



IPO WINES

COUNTRY

France

REGION

Corsica

APPELLATION

Patrimonio

SOIL TYPE

Clay, Limestone, Chalk

VARIETAL(S)

50% Vermentinu

50% Bianco Gentile

FARMING

Organic

WINEMAKER

Antoine Arena



2013 Arena Vin de France Blanc "Cuvée Kermit Lynch"

IMPORTED BY Kermit Lynch

ABOUT THE PRODUCER

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.

WINE NOTES

Vines planted in 1987, 1997. 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 in stainless steel tanks. Wines complete malolactic fermentation. Most vintages are bottled unfiltered.

"Much has been said about how a small group of dedicated vigneronns saved Bianco Gentile from extinction. What hasn't been discussed much is that, while we know the variety is native Corsican and was once widely planted, we really don't know how it was used and what kind of wine it made. Over the last decade or two, growers have been getting reacquainted with this long-lost friend, figuring out its strengths and weaknesses and how to tease out its greatness. Vermentinu, by contrast, has been around uninterrupted in the Mediterranean just about as long as the wheel. Its charms—the saltiness, the verve, the island essence—have been known to all for ages. Bianco Gentile has been on a learning curve, and in wine, that process can take years (generations, even), so we are watching it unfold as we speak. There's only one harvest a year, a single chance to see, taste, and experiment each cycle. Part of that learning process concerns the interaction of grapes with each other, the art of blending so that the diversity makes a more complete whole. A key to understanding Bianco Gentile's past may be hidden here in this blend. Kermit noticed early on Bianco Gentile's tendency to veer toward the plump, round, rich side of the spectrum. So he and Antoine Arena decided to blend together a tank of Vermentinu and a tank of Bianco Gentile. Half and half, as one isn't better than the other, they're simply

so different. Like a great bassist or a great guitarist, or a world-class tenor compared to a soprano. Neither is better per se, but the two performing together perhaps provides the richest experience. The two grapes work so well together we have to wonder if this was the way things were done back in the day.

Given Antoine's enthusiasm, we may well see a lot more of this blending in the future. Notice the new label, too, which is fittingly inspired by a label Antoine's father once used. To show his appreciation of Kermit for encouraging the blend, Arena has named it "Cuvée Kermit Lynch" and given us full exclusivity on the wine. The only place you can try it is here—or maybe at the domaine, if you have the good fortune to go there, and if they haven't drunk the last of their personal stock already." - Kermit Lynch
Wine Merchant