

Elena Fucci Aglianico del Vulture Titolo: 2000-2014

BY IAN D'AGATA | DECEMBER 6, 2016

There are moments in life when you immediately realize you have stumbled upon something or someone special. And so it was for me when I first met Salvatore Fucci back in the spring of 2002. I was introduced to him by Vito Paternoster (of the Paternoster estate) and found the then middle-aged physical education teacher likeable, humble, very sensible in his approach to winemaking, and, most importantly, very proud and knowledgeable about the Vulture volcano and its great variety, Aglianico. Fucci was born into a family that had a long tradition of winemaking but had never estate-bottled before. I was meeting him that day to taste the first vintage bottled under his own label. One taste of his 2000 Aglianico del Vulture made an instant believer out of me. It was already clear back then that this fledgling winery was able to produce wines that were cleaner, deeper and more refined than almost any other wine being made on the Vulture at that time.



Elena Fucci with her parents and husband Andrea in the cellar

The Estate and its only Wine

The Elena Fucci estate is relatively young by Italian standards, but its wines have met noteworthy critical and commercial success over the years, so much so that the estate now ranks with Italy's wine nobility. Prior to Salvatore's decision to set out on his own and estate-bottle his wine, the family had always sold their grapes to Paternoster, one of the Vulture's most famous and storied estates. In fact, the Fucci and Paternoster families have always been close: Elena's grandfather Generoso was Paternoster's *chef de culture* for the better part of his professional life, and the two estates are literally a stone's throw from each other. You can gaze at the Elena Fucci vines from the Paternoster estate's beautiful balcony. The winery is currently run by Salvatore's daughter Elena, who studied winemaking at Pisa, and her husband Andrea, who oversees sales, with Salvatore pitching in as needed. The estate makes only one wine, about 25,000 bottles annually, of its Aglianico del Vulture Titolo, which is one of only a dozen or so southern Italian reds actively pursued by international wine collectors.



The Titolo vineyard

The Superbly Situated Titolo Vineyard

Aglianico del Vulture is potentially one of the world's—not just Italy's—greatest wines and no single bottling demonstrates its quality better than the Titolo. It helps that the Titolo vineyard is probably the best vineyard of the Vulture *denominazione*, a true Grand Cru (if such classification existed in Italy!) uniquely blessed with a fresh microclimate. Fucci owns 6.7 hectares (16.5 acres) of 55-to-65-year-old Aglianico vines (a few are well over 70) in the Titolo vineyard located in the subzone Solagna del Titolo from which the vineyard's name is derived. Only six hectares are currently planted, but Elena Fucci told me she plans to plant more vines shortly.

As the vineyard is situated close to the volcano's summit at approximately 600 meters (roughly 2,000 feet) above sea level, an almost continuous cooling breeze blows from the top of the hill down the slope through the vines. This air movement contributes greatly to the relatively cool environment of the Titolo vineyard. The soil here is also slightly different than that found in other parts of the denomination. While it's essentially volcanic, there are pockets of loam and clay sandwiched between the layers of lava that were formed during eruptions that occurred over eons. Thanks to the soil's capacity for good water retention when needed, the vines rarely suffer from water stress.



The new entrance at the Elena Fucci estate

Winemaking Technique and the Style of the Wine

Winemaking is fairly traditional but with modernist touches. For example, fermentation temperatures never exceed 24 degrees Celsius (75 degrees Fahrenheit), and this may partly explain the strongly perfumed quality of Fucci's wines. The wines are aged for about 12 months in small oak barrels, depending on the vintage, but the oak regimen has changed in recent years. The last vintage to feature 100% new oak *barriques* was 2008, and the estate is now making use of larger oak casks as aging vessels.



I have followed the Elena Fucci wines from the very beginning, and I find them to be powerful yet remarkably refined, with deep aromas and flavors of red cherry, minerals and botanical herbs obvious in most vintages. The oak is always marvelously integrated. While the wines undoubtedly reflect each vintage's unique conditions, they also always display a suave mouthfeel that is Titolo's true signature. The rustic notes that plague many of the Vulture's other Aglianico bottlings are notably absent. Titolo's element of refinement may be relatively subtle in some vintages (for example, in 2004), or much more apparent in others (such as 2002), but it is always present and easy to spot. My recent vertical tasting also demonstrated, one more time, the incredible consistency that Fucci is able to achieve vintage after vintage. Even in difficult years such as the rainy 2002 growing season or the hot drought year of 2003 (both of which were less extreme on the Vulture than in the rest of Italy), the wines are a major success. Wine lovers owe it to themselves to hunt down Fucci's knockout Aglianico del Vulture Titolo, as it ranks with the best that Italy has to offer.

The majority of the wines in this tasting were sourced directly from the estate's cellar or from my own; the 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, which I purchased at the time of their release, were unavailable at the winery and so I pulled the bottles from my own collection. I tasted the wines in September of 2016 during one of my annual forays to Basilicata's wine country.

vinous

92 pts

Elena Fucci 2000 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo

Barile, Basilicata

Red wine from Italy

Drinking window: 2016 - 2022

Bright red-ruby. Deeply pitched aromas and flavors of red plum, black cherry, crushed rocks, tobacco and licorice. Nicely dry and understated, but with very good ripeness to its fruit and mineral flavors. Finishes rich and complex, with suave tannins and outstanding length. This well-made wine, the first vintage ever released by the Fucci estate, made it clear from the beginning that this would be a winery worth following.

Ian D'Agata. Tasting date: September 2016

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From [Elena Fucci Aglianico del Vulture Titolo: 2000-2014 \(Dec 2016\)](#)

Elena Fucci

Elena Fucci's Aglianico del Vulture Titolo, one of Italy's greatest red wines, showcases the potential of both a grape variety, Aglianico, and a viticultural area, the Vulture in the region of Basilicata, that deserves to be better known.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

vinous

94 pts

Elena Fucci 2001 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo

Barile, Basilicata

Red wine from Italy

Drinking window: 2016 - 2026

Full medium ruby-red. Expressive aromas of blueberry, raspberry, mocha, licorice and minerals. Densely packed and polished if still a bit austere, with a vein of peppery acidity enlivening the concentrated flavors of redcurrant, red cherry, minerals and sweet spices. Finishes with superb rising length and a firm spine of acidity and noble tannins. An outstanding Aglianico with plenty of life ahead of it.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

vinous

90 pts

Elena Fucci 2002 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo

Barile, Basilicata

Red wine from Italy

Drinking window: 2016 - 2021

Bright, deep red with ruby highlights. Lively aromas and flavors of black cherry, minty herbs, minerals and blood orange. Juicy but also nicely silky on the palate, with the strong, penetrating fruit conveying outstanding depth and a very refined mouthfeel. Crisp and bracing on the finish. The high quality of the Titolo site comes through loud and clear in this very challenging vintage. I distinctly remember tasting this wine when it first came out and thinking that it was one of the best reds from this rain-plagued vintage in Italy.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

Release price

Not Available

vinous

91 pts

Elena Fucci 2003 Aglianico Del Vulture Titolo

Other Italy, Other Italy

Red wine from Italy

Drinking window:

Deep medium red with some inky highlights. Red fruits and cocoa powder on the slightly roasted nose. Juicy flavors of black plum and raspberry are complicated by a slightly saline mineral note coming from the highly volcanic soil. Finishes with serious, firm tannins.

Ian D'Agata, July 2005

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From [New Releases from Southern Italy \(Jul 2005\)](#)

Elena Fucci

At this estate, a recent success story in the Vulture, the wines are actually made by Elena's father, the ebullient and energetic Salvatore Fucci. He is fortunate enough to own one of the best vineyard sites in all of the Vulture (the Titolo vineyard), which at about 600 meters above sea level is also the highest. Slow ripening and wide day-night temperature swings are critical to the quality of the site. That good wines can be produced here in difficult years is demonstrated by the 2002, which is extremely strong for the vintage.

Grape/Blend

other red varietal

Release price

\$48.00

vinous

93 pts

Elena Fucci 2004 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo

Barile, Basilicata

Red wine from Italy

Drinking window: 2016 - 2027

Healthy deep red. Deep, rich nose combines blackberry, ripe black cherry, wild herbs, mint and milk chocolate. Rich, ripe and dense but tightly wound, with a ripe chocolate character anchoring the palate. Showy but still youthful, this wine finishes with suave, building tannins and terrific length. This very big, ripe Titolo was one of the most powerful wines in my tasting but less graceful than some of the others.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

vinous

92+ pts

Elena Fucci 2005 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo

Barile, Basilicata

Red wine from Italy

Drinking window: 2016 - 2024

Deep ruby with a pale rim. Fresh aromas of black cherry, violet and licorice show a very strong mineral edge. Rich and dense on the palate, offering savory flavors of dark plum, spicy black and red cherry, aromatic herbs and tobacco. Really opens with aeration to offer a juicier red cherry flavor and a floral element that lingers long on the brisk aftertaste.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

Release price

€45.00

Elena Fucci 2006 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo**Basilicata, Basilicata****Red wine from Italy****Drinking window: 2013 - 2021**

The 2006 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo is a dark, brooding wine loaded with violets, blackberry jam, new leather, earthiness, cured meats. The wine possesses staggering richness and opulence, along with considerable varietal character and tons of harmony. The full-throttle style may not be for everyone, but this wine delivers the goods and then some. Readers looking to explore the heights of Aglianico as grown on the high-altitude, volcanic soils of the Vulture owe it to themselves to check out this reference-point wine. Another year or two in bottle will help the wine come together even more fully, but the 2006 Titolo is a great bottle even at this early stage.

Antonio Galloni, April 2009

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From [Central & Southern Italy: A World Waiting to be Discovered \(Apr 2009\)](#)**Elena Fucci**

Elena Fucci makes one of the most fascinating wines of Basilicata.

Elena Fucci 2007 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo**Basilicata, Basilicata****Red wine from Italy****Drinking window: 2013 - 2022**

The 2007 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo is a ripe, seamless wine endowed with layers of espresso, dark fruit, sage, rosemary, spices, crushed rocks and French oak, all of which come together on a textured, sumptuous frame. This dense, full-bodied Aglianico impresses for its richness, impeccable overall balance and fabulous length. It should be even better in a few years' time. Once again, Elena Fucci has made a reference-point wine for Basilicata.

Antonio Galloni, June 2010

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From [The Best of Central and Southern Italy \(Jun 2010\)](#)**Elena Fucci**

Elena Fucci 2008 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo**Barile, Basilicata****Red wine from Italy****Drinking window: 2018 - 2035**

Full ruby with a pale rim. Pungent notes of bay leaf, incense, camphor and juniper complicate very deep, pure aromas of red cherry and raspberry. Rich, dense and suave in the mouth, with a strong mineral underpinning and lively acidity extending the refined, ripe red cherry, anise and graphite flavors through an extremely long, juicy back end. This gorgeous wine is still quite young and should age beautifully. Incidentally, this was the last year in which the Titolo was aged for a year in 100% new oak *barriques*.

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Elena Fucci 2009 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo**Barile, Basilicata****Red wine from Italy****Drinking window: 2016 - 2024**

Bright red with a pale rim. Perfumed aromas of strawberry, incense, orange peel and minerals. Bright and juicy, displaying cool-climate flavors of red berries, sour red cherry and rose petal; this is very Nebbiolo-like. Finishes suave, vibrant and long, with hints of volcanic ash and dried rose petal. This cool-vintage beauty may lack the structure and opulence of warmer years, but it champions delicacy and finesse over brute power. The cool growing season is already quite evident in the wine's lighter color and delicate floral aromas.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

Elena Fucci 2010 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo**Barile, Basilicata****Red wine from Italy****Drinking window: 2016 - 2025**

Bright red with a pale rim. Delicate aromas of strawberry, raspberry, botanical herbs and mint. Fresh and juicy on the palate, with lively floral nuances complicating the pure flavors of red cherry and flint. Not a blockbuster Aglianico but juicy and nicely balanced, with a suave texture and sneaky concentration. The perfumed finish is long and brightly mineral, with a smoky undertone. The 2010 vintage was the coldest in memory in the Vulture area and the wines have tended to be austere and closed in their youth.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

Elena Fucci 2011 Aglianico Del Vulture Titolo**Other Italy, Other Italy****Red wine from Italy****Drinking window:**

Medium red-ruby. Perfumed, wild aromas of raspberry, dark cherry, iron and dried flowers on the knockout nose. Then silky, pliant and compellingly rich, with superb density to the flavors of red fruits, sweet spices and fresh aromatic herbs. Finishes very long and pure, with considerable power. This may well merit an even higher score with aging but it will need a good five to seven years of patience. Titolo has been the best Aglianico del Vulture for many years now and is really one of Italy's better red wines.

Ian D'Agata, March 2014

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From [The Wines of Southern Italy \(Mar 2014\)](#)**Elena Fucci****Grape/Blend**

other red varietal

Elena Fucci 2012 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo

Barile, Basilicata

Red wine from Italy

Drinking window: 2016 - 2024

Purple-ruby. Open-knit, showy aromas of red fruits, sweet spices and minerals are lifted by a floral quality. Balanced and suave on the palate, offering a smooth mouthfeel to the bright flavors of red fruits, violet and rose. Less structured than usual for this bottling, but this very pretty wine offers considerable early appeal and a long ripe finish. The 2012 vintage was marred by an attack of downy mildew that hadn't been seen in the Vulture for close to 50 years; for that reason, it went unrecognized in many vineyards, thus leading to many wines with rot, volatile acidity and other flaws. Clearly, this wasn't a problem for Elena Fucci.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

Elena Fucci 2013 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo

Barile, Basilicata

Red wine from Italy

Drinking window: 2018 - 2035

Bright ruby. Piercing aromas of sour red cherry, blackcurrant, violet and lavender. Dense, sweet and complex on the palate, with very pure smoky berry, mineral, plum, tar and Oriental spice flavors conveying a refined, steely quality. The finish is long and pure, with mineral and floral notes repeating. A wine of remarkable balance and finesse, the 2013 manages the neat trick of being very powerful and concentrated yet refined and suave at the same time. Absolutely gorgeous wine.

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico

Elena Fucci 2014 Aglianico del Vulture Titolo**Barile, Basilicata****Red wine from Italy****Drinking window: 2018 - 2026**

Bright purple-ruby. Aromas and flavors of dark plum, black cherry and sweet spices are complemented by a strong balsamic note. Bright and juicy, with a lovely mineral tang and harmonious acidity lifting the steely red fruit flavors and extending them through a long floral finish.

Outstanding wine. The 2014 vintage was a very rainy one throughout Italy, but it was not so wet on the Vulture, where late harvests mean that summer rains are less damaging than elsewhere in the country (the veraison doesn't even start in the Vulture until September).

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Grape/Blend

Aglianico