

Vulture's Volcanoes

A pair of dynamic women stir things up in Italy's deep south



Photo by: Robert Camuto

Winemaker Elena Fucci with her husband, Andrea Manzani (left), and grandfather Generoso at her "bio-architecture" winery.

Posted: Aug 21, 2018 12:00pm ET



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Barile is one of those Italian towns you fly over on the way to somewhere else. A sleepy inland burg in Basilicata, it's about 225 miles southeast of Rome, between the popular destination coasts of Campania and Puglia.

Nestling on the lower flanks of the long-dormant volcano Mt. Vulture, Barile's vineyards are some of the oldest, steepest, highest and most dramatically volcanic in the Aglianico del Vulture appellation, with soils layering ancient lava flows, clay and volcanic ash.

Like the rest of Vulture, Barile has experienced a slow winemaking renaissance in recent decades and is now home to a dozen relatively small producers. (See my blog post, "[Young and Restless in Southern Italy](#)," for more on the new generation.)

But Barile has also been shaken up by two dynamic women: Barile native **Elena Fucci**, 37, who launched her eponymous label from family vineyards, and Viviana Malafarina, 43, a self-taught transplant who runs **Basilisco**, an outpost of Campania's **Feudi di San Gregorio** winery.

"They are the two volcanoes of Vulture," says Vito Paternoster, 60, of **Paternoster**, the near century-old Barile winery now controlled by **Tommasi Family Estates**.

Fucci and Malafarina are both recognized as leaders for taking big steps to improve and modernize winemaking, practicing organic agriculture and aiming for fresher, elegant versions of Aglianico, traditionally known as a big, tannic wine. But beyond that, they take very different approaches. Fucci, for example, concentrates on one red wine, while Malafarina makes five, as well as a Fiano white.

The two good friends took very different life paths. Fucci grew up in Barile's Titolo district, neighboring Paternoster's vineyards. Her grandfather, born into a sharecropping family, managed to buy vineyards there in the 1960s and sold the grapes. In 2000, when the family considered selling the land, Fucci, an only child, was at first indifferent.

"I said, 'Yes, sell, sell. I will go to the university, and I won't come back,'" Fucci says. But when a buyer appeared, Fucci changed her tune.

"It hit me—I was born here," she says. "I understood that I was tied to this place."

Fucci studied enology and viticulture and immediately began experimenting with wine under her own label. Her first "real" vintage was 2004, when she produced 1,000 cases. Now with her husband, Andrea Manzani, a Florentine engineer she met at a wine tasting seven years ago, she produces up to 2,500 cases a year of exuberant red Titolo from about 15 acres surrounding her new ecologically friendly winery.

Though she does occasionally offer a longer-aged riserva, and is experimenting with **amphora** aging, she prides herself on making "one wine, one grape—and doing it well—that's our rule."

Robert Camuto



Photo by Danino Camuto

Contributing Editor

Wine Spectator contributing editor Robert Camuto is a longtime journalist who moved to an old olive mill in southern France with his family in 2001 and then to Verona, Italy, in 2015. He has written wine travel stories, winemaker profiles and features for the magazine since 2008.

Camuto, a frequent traveler through the wine countries of Italy, France and occasionally beyond, is author of two books exploring old terroirs in modern times: *Corkscrewed: Adventures in the New French Wine Country* (2008) and *Palmento: A Sicilian Wine Odyssey* (2010). He was also the main project writer for the *Michelin Green Guide Sicily* (2012).

A native New Yorker, Camuto has been a home winemaker since 2006.