

(symposium)

# ENIGMA VARIATIONS

## A WAY OF DOING THINGS

Josko Gravner is dismissed as a dangerous eccentric by some and revered as an inspirational visionary by others. Neil Beckett learned more about the man and his wines over a remarkable lunch

It was Harry Eyres who bravely broke the rather stunned silence to ask the first question. “Do you think,” he asked Josko Gravner cautiously, “that we need to adopt a different vocabulary for your wines?” And this from a writer who, as evidenced by his “Slow Lane” column in the *Financial Times* and other writings, has a far wider vocabulary than most. I knew exactly what he meant, too: I had been asking myself much the same thing throughout most of this bewildering but bewitching and emotionally charged lunch. Finding the right words can be difficult enough even with far more conventional wines, but the challenge becomes more daunting than ever when faced with Gravner’s highly original wonders.

The answer to Harry’s pertinent question came without hesitation—not actually from Josko himself but from his daughter Jana, who had the difficult task of translating but didn’t feel the need to translate this time, so sure was she of what her father would have replied: “Yes. And as simple as possible. Like the wines.” But lest I or anybody else around the table think that this would therefore be an easy exercise, relieved of the sense that only the most inspired imagery could begin to convey the extraordinary experience of these wines, several of Josko’s earlier pronouncements warned us not to have any illusions about what we might understand ourselves, let alone share with others. “It is not possible,” he rightly insisted, “to get to know a wine on one meeting, any more than it would be to get to know a person.” Moreover, “these wines are often better the next day and may improve for up to a week after opening.”

If I can therefore have even less hope than usual that my impressions of these wines might be meaningful to anybody else, there are other reasons that make this remarkable lunch worth relating. The first and most important is the presence and openness of Josko himself, a famously reclusive winemaker who seldom receives visitors and seldom travels. (Dirk Niepoort once told me that after failing to get a reply to any of the 40 emails he had sent to Josko requesting a visit, he felt his only option was to go and bang on his door, which, being Dirk, he did.) The second reason is the unprecedented range of the wines: both of Gravner’s famous two white wines, Ribolla Gialla and Breg, in every vintage from 2005 back to 1998, culminating in the still-to-be-released 1998 Ribolla Riserva in magnum and a bottle of his red Pignolo. And the third is the skill with which they were matched to the superb food of Alberico Penati, formerly the head chef at

Harry’s Bar in London and now at Aspinalls, another London club, where this lunch was held. It was all brilliantly masterminded by Gravner’s UK agent, Zubair Mohammed of Raeburn Fine Wines in Edinburgh, and his colleague David Harvey, a former sommelier now specializing in natural wines—though as we shall see, that is not a term that Josko himself would recognize. The first of many paradoxes.

### Swimming against the tide

Josko Gravner is well known today as the maverick Friulian producer who has undergone a series of metamorphoses. Relentlessly reinventing himself and seeking his own way—rather than arrogantly wanting to stand out from the crowd or self-consciously pursuing novelty for its own sake (as some mistakenly suppose)—he has struck out in new directions, only to have others follow in his footsteps. He must often have felt like the medieval mystics who wanted to flee the world but who succeeded only in attracting ever-larger crowds as they retreated higher and higher up the mountain (another paradox). First, in the 1970s, he adopted stainless steel, being one of the first in his region to do so, producing brighter, fresher, less oxidative wines than had long been the norm; then, in the 1980s, small new wooden barrels... Then, in the 1990s, large clay amphorae and large wooden casks.

Now 58 years old, he says, “I’m still swimming against the tide—the rest are going with the flow. But I’ve become stronger that way.” Though convinced that he is now on the right path, he has the humility to admit that he has taken what seem with hindsight to have been wrong turns. Even these, however, have their place in the Gravnerian scheme of things and are not, at least for him, matters of regret. “If I admit a mistake, I may lose the confidence of my customers. But it should be the opposite—it shows the will to improve. Those to whom I have admitted my mistakes have become great friends, because our mutual respect has grown. One of the most important things in life is to learn from one’s mistakes. Mistakes are there to open one’s eyes and to inspire the will to change.”

Beginning anxiously, even nervously, to introduce himself and his wines at our lunch, he spoke softly but fluently, with great emotional intensity and tightly pursed lips, which turned down at the edges only slightly less worryingly than those on the masks of Ancient Greek tragedy. “My history is very simple. I was looking for simplicity, for natural things, so



Josko Gravner at the mouth of one of the large clay amphorae in which his idiosyncratic white wines will spend the first of their seven years prior to bottling

the only way to go was back. I started very early, even when I was still at school, and instead of studying I went to help in the vineyards. When I was 16, I started to work in the cellar. And soon after, I began to make big changes, doing the complete opposite of what my father had taught me. But I have to admit now that my father was right. You don't make wine in the cellar but in the vineyard. Now I thank my father. And I also thank my son, that he was happy to follow in my way, even if I told him, when he left home at the age of 20, that he had to begin all over again every year..." A long pause followed as Josko became too emotional to speak. Almost a year ago to the day, he had lost his only son, Miha, still only 27 years old, in a motorcycle accident. Josko also expresses his gratitude to Miha on his website, where there is a poignant photo. When he was able to carry on, Josko said, "Miha understood that. And that otherwise life's not worth living."

### **Viticulture: back to Columella and Pliny**

If Josko went on to talk less about vineyards and viticulture than winemaking, it is not because this reflects their relative importance for him (so only an apparent paradox). On the contrary, it is because he accepts the primacy of the former as a self-evident truth (and also because his practices in the vineyard are less unusual than those in the winery). Indeed, so fundamental does he regard the vineyard that having realized over the years that his Ribolla sites—Dedno, Hum, Runk, and Svetikriz—are superior to those for Breg's constituent grape varieties—Bracnik (Pinot Grigio and Riesling Italic),

Godenca (Pinot Grigio), Polje (Chardonnay), and Pusca (Sauvignon Blanc)—he no longer feels able to produce the blended wine. This revelation came as a shock to me and will doubtless be regretted by all those who enjoy the Breg as much as the Ribolla. For Josko, however, it seems an unavoidable conclusion. "My best vineyards and best vines are Ribolla. Knowing that, I can produce no other wine," he insisted in a very matter-of-fact way, as though it were the most logical progression in the world. Such is the price of perfectionism.

The other beliefs he voiced on viticulture were also characteristically forthright. He is convinced that there are far too many vineyards, promising, "If I were Minister of Agriculture, I would pay growers each to give up one hectare [2.5 acres] of vines." He would also ban irrigation.

He is indignant that students at San Michele all'Adige, a leading viticultural school in Trentino, are not required to read Columella and Pliny the Elder—"by far the most important books ever written about wine"—and that there is not a single lesson on how to choose the site of a vineyard. On the basis of his own experience, he was adamant that in his area of Friuli, around the small town of Oslavia, it is not possible to make good wine above 1,000ft (300m).

He does not follow biodynamic practices in the vineyards (only in the winery, as we shall see), finding that many biodynamically grown wines are too acidic or too volatile. He abstains, however, from all artificial treatments in the vines, relying on sulfur and copper to combat mildew and oidium, recognizing copper as a pollutant but regarding it as

## (symposium)

infinitely preferable to industrially manufactured products.

He green-harvests in late July or early August if he needs to restrict yields, especially of the Ribolla, removing all or part of between five and seven bunches. He then harvests as late as possible, regarding the risk of loss as well worth running and welcoming botrytis for the additional complexity that it brings. Of the eight vintages on show at our lunch, only one (the 2003) was not affected to some extent by noble rot.

### Winemaking: amphorae and SO<sub>2</sub>

Josko was more expansive when explaining aspects of what he does in the cellar. “Philosophy is more important than enology. If we’re at a crisis in the wine world, it’s because of enology. Which doesn’t mean that I’m opposed to innovation. We need faster planes and trains.”

As resigned as the Psalmist was that “there is nothing new under the sun,” he believes that discovery is really a matter of rediscovery. “You need only go back in history, and the whole world is open to you.” Describing his adoption of amphorae as an essential part of his winemaking (from 1997 on an experimental basis, and from 2001 for all his white wines), he explained that, until Celts introduced wood some 1,300 years ago, all wine was made in clay. But his use of it is not based merely on this historic validation. Rather, it is for a more unusual reason, amounting to “a return to the soil”: “The vine needs soil to grow grapes, and when the grapes are picked, they need to be close to the soil again.

The soil helps both to grow and to mature the wine.”

The amphorae that Josko uses come from the Caucasus, where much of the earliest evidence relating to wine has been found, and where producers have used them for thousands of years. They are large—with a capacity of 1,500–2,500 liters—and lined only with beeswax to stop them leaking. (The only alternative to beeswax, as used by some Georgian producers, would be natural tar.) Josko now has 45 amphorae, buried in the earth in a specially built part of his winery, though no more than 13 are in use at any one time.

The white grapes are fermented in amphorae and stay on their skins for six or seven months—a lengthy maceration that would be impossible for red wines. “I have the great advantage of making white wine,” he enthused. “For me, wine is white.” Because the skins rise, they need to be

punched down six or seven times a day in the early stages. But Josko is very opposed to *bâtonnage*, once telling a French producer who bragged of stirring the lees once a week that this was like supposing one’s children would do something naughty during the week, so spanking them every Monday.

During fermentation, the CO<sub>2</sub> helps prevent oxidation. But once the fermentation is complete, the amphorae need to be kept topped up, and a little SO<sub>2</sub> is added, though Josko relies on intuition rather than measurement. SO<sub>2</sub> is a subject about which he feels particularly strongly. “We *drink* wines, they go straight into us. Whoever looks after himself knows it’s important not to have chemical additives. In the 1990s, I thought I had to get rid of all additives, including SO<sub>2</sub>. It became clear to me that wine is the product of nature more

than of man. But it is also a product of man. The product of grapes without man is vinegar. So I do now use one additive: SO<sub>2</sub>.

“The history of wine goes back at least 5,000 years. For the first 3,000 years, instead of SO<sub>2</sub>, men used raisins and spices to prevent vinegar. Then, 2,000 years ago, the Romans saw that raisins created SO<sub>2</sub> and that, if they added just a little bit, they could make really good wine. Now I can say that to make great wine, you need to know how much SO<sub>2</sub> to use. It’s the only additive you need. And of the 300 permitted, it’s the only one that needs to be identified on labels. All of the other additives—cultured yeasts, enzymes, and so on—don’t need to be mentioned. To those who say that SO<sub>2</sub> is bad for wine, I say that trying to make wine

without SO<sub>2</sub> is like trying to make salami without salt: impossible. And I know, because I’ve tried it. Some who want to use no SO<sub>2</sub> use enzymes instead.”

After the long maceration, the grapes are pressed in March or April, and the wine goes back into amphorae for another six months or so, until September. It then goes into large wooden casks of close-grained Slovenian oak. Until the 2005 vintage, the wines matured there for three years; but since then, the intention has been to hold them there for three more years, so that the *élevage* lasts seven years in total—one in amphorae and six in wood. Needless to say, the number is not random, even though, like the choice of amphorae itself, the rationale is again rather unusual: “Every seven years, the cells in our bodies change. I want to give my wines the same chance.”

The wines are bottled according to Marie Thun’s



Two of the 45 clay amphorae buried deep in the ground of Gravner’s cellar

biodynamic calendar and the lunar cycle (charted on the home page of the Gravner website), a practice that Josko thinks particularly important for wines that are not filtered. But he resists any suggestion that his wines are biodynamic or, for that matter, that he is part of any wider movement. “My wines are wines. Not ‘natural’ wines or ‘organic’ wines—they are just wines. The ‘natural wine movement’ will do great harm, as people are now starting to realize.”

He is no less scathing of others who also claim to be producing wine in amphorae. “Those who still have a lot of stainless-steel tanks and a lot of barriques and three amphorae can’t say that they are making wines in amphorae. You can’t ride two horses at once. If amphorae are best,” he protested, in typically uncompromising fashion, “then all of the wine must be made that way.” So important does he now regard this process that, since the 2001 vintage, “Anfora” has been added prominently across the front labels of both Ribolla and Breg.

### Love and hate

And the results of this highly individual, original winemaking? White wines that will certainly seem extraordinary to most tasters—even if Josko, paradoxically and typically, avows, “My wines are not out of the ordinary—all of the others are.”

They are also certainly divisive—largely, I suspect, because they are so extraordinary. Responses normally fall into one of four main types. Many love the man, his ideas, and his wines. I shall declare myself among them, even if I find some of the ideas hard to understand. Others admire the dedication, the passion, and the perfectionism but question whether they should need to know the story to appreciate, let alone enjoy, the wines. And I also have some sympathy with this view, since these surely are wines (like Valentini’s Trebbiano and a growing number of others) for which it does help to know the story. As an interesting aside, however, Josko said that those who are not experienced wine drinkers often enjoy them much more readily than those who are, who often have much more fixed ideas about what wine should taste like. Nor did Josko deny that the wines should be enjoyed—on the contrary, he insisted that this is paramount. “Wine must be a pleasure. The most important thing is that the wine tastes good. But,” he added characteristically, “it is also important that it carries the soul of the winemaker. The winery has to have the spirit of the people who work there.”

Others respect the man and his ideas but still find the wines difficult to like, however hard they might try, and don’t quite see the point. “Why not move to Jerez?” asked Nicolas Belfrage MW at a *WFW* tasting of Italian white wines in 2005

(issue 6), where the three tasters knew the identity of the wines. Belfrage admitted some bewilderment on this occasion, concluding that “you have to mark these wines either high or low,” giving the 1999 Ribolla a score of 7, and the 1999 Breg a score of 17. The other two experienced but non-specialist tasters awarded scores of 0 and 16 for the Ribolla, and 0 and 7 for the Breg—altogether the most disparate range of scores for any *WFW* tasting. And then there are some who dismiss both the man and the wines as misguided.

There are intelligent wine lovers of all four persuasions, including high-profile advocates and equally high-profile skeptics. Even close friends who have similar tastes and who normally enjoy similar wines often have sharply opposing views on these. For one, there is nothing he would rather drink, and he will happily drink them all evening; for the other, the wines are almost undrinkable.

Josko himself, of course, is fully aware of this range of responses. “I accept that not everybody will love my wines. Thirty years ago, I wouldn’t have liked these wines myself. But

I love them now. I make them for myself and sell the rest.” (Another paradox, for at the same time, he does need to sell them. When he admitted at our lunch that if he were a rich man, he would not be making the wines the way he is, a fellow guest asked what else he would do differently if he were rich; Josko quipped that he would not be at our lunch, for one thing. He may seem serious, even solemn, but he has a

wit as dry as his wines—and he smiles from time to time.)

In response to the most common criticism of his wines—that they look, smell, and taste oxidized, even when first released—he expresses his conviction that the wines still have many years of life left in them. “I want my wines to live longer than I will. And I want to live till I’m 114. But I’m also ready to die tomorrow. It’s in this spirit that I make my wines.”

Personally, I do not find the wines remotely past it—rather a classic example (like good Fino Sherry) of the distinction between oxidative and oxidized. They are dry without being in any sense dried out. They have composure without being fresh, equilibrium without being flat. They still have energy, if not pristine purity. But they are certainly distinctive and—coming back to where I began—they are certainly difficult to describe in conventional terms.

The greatest paradox of all, perhaps, is that, for all that Josko and many aspects of his viticulture and winemaking hark back to a tradition thousands of years old, the wines themselves are strangely modern in taste terms. Like much modern art, literature, and music, they are abstract or impressionist, without a clearly discernible narrative or shape; they certainly have a structure, but it is far from

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straightforward—less a beginning, a middle, and an end than crisscrossing multiple story lines, flashbacks, even stream of consciousness. They certainly have complexity and intensity (as even their detractors recognize), and they seem to me to have their own harmony as well (even if the melody can be hard to identify). So, all the intrinsic components of quality are there, even if the wines remain variations on a theme: enigma. They have authenticity, originality, and personality, too, though whether one likes or dislikes the ways in which these manifest themselves is more a matter of personal taste.

### The lunch and the wines

Josko emphasized that his Ribolla and Breg are better consumed considerably warmer than most white wines—at 59–65°F (15–18°C)—and from glasses with wide bowls (akin to the Riedel Sommelier Montrachet glass, though, like Gianfranco Soldera, he has had glasses made to his own specifications). This is how we were served the wines at our lunch, the Ribolla and the Breg from the same vintage at the same time—and without exception, the wines seemed to be showing as they should.

They also proved remarkably versatile, even if mutually enhancing alliances (the 2004 Breg with the sea-bass carpaccio was one) were inevitably less frequent than *ententes cordiales*—normally the most than one can hope for in terms of food-and-wine matching. Only one or two dishes were rather overwhelmed by the sheer power of the wines. Attempting a detailed description would be both dishonest and pointless. (It was difficult enough to record Josko's steady flow, as well as to taste the wines two at a time, without reflecting on how well they all went with the food.) But it may still be helpful to show the range and type of dishes, carefully chosen and meticulously prepared, with which the wines generally worked very well:

salmon pâté on *crostini*  
sea-bass carpaccio, watercress purée, hazelnut oil  
Josè Noè Tonda Gentile di Langa IGP (hazelnuts)  
green pappardelle with capon and wood-pigeon sauce  
wild-mushroom soup with saffron  
quail breast, broad beans and balsamic  
Parmesan cheese with grilled bread.

Before describing the wines, it is worth mentioning their varietal makeup. After all, this, more than anything else, determines the taste of any wine—a fact that is often overshadowed by Gravner's unusual vinification. Ribolla Gialla enjoyed the highest reputation of any grape variety in Friuli from at least the 15th to the 18th century, losing its preeminence to phylloxera in the 19th century and to the growing popularity of “international” varieties in the 20th. The potential for quality has always been there, but even more recently, with the renewed interest in indigenous varieties, it still accounted for less than 1 percent of all the DOC white wines of Friuli in the mid-1990s (*The Oxford Companion to Wine*) and, apart from across the border in Slovenia, is almost unknown in the rest of the world. Moreover, quite aside from

its rarity, the wine generally lacks strong personality, its appeal having more to do with floral finesse and subtlety. So if the Gravner version is unfamiliar, elusive, and enigmatic, this is hardly surprising, even if the unusual vinification takes us even deeper into unknown territory. Similarly, while we may be more familiar with three of the four grape varieties in Breg (the proportions varying with the vintage), how many of us frequently taste blends of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, and Riesling Italico—even without the added layers of Gravnerian inscrutability?

At our lunch, we worked our way back, starting with the 2005s (which will probably not be released for another couple of years). Josko described this as a difficult vintage, but added that when the going got tough, the tough got going (or words to that effect), and that these were often the most rewarding for him in the longer term. The color of this wine (like the others) is certainly deeper than one would normally expect of most white wines of this age: an attractive, intense, medium-deep antique gold. It (along with the rest of the wines) is not “star-bright” in the way that most filtered wines are, but after its years of settling it has still “fallen” fairly bright and clear in cask, and I would not describe it (as others do) as cloudy; rather, it has a dullish luster (even if that adds an oxymoron to the other paradoxes). Discreet on the nose, with soft, white stone fruit and gentle spice, then round and smooth on the palate, but with dry grip from the high phenolic content resulting from the long skin contact; balanced, well-integrated acidity that neither disappears nor dominates, and great intensity and limpidity of flavor, with a dry, persistent, potent finish. The 2005 Breg was (typically) a shade deeper in color, with apricots and herbs on the nose; denser, silkier, smoother, and suppler, with the same dry grip but even greater transparency of flavor, making it seem more *aérien* and ethereal; real elegance and finesse as well as persistence, more settled at this stage, with gentle warmth on the finish and a herbal reprise.

The 2004 Ribolla had an attractive nose of dried apricots, chanterelle mushrooms, and white pepper, at once exotic and earthy, but seemed totally effortless, as natural as air, so it felt as though one were breathing it rather than smelling it (maybe this is one of the benefits of the minimal SO<sub>2</sub>); natural without being pure and without being wild; medium-bodied, smooth on the surface, but again with a dry rub underneath; this was all structure and texture and vigor, in the realm of earth rather than fruit, with a peppery, warm finish. The 2004 Breg was a deeper gold and more complex on the nose; apricot kernels, honey, and herbs initially—so intricate that it is difficult as well as diminishing to pick it apart—but with a botrytis-lent exoticism, pineapple-redolent, with time in the glass; ample but far from fat on the palate, dry but richly layered; less pure and refined than the 2005 Breg, but still effortless, without being in any way obvious; not alcoholic (these wines are typically around 12.5% ABV), but the concentration leaves the impression of warmth.

The exceptional heat of the 2003 vintage was reflected on the nose of the Ribolla, which, despite the absence of botrytis, was exotic, with anise and pineapple; elegant, flowing, silken, and supple, still with adequate acidity, but lacks a little depth,

energy, and intensity on the mid-palate, and slightly hollow on the finish by comparison with the other vintages. The 2003 Breg was a very deep, intense gold with an amber/orange hue; a magnificent, opulent, peach and peach-skin nose; ample and broad, with a syrupy, velvety texture, greater harmony and richness than the 2003 Ribolla, if less intensity than the 2004 or 2005 Breg; a hot spot on the finish, with the sultry energy, or rather tension, that precedes an afternoon thunderstorm.

The 2002 Ribolla, medium-gold, had a brisk, invigorating, mineral, saline sea-breeze nose, becoming richer and spicier with air; greater density, intensity, and minerality than the 2003, with a brighter, fresher, more persistent finish. The 2002 Breg was a less deep gold than the 2003 but not completely clear; floral intrigue gave way to a dried mango/papaya, peppery richness; greater density and weight than the 2003, still with gentle grip, but smoothed over by a rolling, liquorous richness; grace and refinement, as well as great, straight persistence; lovely wine.

The 2001 Ribolla was light to medium-gold, with a light, pure pineapple nose reminiscent of fine young Sauternes; composed, elegant, and effortless; dry underneath but with sufficient silk and succulence on top. The 2001 Breg was a deeper gold, with an amber hue and spiced-peach nose; ample, expansive, and harmonious; dry but energetic and sapid, with a molten smoothness; spectacular complexity and length.

The 2000 wines were the last to macerate in large, open oak vats rather than amphorae. The Ribolla was a bright medium-gold, with fresh herbal aromas (mint and tarragon), though also more overt wood influence; concentrated and richly silky, but still with lovely fluidity and limpidity, as well as great freshness and persistence on the finish. The Breg was a dullish amber and, unusually, less expressive than the Ribolla on the nose, with light herb and vanilla; much more eloquent on the palate, harmonious and vigorous, with even greater smoothness and succulence than the Ribolla; wonderful depth of flavor and a seemingly endless, flourishing finish.

The 1999 Ribolla was the first where the color was at least as deep a gold as that of the Breg; herbs and honey on the nose; complex, harmonious, and long; one of the driest and most tannic wines so far, but still fluid. The 1999 Breg was composed but still energetic at more than ten years old; harmonious, rich, smooth, and succulent, with a very long, complex finish; approaching the height of its powers but should stay on its plateau for many years yet; superb.

Although the 1998 Ribolla was good (dry, rich, and smooth) and the 1998 Breg better still (honeyed, supple, subtle, but still vigorous) both were eclipsed by the 1998 Ribolla Riserva from magnum, which is a very special wine. Here the designation “riserva” really means something, and the abundant qualities of the other vintages of the Ribolla are magnified. One of the reasons is that this wine comes from Runk, the vineyard that, until 2003, had the oldest vines—the oldest planted during World War I, in 1915, and the youngest planted during the 1950s. But Josko had to replant the vineyard in November 2003, so this is the last year from which he made wine from these very old vines; he will bottle it as a Riserva in September 2010, and says it is this wine that persuaded him to mature his

other wines for the same amount of time before bottling—seven years. Meanwhile, even the 1998 Riserva, available only in 500 magnums, will not be released until 2011. But it will have been well worth the wait, for the wine is splendid: amber in color, but luminous; composed but very complex on both nose and palate; dry, with gentle grip, but also the cremosity of old vines, so that it is seductively fleshy and voluptuous; perfect harmony and tremendous persistence; glorious.

After this there was nowhere to go but a red wine. Having made a rosso for many years, as a Cabernet/Merlot blend, the only red that Josko will make from now on is from Pignolo. He also experimented with three other indigenous red varieties (Refosco, Schioppettino, and Tazzelenghe) but felt that Pignolo was the most successful, “combining the finesse of Pinot Noir with the structure of Nebbiolo.” He admits that he would not plant it now—he would plant only Ribolla—but says that he will not rip it out and will continue to make the wine. The 2003 Pignolo (to be released in 2013) was a medium-deep matt purple; naturally expressive on the nose, with cherry, earth, and licorice; grippy tannins underneath, but smooth, refined, and velvety, around a core of perfectly ripe soft fruit; a correctly dry, cleansing finish of good length; nothing aggressive or rustic; both curious and delicious.

By now the lunch had been going for nearly four hours, though it had fairly flown. By turns exhilarating, moving, illuminating, and mystifying, it was a memorably special occasion. Josko’s conclusion and valediction was: “Making wines is like living one’s life. It’s a way of doing things.” I, for one, am glad he does things his way. ■



#### CONTACT INFORMATION & PRICES FOR RECENT VINTAGES

/// Ribolla Gialla

POR Ribolla Gialla Riserva  
(magnum)

/// Breg

POR Pignolo

#### Azienda Agricola Gravner Francesco

Loc. Lenzuolo Bianco 9, Oslavia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy

[www.gravner.it](http://www.gravner.it)

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