



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

ANTOINE ARENA

Country: France

Region: Corsica

Appellation(s): Patrimonio, Cap Corse

Producer: Antoine Arena

Founded: 16th Century

Annual Production: 5,500 cases

Farming: Organic

Website: www.antoine-arena.fr



Antoine Arena, like most Corsicans of his generation, grew up in a family that earned a modest living working the land on an island largely unknown to the outside world. As soon as he could he joined the mass exodus of Corsicans to the French mainland, in search of jobs and what they thought to be a better life. Several years later in the mid 1970s, with a promising career on the mainland, the Corsican independence movement exploded with violent confrontations between nationalists and French government forces, leaving Antoine stunned.

In his shock and anger, he moved back to the family farm and decided to reverse the trend and remain on the land, as his own form of protest. Many others soon followed his lead, and for the first time in over a century, the emigration from the island ebbed and Corsicans came back home to reclaim their land.

To survive off the land, Antoine knew he would need to show the world outside of Corsica what Patrimonio was capable of. And so his mission began to make the best his land could make and to spread the word. He started identifying the best parcels and vinifying them separately, and long before his time, worked the vines organically and vinified without any added sulfur.

From the beginning of the endeavor, Antoine and his wife Marie worked tirelessly to put Patrimonio on the map to the greater French public, and with quite a success. They brought fame and respect to their appellation and are recognized nearly unanimously as being the best there is on the island. In Paris, for example, Arena is a living legend and his presence at a tasting in the city will always guarantee an over capacity crowd. He's close friends with the likes of the Gang of Four, Montanet, Barral, Catherine & Pierre Breton, and is as much of a *bon vivant* as any of them.

Now Antoine is joined by his two sons, Antoine-Marie and Jean-Baptiste who share Antoine's spirit and continue to work the land and make the wine naturally, as taught from their father. Good thing is, this time around, no one will be leaving the domaine in search of a better life elsewhere.

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ANTOINE ARENA (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend¹</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Bianco Gentile	Bianco Gentile	N/A	Clay, Limestone	.5 ha
Patrimonio <i>Blanc Carco</i>	Vermentinu	Planted in 1987	Chalk, Clay, Limestone	1 ha
Patrimonio <i>Blanc Haut de Carco</i>	Vermentinu	Planted in 2003	Limestone	1 ha
Patrimonio <i>Blanc Grotte di Sole</i>	Vermentinu	60 years	Clay, Limestone	1 ha
Patrimonio Rosé	80% Niellucciu, 20% Vermentinu	N/A	N/A	N/A
Patrimonio <i>Rouge Carco</i>	Niellucciu	Planted in 1987	Chalk, Clay, Limestone	2 ha
Patrimonio <i>Rouge Grotte di Sole</i>	Niellucciu	60 years	Clay, Limestone	2 ha
Patrimonio <i>Rouge "Morta Maio"</i>	Niellucciu	Planted in 2001	N/A	2 ha
Muscat du Cap Corse	Muscat à Petit Grains	N/A	N/A	1 ha

¹ Corsican spellings of grape varieties

* "ha"=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

Whites:

- Hand harvested (yields usually around 40 hl/ha)
- Natural fermentation, low doses of sulfur, cement *cuve*, no wood
- Long fermentations, then wines are aged for 6 to 8 months on fine lees
- Wines complete malolactic fermentation
- Most vintages are bottled unfiltered

Reds:

- Hand harvested (yields usually around 35 hl/ha)
- Natural fermentation, with infrequent doses of sulfur, cement *cuve*, no oak
- Long macerations from 6 to 9 weeks, with regular punch-downs
- Long *élevages*, up to 2 years
- No fining, no filtration

Patrimonio Rosé:

- Rosé is mostly made *saignée* method
- Malolactic fermentation is always completed

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- Vines are mostly situated in the “Morta Maio” vineyard

Carco:

The Carco vineyard is on an eastern facing slope, cleared of its *maquis* and planted in 1987 by Antoine. The name of the parcel, *Carco*, dates back to at least Napoleonic times, and in Corsican means "busy," most likely due to the fact that it was covered in densely planted olive trees at that time, before being abandoned. Two different wines come from this vineyard: the Patrimonio *Carco Rouge*, from Niellucciu (1ha). Niellucciu (Corsican spelling) vines are the descendants of Sangiovese vines brought to Patrimonio by Pisans in the 12th century when Corsica was a part of the Republic of Pisa. "Niel" in Corsican means black, and "lucciu" is an endearing term for something small, thus the name given to the grape for its dark color and small berries. While Niellucciu and Sangiovese are indeed cousins, the Niellucciu of Patrimonio has had nearly nine centuries to adapt to the particularities of the local *terroir*. The second wine is the Patrimonio *Carco Blanc* (2ha), 100% Vermentinu. (Vermentinu arrived in Patrimonio well before Niellucciu, although the date of its arrival is still unclear). Both the *rouge* and *blanc* from this parcel are marked by a limestone nerve and minerality.

Haut de Carco:

The Haut de Carco is the most recently planted parcel, sitting directly above the *Carco*, and containing even harder, thicker limestone than the *Carco*. In fact, nothing grew there before. The Arenas cleared rocks and blasted holes for over a year in the rock to plant Vermentinu (much to the awe of their neighbors who were convinced that the vines would never take). The first harvest was in 2008.

Grotte di Sole:

Meaning "sunny grottoes" in Corsican, this parcel takes its name from its direct southern facing exposure. As the name suggests, this *terroir* on clay-limestone soils gives the ripest grapes from the property. Patrimonio *Grotte di Sole Rouge* (2 ha), 100% Niellucciu, and Patrimonio *Grotte di Sole Blanc* (1ha), 100% Vermentinu, both come from this parcel. These vines average 60 years of age, and are from the original holdings of the Arena family, going back to at least the 18th century. These wines tend to be rich and round, but Antoine takes pains to harvest early and never allows for excessive maturity.

“Morta Maio”:

The Morta Maio vineyard was planted in 2001 with only Niellucciu. There is just a single *cuée* from this parcel, the Patrimonio “Morta Maio” *Rouge*. This is often the most approachable of the reds when young—dark, earthy, chewy and juicy.

Bianco Gentile:

Bianco Gentile is a variety native to the island, which was considered lost until a small parcel was found up the highlands of Corsica. Antoine and a small group of *vigneron* friends took some cuttings from that last remaining vineyard, and planted it back on his property, effectively saving it from

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ANTOINE ARENA (continued)

extinction. Patrimonio regulations, drawn up when the grape was considered extinct, don't allow for its use in the A.O.C., so the wine is simply a *Vin de Table*. The parcel is situated between the *Carco* and *Grotte di Sole* vineyards.

Muscat du Cap Corse:

There is also a small parcel of Muscat à Petits Grains that goes into the Muscat du Cap Corse cuvée. It is a low-yielding parcel, which is then fortified with Corsican grappa, as tradition and A.O.C. rules require. His Muscat is never over the top nor syrupy but is always floral and delicate. The Arenas also produce a small quantity of unfortified Muscat that is mostly consumed locally.