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Michele Chiarlo's Art Park La Court Celebrates 20 Years

The historic winery celebrates the revolutionary art park with the release of Nizza Riserva La Court 2020

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2023 marks an incredibly special anniversary for the Chiarlo family: the 20th anniversary of the Art Park La Court, Michele Chiarlo's visionary and creative project that celebrates the union between wine and art within a landscape recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Art Park is located in La Court, the Chiarlo family's "chateaux" on the hills of Castelnuovo Calcea and is celebrating this important milestone with the release of the 2020 vintage of Nizza Riserva La Court, the renowned label that has made the history of the Nizza denomination.

The story of the Art Park La Court began in the early 2000s, when Michele Chiarlo had the "vision" of transforming the first vineyard into a constantly evolving artistic park, an interactive path through the vineyards where art works could elicit the active involvement of the spectator, who is already immersed in a spectacular landscape.

When the Art Park La Court was inaugurated in the summer of 2003, it was immediately clear that it would be more than a mere exhibition among the vineyards, more than an open-air museum, and more than a work of land art in an evocative location. The Art Park was born to transform the landscape, to turn the agricultural environment into a real fairy tale, a place where hard work and creativity would find the right balance. Like the vineyard described by Cesare Pavese, the Art Park intended to be a window to "a breathtaking scene, an event that is unknown to memory and to the imagination".

"Art Park La Court rises in the heart of the cru found in the historic area, the place from which our best Nizza and Nizza Riserva are born. It is the largest open-air museum among the vineyards and is constantly evolving: a place where art, landscape and wine continuously interact with one another, offering visitors one of the most unique land art experiences on the wine scene. It is a living cultural center based on the idea of sharing beauty. The Art Park is open to the territory and the world and through its association – O.R.M.E. – every year, it promotes and supports initiatives that invite visitors to walk through the vineyards and enjoy the magical union of landscape and art" says Stefano Chiarlo.

Leading the "transformation" was Giancarlo Ferraris, a painter from Nizza Monferrato, with whom Michele Chiarlo had shared a long creative relationship and the artist behind all of his labels. "It was a gargantuan feat, perhaps the most enjoyable I've ever experienced, " Ferraris recounts. "I gathered a dozen artists, friends and exemplary artisans, to work together. There were potters, blacksmiths, sculptors, painters and mosaicists. The skills of each one complemented those of the others and the projects became more interesting because we worked together on them: it was like a Warholian factory in Castelnuovo Calcea". Thus, a path was designed to go through different areas, thanks to the great Emanuele Luzzati, featuring iconic works placed along a fairytale-like trail dedicated to the elements: Earth, Water, Air and Fire. Alongside Luzzati's sculptures, the park also exhibits works by internationally renowned artists, including Ugo Nespolo, Giancarlo Ferraris and Chris Bangle. Imaginative elements engulf visitors in an archaic and fantastic atmosphere, inviting to reflect on the relationship and harmony between man and nature, creating spaces for meditation and observation.

The History of Nizza and La Court

Located in Castelnuovo Calcea, La Court was purchased in 1995 and has since become Michele Chiarlo's "chateaux". The 19th century estate consisting of three farmsteads is surrounded by a single body vineyard stretching for more than 20 hectares on the hills of Monferrato: a unique and inimitable stage for the qualitative development of the Barbera vine.

In 2014, Nizza reached the top of the Barbera vine denomination with the birth of the Nizza DOCG. An important milestone that included Michele Chiarlo among the creators of this appellation, serving as the first president of the Associazione del Nizza in 2000.

"For me, Nizza is a dream come true for a group of local producers who wanted to produce an excellent wine from the best Barbera grapes," says Michele Chiarlo. "I wistfully remember the endless meetings I had with my friend Giuliano Noe' in the 1990s to lay the foundations of a strict disciplinary focusing on high quality. Thanks to this quest for excellence, the faith we had in it and to a constructive and constant exchange, we have come to this result today".

The vineyards that can boast the "Nizza" appellation are located in an area historically dedicated to this variety, a well-defined territory in the Monferrato region which includes only 18 municipalities. The vineyards enjoy full exposure (from south-east to south-west), have exceptionally low yields (less than 70 quintals per hectare) and grow on soils known as "Asti sands". The aging period for Nizza DOCG is a minimum of 18 months, while Nizza DOCG Riserva requires at least 30 months.

The Estate's best vineyards yield Michele Chiarlo's most important Nizza wines: powerful, elegant, endowed with great structure and longevity. La Court is not only a symbol of elevated enological quality, but is also the perfect union between nature, landscape and the work of man.

Nizza Riserva La Court 2020



The vineyard destined for Riserva La Court was planted in 1976 and stretches for about 3 hectares, containing approximately 5,000 vines per hectare. Situated at 250 m asl, the soil of La Court consists of Asti sand: clayey-calcareous marl of marine sedimentary origin, with good presence of silt and sand, rich in microelements, particularly magnesium. Yield is extremely low, the excess bunches are thinned at the end of the summer, keeping 5/6 bunches per vine.

The 2020 vintage began with a mild winter with little rainfall, especially snowy ones. The first part of spring was dry and sunny (March and April), suggesting an early vintage. This forecast has been proven wrong: May and June have been particularly rainy, slowing down vegetative development. But this also allowed for an abundant accumulation of essential water resources for the summer season that has not been excessively hot and dry. It was an abundant year in terms of quantity, but thanks to the performance of the now traditional practice of thinning, the situation returned to

normal levels, further favoring grape quality. In general, the weather was ideal, including a final spurt of sunny days and excellent diurnal temperature variation from mid-August to late September, conditions that identify great vintages.

Manual harvesting was followed by alcoholic fermentation in 55-hectolitre oak vats, 15 days in contact with the skins with delicate pumping over, at a controlled temperature between 30°/27°C. Malolactic fermentation was carried out in vats. Aging lasted for approximately 30 months, of which an average of one year was spent in wood. 50% aged in barriques, the other 50% in large barrels. After blending, the wine aged in the bottle for another18 months.

Nizza Riserva La Court 2020 reveals a purple color with brilliant ruby reflections. The nose is broad, intense, elegant, with notes of black cherry followed by tertiary notes of cocoa and coffee. In the mouth, the great structure stands out, unveiling a fresh but velvety sip and a long, silky finish. Perfect with traditional Piedmontese dishes such as agnolotti with roast sauce and tagliolini with porcini mushrooms, or even with roasted veal and well-aged cheeses.