



Country:
Italy

Region:
Lazio > Piglio DOCG
> Frusinate IGT

Estate owned by:
Owned and operated by a few local families, with Alessandra Borgia and Flavio Carella managing the winery and the vineyards.

Winemakers:
Gian Marco Cioffi
with enologist Gabriele Graia

Vineyards:
Practicing organic with preparations for certification, 15 hectares.

Year founded:
2002

Home link:
<https://pileum.it/>

Production:
Passerina del Frusinate: 650 cases
Valle Bianca: 800 cases
Cesanese del Piglio: 1650 cases
Massitium: 1500 cases

The Pileum winery was started by four friends in 2002 whose vision was to create the best wines of Lazio region – a place their families had called home for multiple generations. From day one, the utmost care has been placed in growing only the Cesanese di Affile grape for the reds, utilizing old vines, planting the right clones, and pursuing a natural approach with spontaneous fermentation, minimal sulfites, and organic practices in the vineyard.

Pileum is in the heart of the Piglio DOCG for the Cesanese grape, surrounded by forests and mountains to the north and south. The mountains protect the region and create an upper valley microclimate, ranging from 900-1600 feet a.s.l. In the foothills of the Apennine Mountains, Piglio is a dry region that benefits from morning dew and a strong diurnal shift in temperature at night to refresh the grapes on the vine. From an area less than 50 miles from the heart of Rome, Pileum is cultivating 15 hectares of vines with the original property of 6 hectares, planted between 35-50 years ago. The newer plantings are composed of tiny, separate family plots of vineyards. These small vineyards were created on ideal terroir with higher elevation and southern exposures.

Cesanese is the wine of Rome and its people. The majority of the production is consumed locally and very little is exported. There are two different Cesanese grapes in this area, Cesanese Comune and Cesanese di Affile. The Affile is more difficult to grow because the berries are smaller and the bunches are more tightly clustered. This feature makes it difficult to get even ripening and makes it harder to prevent disease, but when ripeness is achieved, the small berries create a more complex wine with structure, age-ability, and intensity. You see a similar distinction in the old clonal selections of Pinot Noir in Burgundy. Speaking of clonal selections, one of the newest experiments for Pileum is a new vineyard planted with the established seven clones of Cesanese di Affile (pronounce: *Chae-zah-Nae-say dee Ah-fee-lay*). This vineyard is helping the winery better understand this complex local grape that was overlooked in the 20th Century. From Roman times up until the late 1800s, this was a celebrated grape variety praised for its complexity and loved by many.

What makes Pileum special is their dedication to exploring and experimenting in the vineyards and in the winery to better understand the relationship between grape, terroir, and production methods. Today there are three key members from the families running the estate: Alessandra Borgia, Flavio Carella, and Gian Marco Cioffi. Together, they are assisted by enologist Gabriele Graia in pursuing a noble goal to not only make great wine but to better understand their historic region and the grapes that have existed here for thousands of years.

“[T]he Cesanese varieties are unquestionably capable, in competent hands, of giving very fine, perfumed, penetrating red wines. I don’t mean to overstate my case, but I truly believe that the Cesanese are capable of producing wines that one day might be viewed in the same light as those made with Nebbiolo or Aglianico.”

– Ian D’Agata,
Author of “Native Wine
Grapes of Italy”

