENA

Well-known as a restaurateur and hotelier in northern Friuli, Mario Fantinel acquired his first vineyards in the coveted Collio district in 1969. Some 8 years later, in the tiny village of Venco, he added the gorgeous Tenuta Sant'Helena to the equation. Situated some 15 km from Gorizia and perched right on the border with Slovenia, the farm's 15 to 45-year-old vines benefit from a mild climate (protected by the Julian Alps to the north), 200 meters of altitude, and proximity to the Adriatic Sea. Run by third generation producers Marco, Stefano and Mariaelena, Tenuta Sant'Helena today represents some of the Fantinel family's best, hand-picked, single estate wines.

Famous throughout Europe for its structured, mineral-driven whites, the Collio DOC in Friuli revolves around its unique soil type, called ponca in the local dialect. This multicolored, marly clay derives from the Eocene epoch (66 to 23 million years ago), when the earth was considerably warmer than today, and an inland sea covered the region. Shell material and high calcium carbonate levels lend Collio's wines their acidic backbone and (in the case of white varieties) enhance their intriguing tropical nose. To further concentrate these aromatics, all of Tenuta Sant'Helena's white wines see 2-3 hours of skin contact (except the Sauvignon) and the reds are made following a brief drying (or appassimento) process.

REGION

FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA

Situated in the NE corner of Italy, Friuli-Venezia Giulia borders Veneto to the west, the Austrian Alps to the north, Slovenia to the east, and to the south has a short coastline along the Adriatic Sea. The combination of warm maritime breezes, chilly subalpine nights, and clay-based soil creates the perfect terroir for white wines in particular. Unsurprisingly, 77% of Friuli's total production is devoted to its bianchi (higher than any other Italian region). Overall, they're prized for their aromatics, big-boned acidic structure, and flinty, mineral-driven finesse. Although relatively small in terms of geography, like Piedmont this region is home to a large number of artisanal, family-run vineyards. With 4 DOCGs and 12 DOCs, Friuli ranks third amongst Italy's 20 autonomie in its percentage of DOC wine production (behind only Trentino-Alto Adige and Piedmont). The Collio and Colli Orientali del Friuli DOCs are generally held in the highest esteem, with Grave del Friuli being the most prolific.

In terms of terroir, the most important influence on Friuli's vineyards is their position between the Alps and the Adriatic. Wine styles vary depending on whether an estate enjoys a Mediterranean climate near the sea or the alpine continental climate further inland. Higher vineyards in the north/northeast may rise above the low-lying cloud banks that can linger between the hills and the coast. This allows grapes to soak in the sun and develop to their full phenolic potential without overripening; aromatics are deepened, and a wine's acidic structure becomes more pronounced. At lower altitudes closer to the coast, producers may count upon more stable, maritime weather, but this comes with less dramatic swings in diurnal temperature.

VENEZIA GIULIA IGT

Established in 1996, the Venezia Giulia IGT is one of several such designations used throughout the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Its borders are the same as Friuli's, extending from the Veneto in the west to Italy's border with Slovenia, and from the Alps down to the Adriatic Sea. Therein, it contains a wide array of terroirs and microclimates, both Mediterranean and subalpine, allowing for a host of styles. As with many IGTs that overlap higher-ranking appellations, the tendency is for producers to devote their best grapes to the DOC, and secondary fruit to the less expensive label. As a result, Venezia Giulia IGTs are often more affordable... Fresh, unoaked Pinot Grigio, for example, remains the undisputed champion in this subzone.

Given the large number of serious producers in Friuli and their devotion to DOCs, there are relatively few hectares devoted to this particular designation (just over 1300 as of 2018). Winemakers are granted a wide berth, with reds, whites, rosés, sparklers, and sweet wines all permitted. Consistent with regional trends, however, a large number remain monovarietal. Different provinces within Friuli allow for their own, personalized lists of varietal wines (with the grape printed on the label). Across the board, these must contain at least 85% of the stated grape. The minimum alcohol for all wines (outside of bubbly) is a mere 9%, and the IGT has no aging requirements.