

La Donna È Upwardly Mobile

WOMEN TAKE LEADING ROLES IN ITALY'S WINE AND SPIRITS WORLD

photos by Allison Levine



Anthony Dias Blue with
Marilisa Allegrini.

THE TASTING PANEL attended Vinitaly again this year, cutting a wide swath through the mayhem and madness in Verona, and venturing further afield to discover the special magic that is Italy—with a special emphasis on our year-long theme, Women in Wine and Spirits.

Today, more and more women are working in prominent roles in Italy's wine and spirits industry. During this year's visit to VinItaly, *THE TASTING PANEL* focused on meeting many of these leaders in what used to be strictly a man's world. Here's an extended report from our Marketing & Events Director, **Allison Levine**, and Editor in Chief, **Anthony Dias Blue**.

Marilisa Allegrini

Azienda Agricola Allegrini, Valpolicella

Marilisa Allegrini is the face of one of Italy's greatest wineries. Located in the Veneto, the Allegrini family has been a major landowner since the sixteenth century. The family has made wine for several centuries in the Valpolicella region and, in 1950, they made their first Amarone. Allegrini has been one of the top producers of this great wine ever since.

Marilisa is in charge of marketing for Allegrini and travels the world promoting her wine. The Allegrinis have reclaimed and completely refurbished the Villa della Torre, a fifteenth-century palazzo in the hills of Valpolicella. During Vinitaly this year, Marilisa, radiant and beaming in fiery red, hosted a lavish celebration at this exquisite property including a huge buffet of *salumi*, an amazing spread of regional dishes and a display of forty cheeses. The wonderful Allegrini wines flowed freely—Soave, rosé, Valpolicella, Amarone and several exciting proprietary reds. After dinner, guests were invited outside for a spectacular fireworks display—followed by dancing into the early morning hours. —ADB

WINEBOW

Ginevra Venerosi Pesciolini

Tenuta Il Ghizzano, Tuscany

Like many other Italian women who find themselves running a winery, Contessa Ginevra Venerosi did not set out to be a vintner. Her family, successful in the pharmaceutical business, owns a weekend estate in the countryside, just south of Pisa; it has been the property of the family since the end of the 14th century. Grapevines and olive trees had always been cultivated there, but in 1985 Ginevra's father Pierfrancesco decided to upgrade the vineyard and the quality of wine being made. The vineyards were replanted and the cellar was modernized. Ginevra, who worked in publishing, agreed in 1993 to devote some time to administrative work; this eventually grew into a full-time managerial position.

Currently, the winery, Tenuta Il Ghizzano, produces four different wines—three reds and a vin santo. Il Ghizzano is mostly Sangiovese with a small amount of Merlot; Veneroso is Sangiovese blended with Cabernet Sauvignon; and Nambrot, the top of the line, a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. San Germano, the sweet vin santo, is made from a blend of local white grapes.

Taking her proprietorship very seriously, Ginevra devotes herself full time to the winery and is involved at every level of its management, from harvesting to marketing. "I love what I'm doing," she smiles. —ADB

HENRIOT USA



PHOTO COURTESY OF TENUTA IL GHIZZANO

Contessa Ginevra Venerosi Pesciolini of Tenuta Il Ghizzano.



Anthony Dias Blue with Cristina Mariani-May.

Cristina Mariani-May

Banfi, Tuscany

Banfi is one of the great success stories in American business history. John and Harry Mariani inherited a small Long Island importer from their father. On a trip to Italy, searching for wines to import, they stumbled upon an obscure, slightly sparkling red wine made near Parma. The wine was Lambrusco, and the Marianis imported a few hundred cases, but not before they tweaked the

wine by adding a little sweetness to appeal to the U.S. market. The wine, called Rinuite, became a sensation which, at its peak, sold more than 12 million cases a year in the United States.

With the profits from this wine, the Marianis bought thousands of acres of prime vineyard land around the Tuscan town of Montalcino (as well as an estate in Piedmont) and reshaped the vineyards with giant earthmovers. They have become one of the leading producers of wine in Italy as well as one of the most successful importers in America.

In charge of this huge organization is Cristina Mariani-May and her cousin James Mariani, who share the title of CEO. Christina is the energetic, charismatic and charming face of the company, leading tastings, seminars and marketing meetings while at the same time raising two sons and a daughter. She travels the world and was an important presence at Vinitaly this year. Christina is responsible for every aspect of the Banfi operation, including the lovely new Il Borgo hotel in Montalcino. —ADB

BANFI VINTNERS

Italian Organizations Supporting Women

ONILFA

Founded in 1997, ONILFA's main purpose is to further the education and promotion of female enterprise and labor in the agricultural and rural sectors. www.onilfa.gov.it

Le Donne del Vino

Le Donne del Vino (Women in Wine) is a national association of female producers, caterers, wine retailers, oenologists, sommeliers and journalists. Established in 1988, the group currently has approximately 750 members.

www.ledonnedelvino.com

PHOTO: ANTHONY DIAS BLUE



Emilia Nardi of Silvio Nardi.

Emilia Nardi

Tenute Silvio Nardi, Tuscany

Silvio Nardi was an Umbrian with a successful farm machinery business who bought an old winery estate in Montalcino in 1950. He was the first “foreigner” to invest in this as-yet-undiscovered wine region. Over time, the Nardi family acquired a number of other vineyards, including the prime Manachiara estate purchased in 1962. Silvio Nardi was one of the prime movers behind the foundation of the Brunello di Montalcino Consortium in 1967.

No one anticipated that the successor to Silvio’s leadership would be his strong-willed youngest daughter Emilia. Today, under her direction, Tenute Nardi controls 36 vineyards and has become one of the top producers of one of the world’s most celebrated wines. In 1997, Emilia began an ambitious replanting program, with specific emphasis on the individual terroir characteristics of each vineyard. —ADB

KOBRAND

Cinzia Merli

La Macchiole, Tuscany

Cinzia Merli makes some of the most sought-after wines in all of Italy from her estate in Bolgheri in Tuscany. Her winery, Le Macchiole, began in 1980. “I started to do wine only because my husband loved wine,” she told THE TASTING PANEL at Vinitaly, “So we started to produce wine and I learned to



Cinzia Merli of Le Macchiole.

love wine too. If I were born again I’d do the same thing.”

In 2002, Cinzia’s husband Eugenio died. “I was devastated, but it seemed the natural thing to do—to continue.” But she was confronted with two very difficult vintages, 2002 and 2003. “I said to myself, ‘What have I done?’” But 2004 was a great vintage, and Le Macchiole from that year went on to receive 100 points. “I understood I was moving in the right direction.”

When she suddenly and unexpectedly found herself running a winery, “I didn’t have time to think about being a woman in a man’s world.” Now Cinzia is able to look around and see other women running wineries and making wine. “We are a small group,” she smiles, “but we are growing.” —ADB

DOMAINE SELECT



Emanuela Stucchi Prinetti.

Emanuela Stucchi Prinetti

Badia a Coltibuono, Tuscany

Badia a Coltibuono is a family-owned agriturismo estate, with wine production, originally by monks, dating back over 1,000 years. In 1846, the Prinetti family took over and grew the property, starting its first cooking school. Emanuela, the eldest child of four and the family’s only daughter, returned to the winery at the age of 35 and took over the family business. She has run it for the past seven years, now focusing on sales and marketing while continuing to run the winery with her brother Roberto; brother Paolo runs the restaurant. Emanuela, who is also raising two sons, believes the ability to multitask is what makes women stronger. —AL

DALLA TERRA

Elena Walch

Elena Walch, Alto Adige

Elena Walch traded one “man’s world” for another when she left archi-



Elena Walch with her 22-year-old daughter Karoline, who plans to study for her Master of Wine in Australia.

ecture and entered the wine industry after marrying into an established wine family in Alto Adige. The family dated back to the 1800s, and Elena was known as “the wife of . . .” Without a wine-school background, she was looked at suspiciously by neighbors. But, with her love of and passion for wine, Elena worked hard to gain their respect and today is a top producer in Alto Adige and the region’s representative for Le Donne del Vino. Producing 35,000 cases each year, with 5–10% growth predicted each year, Elena’s wines are sold all over the world. —AL

CHAMBERS & CHAMBERS



Magda Pedrini.

Magda Pedrini

Magda Pedrini Wines, Ca’ da Meo, Gavi

Magda Pedrini’s winery is not just a project; it is her dream. Magda was a university professor of Italian history and literature for 36 years, and then spent time in Nigeria with her husband until four years ago, when she was presented with the opportunity to buy a vineyard in Gavi. Although she had no previous experience making wine, a passion for the earth was her inspiration to begin. She currently produces 35,000 bottles per year from five hectares but intends to plant three more, eventually expanding to 60,000–

70,000 bottles yearly. One of only a few women making wine in Gavi, Magda is growing her business slowly and steadily. In May, her wines entered the U.S. market for the first time through VEDI Wines. —AL

VEDI WINE IMPORTS



Ninni Collalto.

Ninni Collalto
Borgoluce, Treviso

The Collalto family has owned their Treviso estate for centuries; it dates back to the year 1064. Ninni, the fourth of five daughters, studied agriculture in order to understand the farm and to be seen as more than just her father's daughter. In 1992, Ninni began work-

ing at the estate with her father and realized they had to start promoting the image and quality of their wines. While her sister Isabella runs the more traditional Collalto label, three years ago Ninni and her sister Caterina launched the Borgoluce brand, whose wines are produced sustainably using modern technology. Serious, honest and detailed, Ninni has an obvious passion for her label and her wines. —AL

VEDI WINE IMPORTS

Giannola Nonino
Nonino, Friuli

Giannola Nonino is the matriarch of the Nonino family. In 1962, she married fourth-generation master distiller Benito Nonino, whose family had been producing grappa since 1897. Giannola immediately fell in love with grappa, and she saw a tempting challenge: She would transform this spirit stylistically from the harsh, traditional "poor drink" into a noble distillate. At the time, grappa was strictly a man's drink; women were not even allowed in the distillery. Through determination, Giannola realized her dream; it took ten years. In 1973, going



Giannola Nonino with oldest granddaughter Chiara.

against the tradition of keeping the red and white grape pomace together, she distilled one variety at a time.

As the first to distill single-varietal grappas, the Noninos created a true revolution. Today, Giannola and Benito's three daughters, Elisabetta, Cristina and Antonella, all work in the family business, as well as in the distillery. In 1998, Giannola became one of 48 women (and 500 men) given Italy's highest honor, the Cavaliere del Lavoro, and she and Benito also received the Leonardo Prize for Italian Quality in 2003. —AL

TERLATO WINES INTERNATIONAL

A New Retreat in Piedmont

IL BOSCARETO RESORT & SPA BRINGS LUXURY TO BAROLO COUNTRY

story and photos by Allison Levine

Built on a hill in Serralunga d'Alba—prime Barolo terroir—is a new luxury hotel that opened in October 2009. Owned by the Dogliani family, owners of top-notch local winery Beni di Batasiolo, Il Boscareto Resort & Spa is a gem among the vineyards. The first resort of its kind in Piedmont outside of Turin, it is like no other accommodation in the region, with 38 guest rooms, a full spa, an elegant fine-dining restaurant, La Rei, and a soon-to-be-opened informal wine bar called La Briccolina.

The idea of Il Boscareto was born more than ten years ago, when, in 2000, the Dogliani family tore down one of the nine *cascine* (farms) on their land and began construction. Valentina Dogliani, the niece of Batasiolo President Fiorenzo Dogliani, was asked to get involved in the project. With a



Il Boscareto, with Alba in the distance.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF IL BOSCARETO



CEO Valentina Dogliani and Sales Director Federica Giachino.

women out of a class of 25 at a catering school. Realizing that, as a woman, she couldn't become a chef, she returned to work in her family's store, trained with chefs and studied management, law and anything else she could.

During an 11-year stint overseeing the food program at a hotel in Piedmont, Federica moved from operations to management, learning all elements of running a successful hotel. She joined Il Boscareto in February 2009. Together, these two hard-working, extremely dedicated women make a solid management team, committed to making Il Boscareto a five-star resort.

www.ilboscaretoresort.it



Il Boscareto's Wine Director, Matteo Toso.

Il Boscareto's fine-dining restaurant, La Rei, is run by Executive Chef Shiquin Chen, whose menu is a blend of creativity and tradition. The cellar offers more than 1,000 labels from around the world and is managed by Sommelier Matteo Toso, who was born in nearby Asti and has a true passion for Barolo. With an emphasis on Piedmontese and Langhe wines, including more than 15 Batasiolo labels, Matteo's list also includes wines from throughout Italy, France and around the world.

background in political science, she enrolled in a hotel management course and worked for a year in a Turin hotel.

In May 2006, Valentina began working at the site and was hands-on in all aspects of the creation of the resort. Although Il Boscareto is a family project, Valentina is the first woman in the family with the level of responsibility that she has. Since prior to the opening, she has lived on the property and works around the clock, overseeing all operational aspects of Il Boscareto.

Valentina specifically sought a woman to run sales and marketing for the new resort. She found a gem in Federica Giachino. Raised in Liguria, Federica's love of food began in her family's specialty food store. She was one of four



President of Batasiolo SPA, Fiorenzo Dogliani.

Tasting Notes on Beni di Batasiolo Wines

by Anthony Dias Blue

Beni di Batasiolo 2009 Bosc d'la Rei Moscato d'Asti (\$15) Foamy and bright with juicy fruit, sweetness and great charm; fresh and balanced. 90 points

Beni di Batasiolo 2007 Barbera d'Alba Sovrana (\$23) Silky and bursting with bright black raspberry and blueberry fruit; juicy and smooth with mouth filling flavors with hints of oak and a long, vibrant finish. 91

Batasiolo 2005 Barolo (\$48) Smooth and loaded with high-toned black raspberry fruit; elegant, structured and pure with great length and lively flavors; supple, balanced and luscious. 91

Batasiolo 2003 Barolo Vigneto Corda della Briccolina (\$95) Smooth and silky-textured with mature fruit and some intense tannins; edgy and complex with good length and surprising quality for this difficult year. 89

Beni di Batasiolo 2005 Barolo Vigneto Boscareto (\$90) Pure and elegant with lovely plum and raspberry fruit with dramatic structure and great length; smooth, supple and stunning. 93 points

Beni di Batasiolo is imported by Boisset USA.

Escape From Vinitaly: A Trip to Vicenza

story and photos by Allison Levine



Angela and Maria Vittoria Maculan are among the new generation of women running family wineries.

Twenty-five miles from Verona, in the center of the Veneto, the industrialized province of Vicenza produces a wide variety of traditional products, including Sopressa Vicentina salami, Marostica cherries, white asparagus, radicchio, panetone, cheeses (Asiago, Grana Padana, Stravecchio di Malga and Provolone Valpadana) and the famous baccalà alla vicentina, a native dish made from unsalted cod and served on polenta. And, like other areas of the Veneto, Vicenza has been an area for wine and grappa production for multiple generations. Here are three imported wineries that THE TASTING PANEL visited during our break from Vinitaly. For a list of Vicenza wineries currently seeking a U.S. importer, see our website at www.tastingpanelmag.com.

Maculan www.maculan.net

The Maculan family has been producing wine in Breganze for three generations. Today, Fausto Maculan works with his two daughters, Angela, who handles marketing, and enologist Maria Vittoria, who are part of the new generation of women running family wineries. Since wineries were traditionally passed to male heirs, families with only female offspring have seen their wineries go out of business—until recently. Fortunately, Maria Vittoria had wanted to make wine with her father since she was a child. She still experiences older farmers who are reluctant to work with her, but she sees this changing and one day will take over when her father retires.

WINEBOW

Poli www.poligrappa.com

Jacopo Poli, along with his siblings, runs this family business dating back multiple generations. Until WWII, farmers didn't own land but were paid in produce; landlords took the wine while the farmers kept the pomace, from which they made grappa. Jacopo's great-grandfather GioBatta, a straw hat maker, was passionate about grappa, building a small still in 1898 and selling door-to-door. His son continued the passion, constructing a still from a locomotive steam engine, and Jacopo's father Toni continued to grow the family business by modifying the original alembic. Today, Jacopo continues the tradition with a true love for the distillate.



Jacopo Poli.

WINEBOW



Tommaso and Marioantonio Piovene.

Piovene Porto Godi www.piovene.com

Marioantonio and Tommaso Piovene Porto Godi own this winery, set in Toara di Village in Colli Berici. With wine production dating back to the 1500s, the property was passed down to the Piovene Porto Godi from the family of Count Barbaran. The varieties of grapes cultivated are the Tocai Rosso (a traditional vine exclusive to the Colli Berici region) Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Bianco and Garganega. ■■

ITALIAN WINE IMPORTS