



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

ANTOINE ARENA

Country: **France**

Region: **Corsica**

Appellation(s): **Patrimonio, Cap Corse**

Producer: **Antoine Arena**

Founded: **16th Century**

Annual Production: **5,500 cases**

Farming: **Organic**

Website: **www.antoine-arena.fr**



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 by their father. As of the 2014 vintage, the Arenas have divided their holdings evenly amongst Antoine, Antoine-Marie, and Jean-Baptiste. The decision came naturally: in a typically Corsican spirit of independence, Antoine's sons will carry on the family tradition through their very own domaines, enjoying the autonomy to work the way they desire while maintaining close family bonds and a free exchange of ideas (see Antoine-Marie Arena and Jean-Baptiste Arena). Antoine's legacy lives on, and the Arena name will forever be associated with pioneering excellence in Corsican wine.



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ANTOINE ARENA (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend¹</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Bianco Gentile	Bianco Gentile	Planted in 1997	Clay, limestone	.5 ha
Patrimonio Blanc Carco	Vermentinu	Planted in 1987	Limestone, chalk, clay	1 ha
Patrimonio Blanc Haut de Carco	Vermentinu	Planted in 2003	Limestone, chalk, clay	1 ha
Patrimonio Blanc Grotte di Sole	Vermentinu	60 years	Clay, limestone	1 ha
Vin de France Blanc “Vendange Tardive”	Vermentinu	Planted in 1998	Clay, limestone	.2 ha
Patrimonio Rosé	80% Niellucciu, 20% Vermentinu	N/A	Chalk, clay, limestone	.5 ha
Patrimonio Rouge Carco	Niellucciu	Planted in 1987	Limestone, chalk, clay	2 ha
Patrimonio Rouge Grotte di Sole	Niellucciu	60 years	Clay, limestone	2 ha
Patrimonio Rouge “Morta Maio”	Niellucciu	Planted in 2001	Clay, limestone, schist	2 ha
Patrimonio Rouge “Cuvée Zero”	Niellucciu	Planted in 2001	Clay, limestone	NA
Patrimonio Rouge “Mémoria”	Niellucciu	80 years	Clay, limestone	1 ha
Muscat du Cap Corse	Muscat à Petit Grains	Planted in 1982, 1992, 1995	Clay, limestone	1 ha
Vin de France Muscat	Muscat à Petit Grains	Planted in 1983	Clay, limestone	1 ha

¹ Corsican spellings of grape varieties

* “ha”=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

Whites:

- 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
- Vin de France *Blanc* “Vendange Tardive” is harvested in November



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Reds:

- Hand harvested (yields usually around 35 hl/ha)
- Natural fermentation, with infrequent doses of sulfur, cement *cuve*, no oak
- Long macerations from 6 to 9 weeks, with regular punch-downs
- Long *élevages*, up to 2 years in concrete tanks
- Património “Carco” *Rouge* is partially aged in 350 L, old barrels
- Património Rouge “Mémoria” is partially aged in 350 L, old barrels
- Património Rouge “Mémoria” is sourced from the oldest parcel of the Morta Maio vineyard, which was planted by Antoine’s grandfather
- No fining, no filtration

Património Rosé:

- Rosé is mostly made using 10% *saignée* method, 90% direct press
- Malolactic fermentation is always completed
- Vines are mostly situated in the “Morta Maio” vineyard

Carco:

The Carco vineyard is on an eastern facing slope, cleared of its *maquis* and planted in 1987 by Antoine. The name of the parcel, *Carco*, dates back to at least Napoleonic times, and in Corsican means “busy,” most likely due to the fact that it was covered in densely planted olive trees at that time, before being abandoned. Two different wines come from this vineyard: the Património *Carco Rouge*, from Niellucciu (1ha). Niellucciu (Corsican spelling) vines are the descendants of Sangiovese vines brought to Património by Pisans in the 12th century when Corsica was a part of the Republic of Pisa. “Niel” in Corsican means black, and “lucciu” is an endearing term for something small, thus the name given to the grape for its dark color and small berries. While Niellucciu and Sangiovese are indeed cousins, the Niellucciu of Património has had nearly nine centuries to adapt to the particularities of the local *terroir*. The second wine is the Património *Carco Blanc* (2ha), 100% Vermentinu. (Vermentinu arrived in Património well before Niellucciu, although the date of its arrival is still unclear). Both the *rouge* and *blanc* from this parcel are marked by a limestone nerve and minerality.

Haut de Carco:

The Haut de Carco is the most recently planted parcel, sitting directly above the *Carco*, and containing even harder, thicker limestone than the *Carco*. In fact, nothing grew there before. The Arenas cleared rocks and blasted holes for over a year in the rock to plant Vermentinu (much to the awe of their neighbors who were convinced that the vines would never take). The first harvest was in 2008.

Grotte di Sole:

Meaning “sunny grottoes” in Corsican, this parcel takes its name from its direct southern facing exposure. As the name suggests, this *terroir* on clay-limestone soils gives the ripest grapes from the property. Património *Grotte di Sole Rouge* (2 ha), 100% Niellucciu, and Património *Grotte di Sole Blanc* (1ha), 100% Vermentinu, both come from this parcel. These vines average 60 years of age, and



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are from the original holdings of the Arena family, going back to at least the 18th century. These

ANTOINE ARENA (continued)

wines tend to be rich and round, but Antoine takes pains to harvest early and never allows for excessive maturity.

“Morta Maio”:

The Morta Maio vineyard was planted in 2001 with only Niellucciu. There is just a single cuvée from this parcel, the Patrimonio “Morta Maio” *Rouge*. This is often the most approachable of the reds when young—dark, earthy, chewy and juicy.

Morta Maio translates as “The Eldest Myrtle.” Morta = Myrtle in Corsican, the shrub that makes up the bulk of the maquis in Patrimonio. (In other parts of Corsica they spell Morta as Murtha, where you can see more of the resemblance to the word Myrtle). Maio = The Eldest, or the oldest. This parcel, which has belonged to the Arena family for over 400 years, immediately surrounds their house and was used as brush pasture for the donkeys who worked the vines. Since the parcel has been in use for so long (longer than the 400 years it has belonged to the Arenas) the term “Maio” was added to it.

Bianco Gentile:

Bianco Gentile is a variety native to the island, which was considered lost until a small parcel was found up the highlands of Corsica. Antoine and a small group of *vigneron* friends took some cuttings from that last remaining vineyard, and planted it back on his property, effectively saving it from extinction. Patrimonio regulations, drawn up when the grape was considered extinct, don’t allow for its use in the A.O.C., so the wine is a *Vin de France*. The parcel is situated between the *Carvo* and *Grotte di Sole* vineyards.

Muscat du Cap Corse:

There is also a small parcel of Muscat à Petits Grains that goes into the Muscat du Cap Corse cuvée. It is a low-yielding parcel, which is then fortified with Corsican grappa, as tradition and A.O.C. rules require. His Muscat is never over the top nor syrupy but is always floral and delicate. The Arenas also produce a small quantity of unfortified Muscat that is mostly consumed locally.

Patrimonio Rouge “Cuvée Zero”:

A completely no-sulfur blend, vinified in cement and stainless steel tanks. All fruit comes from the Morta Maio vineyard.