



The incredible Chef Pepe Zullo  
from Villa Jamele



# A wine trip to Daunia:

WELCOME TO THE COUNTRY OF LIGHT!

A LAND OF SWORDS, KNIGHTS, CROWNS AND ANCIENT LANGUAGES...

*Mention Apulia and images of idyllic white sandy beaches in Salento and rosé wine immediately spring to mind. The North, on the border with the Apennines of Campania and the forgotten Molise region, is much less predictable. A region rich in history, local crafts and unspoilt wilderness, it is ideal for an active holiday!*

By Isabel Ferran

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## ITALY FACTORS



A view of the Sub Apennines from Bovino's Ducal castle. The border with Campania seems demarcated by mills of the Aeolian era, taking advantage of the wind as a clean energy source



Chef Pepe Zullo home !



Many populations and conquerors have settled in Apulia: from the great Hannibal of Cartago ousted by the Romans, followed by Byzantine domination, then the Normans and Frederick II Hohenstaufen (founder of the kingdom of Sicily) defeated by Charles I of Anjou (kingdom of Naples), it was finally passed over to the Spanish Bourbons as part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

La Daunia and La Capitanata are historic synonyms for the province of Foggia. Capitanata is derived from the Byzantine name for the governor of the area in the 9th-10th century. Since Roman times, Apulia has been an important producer and exporter of olive oil and wheat, and it still is. Daunia is the only mountainous area in the Apulia region: the plain of Tavoliere delle Puglie is bordered by the sub Apennines in the West and the Gargano Mountains on the East coast.

Wine production in this area includes both wines with a Protected Designation of Origin (DOC): Cacc'e Mmite di Lucera, San Severo and Tavoliere delle Puglie; and wines with a Protected Geographical Indication: Puglia or Daunia IGT.

A wine tour in Apulia inevitably has to be part of a broader experience of the region's cultural heritage, local foods and the warmth of its people. Let's start in the hills at 620 m above sea level, in the beautiful village of **Bovino**, the land of Popes, kings and bandits, where the rural development organisation GAL Meridaunia that guided us through the province is based.

**Orsara di Puglia** (635 m above sea level) is among the five villages in Daunia awarded the 'orange flag' (a tourism and environmental quality seal by the Italian Touring Club) and a 'Slow city'. It is also the home of Italian Chef **Pepe Zullo** who has his international cooking school at Villa Jamele surrounded by forests and vineyards, and his restaurant 'Nuova Sala Paradiso' which hides a beautiful wine cathedral.

## ITALY FACTORS

In his architect's studio, Leonardo Guidacci from the Il Tuccanese winery welcomes us for a wine tasting. While studying at Venice University he was captivated by the wine culture of Veneto and decided to produce his own wine back home in Orsara. His venture now boasts 5ha and total production of 5,000 bottles. The name of the winery stems from the Sangiovese cultivar typical of the area which he vinifies alone for his 'Magliano' label and blended with Aglianico for the 'Sannoro' label. Sangiovese is trained using the Guyot method while Aglianico, a grape variety typical of neighboring Irpinia, is cultivated as a bush vine. He also produces a rosé using the saignée technique. Our vote goes to the Sannoro 2013 Daunia PGI, a fine wine with a medium garnet colour, a bouquet of cigar, liquorice root and mature cherry, offering a fine tannin structure along with marked freshness, light body and a long finish. While the 2012 vintage of Magliano is still young and concentrated, driven by empyreumatic aromas, the 2009 exudes medicinal herbs, curry and truffle over a background of fresh wild strawberries and Marasca cherry.

Driving down the hill, we reach Troia, a very ancient village with a magnificent cathedral in a typical Apulian Romanesque style. Here, too, the economy is based on the staples of the Mediterranean diet: wheat, olive oil and wine. The village lends its name to one of the main grape varieties in the area: Uva di Troia or Nero di Troia. Compared to other wine regions, vineyards here are not continuous but dotted in plots amongst the olive trees, cereals and windmills.

At **Cantine Pirro**, an organic farm, a wide range of produce is grown and the in-house restaurant uses its own produce. The 7 hectares of vineyards were recently planted to Nero di Troia, but the range of wines includes three levels of quality, wines made as 'blanc de noirs', rosé, a young red and red wine for cellaring. Our favourite pick is the Bianco di Troia Epiro 2012 (100% Nero di Troia), a beautiful copper grey colour with a subtle, clean nose combining wild aromas of hay with sweet vanilla and a



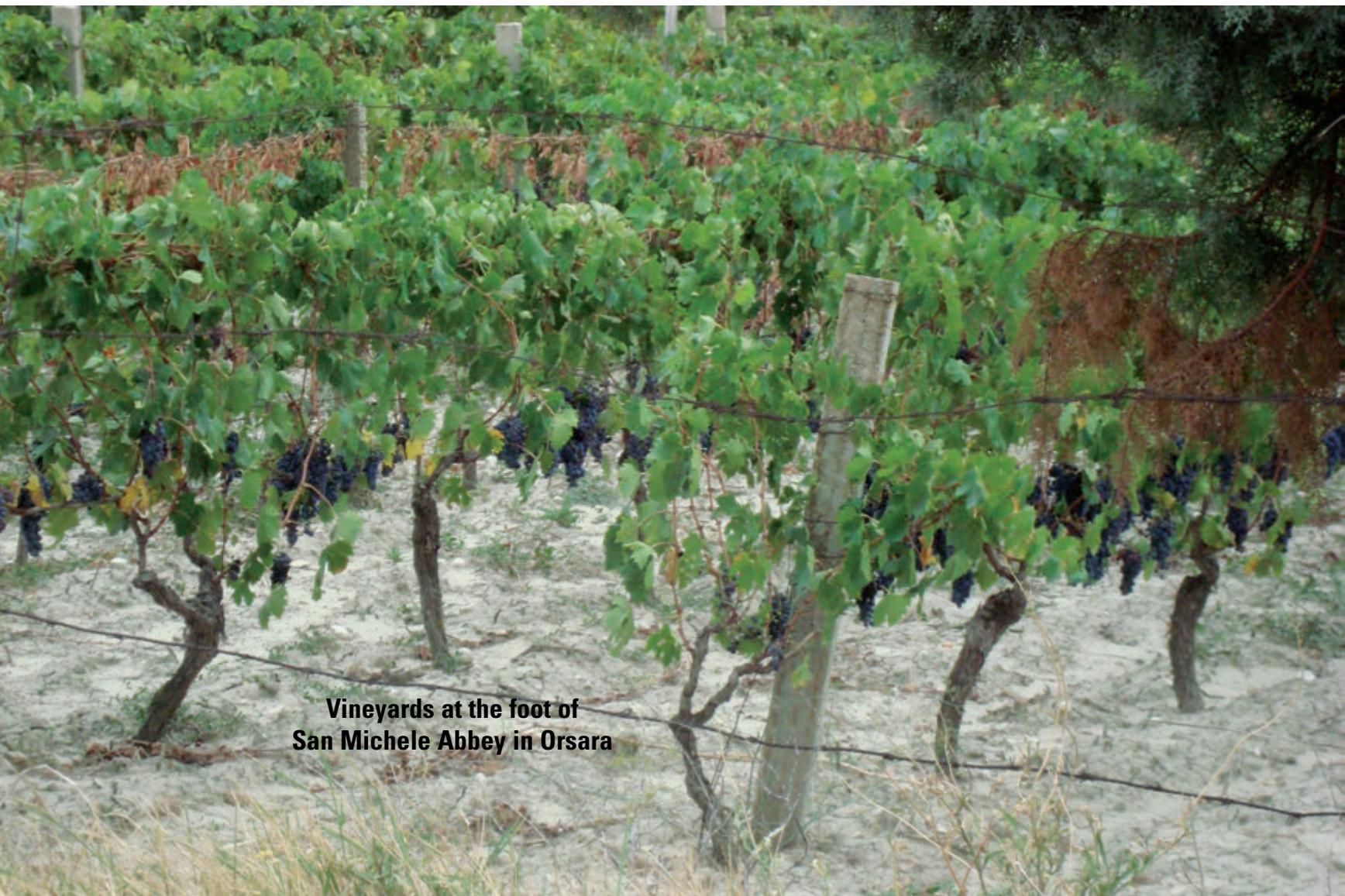
Leonardo Guidacci, architect and owner of the small winery 'Il Tuccanese'

Wine glass and taralli or carretto





**Troia Cathedral**



**Vineyards at the foot of  
San Michele Abbey in Orsara**

## ITALY FACTORS

long palate with a surprising salty finish that makes the ideal partner for local cheese specialities.

Stefano Pirro is part of the Consorzio Nero di Troia Tavoliere delle Puglie DOC founded in 2011, but Epiro Rosso 2010 (12 months' ageing in casks) is still marketed as Puglia IGT, and pairs perfectly with black pig cold cuts of pork and 'grano arso' pasta. The pasta is made with left-over grains in the field after harvesting when they are burnt, hence its colour. The grilled flavours match the cedar wood notes of the Epiro Rosso 2010, its medium tannin structure and emphasize the jammy black fruits (blackberries). The cellar built in 2008 meets criteria for environmental sustainability and energy optimization.

Heading towards the plain, we arrived in San Severo city: an important cultural centre and capital of the province for many years, before Lucera and Foggia. Louis Rapini from **d'Arapi winery** welcomes us in a house in the centre of San Severo. Even though this was the original location of the winery in 1979, nowadays the first stages of winemaking are handled outside the city centre, near the vineyards. We took an amazing walk through the underground cellars that are undergoing restoration. The original cellars date back to the 18th century, when winemaking was the activity of every family. These ancient cellars offer the right temperature, humidity and silence for the long ageing period of traditional sparkling wines. Many cultural events and social projects (Research Hospital in San Giovanni Rotondo) are supported by the winery, housed of late in this unique location where ancient oil mills have been found. The winery uses mainly native grape varieties (Bombino bianco, Montepulciano) together with fine Pinot Noir and many stages are still done manually, including riddling and disgorging. They are passionate about sparkling wines and have producer friends in Champagne with whom they share experience.

We had the chance to stay overnight at Pietramontecorvino, visiting the old town 'Terravecchia', walking up the tower's wooden steps, still in use after many centuries, and having dinner at the cooking school where food is paired with



Organic Nero di Troia at Cantine Pirro

Arapi winery produces interesting sparkling wines





Arapri winery in the centre of San Severo

d'Arapri sparkling wines. Cuvée Pas Dosé is a perfect start to dinner but also for an entire meal with its very clean floral aromas and upright structure with lots of freshness and fine bubbles (30 months on laths). Conversely, the Riserva Nobile 2011 (100% Bombino bianco) has a more intense nose of lees ageing aromas (brioche, toast, vanilla), more volume on the palate and a silky mouthfeel due to barrel fermentation of the base wine, requiring more elaborate foods.

In the morning we visited **Lucera**, the province's capital after San Severo, with its rich heritage and elegant city centre, preserved from WWII bombings due to its often-cloudy skies. Entering via the Porta di Troia, an inscription can be read in Arabic (ancient Saracen) bearing testimony to its early origins and struggles with the Christians.

M. Digregorio, technical director of Alberto Longo winery, kindly welcomed us on a Sunday during harvest time. The winery operates two facilities: the modern winery in Lucera (surrounded by 10ha of vineyards) and 25ha at the ancient Masseria or farm house in San Severo. They grow regional varieties such as Nero di Troia, Montepulciano and Bombino bianco, but also Negroamaro and Falanghina from surrounding provinces and the French grapes Syrah, Cabernet and Merlot.

The tasting starts with an inviting Falanghina (Bianco Brut VSQ 2013) sparkling wine produced using a long Charmat method. It shows a nose scented with mineral flint, fresh fruit (pear, melon) and market freshness and is suitable for relaxed, fun moments. Ideal temperature ranges between day and night (from 38 to 19°C) ensure aromas synthesis in the fruit and good acidity at harvest time, giving rise to a Negroamaro rosé that is very different for the Salento area. Donadelle 2014 Rosato Puglia IGT has a pale salmon hue, very fruity nose and a sensation of crunchy peach and jasmine flowers - the flavour of holidays! Fortunately, winemaking consultant Graziana Grassini left a magnum of the delicious Cacc'è Mmite 2011, a very intensely coloured 'black' wine showing cedar wood, liquorice and Marasca cherry on the nose, a generous attack on the palate and elegant freshness supported by mature tannins.

Louis Rapini at the Pepe Zullo wine cathedral





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*The historic Terra Vecchia area  
in Pietramontecorvino*

1. Cathedral
2. A night view from Terra Vecchia's Norman tower
3. Port'Alta, the entrance to the old town of Pietramontecorvino
4. A food truck, in italian version !



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Relais in Contrada, a charming country house decorated in the simple, elegant Apulian style, similar to France's Provençal style, with large white spaces full of light

Cacc'è Mmite is a denomination of origin produced mainly in Lucera (also permitted in Troia and Biccari), defined as a blend of mainly Nero di Troia, with Montepulciano, Sangiovese or Malvasia nera, and a dash of white varieties such as Bombino bianco, Trebbiano or Malvasia del Chianti.

Our lunch stop seemed to be in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by sweeping panoramic views over cultivated fields surrounding the Relais in Contrada, which offers typical food at Locanda Pampanelle. Mr.X seems to be the ambassador of Cacc'è Mmite, listing 6 producers (Alberto Longo, Cantina La Marchesa, Cantina Svevo, Masseria nel Sole, Agricola Paglione and Paolo Petrilli). (photo bouteilles + restaurant) He introduced us to a Nero di Troia rosé from the Cantine Terre bianche, offering exotic notes of hibiscus, orange zest and sweet dried dates with a citrus finish, accompanied by tortellini filled with hake fish and caramelized orange with a creamy sauce.



Marika Maggi (on the right) from Cantina La Marchesa

Our last visit, but by no means least, was to **Cantina La Marchesa** whose rosé 'Il Melograno' strongly appealed to us last year at the SIAL in Paris. The lovely couple Marika Maggi and Sergio Lucio Grasso farm 14 ha of sandy-clayish soil mainly planted to Uva di Troia. Entering their small press and tank cellar, we can see how many vineyard selections Sergio does and how many different winemaking techniques he uses, in deference to the fruit yet with a sense of innovation. One of their latest labels is 'Il Capriccio della Marchesa', an outstanding barrel fermented Fiano, still youthful but already enjoyable; 2013 is an exuberant explosion of tropical fruits and flowers, with no lactic notes, just the sweetness from ageing on fine lees counterbalanced by a savoury palate that made us salivate! Of their interesting range, the premium red Il Nerone 2011 offers a long-lived Nero di Troia without the profound empyreumatic notes, therefore accentuating the elegant notes of rose and cedar wood, along with liquorice, fresh cherries and strawberries. A great wine indeed.