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Tenuta di Castellaro leads sustainable winemaking on Lipari with Bianco Pomice

Native grapes and traditional methods drive innovation and tourism on Sicily’s Aeolian Islands, highlighting volcanic terroir and organic practices

Friday, June 13, 2025



On the island of Lipari, the largest of Sicily’s Aeolian Islands, Tenuta di Castellaro has established itself as a leading name in Italian winemaking. The estate’s Bianco Pomice, first produced in 2008, has become a symbol of the region’s volcanic landscape and its unique approach to sustainable viticulture. The wine is crafted from a blend of Malvasia delle Lipari (60%) and Carricante (40%), two native grape varieties that reflect the island’s diverse terroir.

Tenuta di Castellaro was founded in 2005 by Massimo Lentsch and his family, who were drawn to Lipari’s wild beauty and rich winemaking history. Their goal was to revive traditional bush-trained vine cultivation on volcanic soils while adopting modern, environmentally conscious practices. Today, the estate covers 24 hectares and produces about 70,000 bottles annually. The property includes a modern winery, a wine resort, and the restored Geomineral Park of the Kaolin Quarries, which is now open to visitors.

The vineyards are located at an altitude of 350 meters above sea level, where sandy volcanic soils and frequent winds create ideal conditions for grape growing. The climate is Mediterranean, with warm temperatures and significant day-night temperature swings that help preserve acidity and aromatic complexity in the grapes. The vines are trained using the traditional “alberello” or bush method, with a high density of 7,000 plants per hectare. Yields are kept low at around 70 quintals per hectare to ensure concentration and quality.

Grape harvesting is done by hand with careful selection of each bunch. Malvasia delle Lipari brings floral and herbaceous aromas, while Carricante adds freshness and minerality. After direct pressing in a pneumatic press, the must is clarified at low temperatures before fermentation. Malvasia ferments in stainless steel tanks at 16-18°C, while Carricante is fermented in third- or fourth-use barriques. Both components remain on their lees for about six months with regular bâtonnage to enhance texture and complexity. The wine is then aged in bottle for at least six months before release.

Bianco Pomice stands out for its pale yellow color with green reflections and its aromatic profile marked by Mediterranean herbs, citrus notes, and a distinct saline character. On the palate, it combines the aromatic richness of Malvasia with the crisp

acidity of Carricante, resulting in a wine that is both vibrant and persistent. According to winemaker Emiliano Falsini, this balance makes Bianco Pomice a fine example of how native varieties can express the identity of their origin.

Sustainability is central to Tenuta di Castellaro’s philosophy. The estate follows certified organic protocols and avoids chemical inputs whenever possible. Indigenous yeasts are used for fermentation, and clarification occurs naturally through repeated racking rather than filtration or additives. These practices aim to protect soil health and local biodiversity while reducing environmental impact.

The estate’s commitment extends beyond winemaking. By restoring historical sites like the Kaolin Quarries and opening them to visitors, Tenuta di Castellaro promotes cultural tourism on Lipari. The winery itself serves as both a production facility and an architectural landmark that blends into the volcanic landscape.

Bianco Pomice has an estimated aging potential of eight to ten years, making it suitable for cellaring as well as immediate enjoyment. It pairs well with seafood dishes typical of Sicilian cuisine but also stands on its own as an expression of place.

The story of Tenuta di Castellaro reflects a broader trend in Italian wine: a return to native grapes, traditional methods, and respect for nature. On Lipari, these values have produced not only a distinctive wine but also a model for sustainable tourism and rural development in one of Italy’s most remote regions. As interest in volcanic wines grows worldwide, Bianco Pomice continues to represent both the heritage and future potential of the Aeolian Islands’ viticulture.