

## **Wine Family of the Year**

Guilio Ferrari was born in Trentino, at the foot of the Italian alps, at a time when the region was still part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. After studies both at home and in Montpellier and Champagne in France, he realized that his home was the perfect place to make great sparkling wines.

Giulio Ferrari was not the first winemaker to make sparkling wine in Italy, but he was the first to introduce the traditional Champagne-style method and he pioneered the growing of Chardonnay. But his intuition about his region paid off – by 1906, he was already winning awards for his wines.

He was, however, childless and as he grew older, he began looking for a successor. The man he chose in 1952 was Bruno Lunelli, a friend and owner of the local wine shop. Lunelli brought an entrepreneurial spirit to the work, increasing both the area of Chardonnay and total production. In 1969, he passed the winery to his sons, one of whom, Mauro Lunelli, was a keen experimenter who further raised the quality of the wines.

A seminal moment came for Ferrari in 1982, when Paolo Rossi, one of Italy's leading footballers, drank from one of its magnums to celebrate Italy's soccer team's triumph in the 1982 World Cup final. From that moment on, Ferrari had cemented its place as the sparkling wine of choice for major celebrations in Italy. It's not only regularly served at state occasions, but Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi even told French President Francois Hollande that he would not find anything better in Champagne. Today, a winery that began in a region that was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, now stands as a symbol of Italian flair.

The successes keep coming: last year, Ferrari not only won gold medals for all nine of the wines it had entered at the Champagne & Sparkling Wine World Championships in London, but it was also named best producer, beating such Champagne producers as Charles Heidsieck and Louis Roederer. Sparkling wine expert and competition organizer Tom Stevenson was quoted as saying that the results were "unheard of. It has certainly never happened in any competition I have judged at around the world."

But the Lunelli family haven't just put Italian sparkling wine on the world map.

The Italian newspaper La Repubblica once said that Cantine Ferrari was an example of a single company that acted as a leader for a whole area, raising the prosperity of everyone as they went. Cantine Ferrari dominates the region, producing about 40% of Trento DOC wines, and taking in grapes from 500 local producers. These families adhere to organic principles, with some vineyards already certified organic and others in the process of converting.

So far, Cantine Ferrari has followed the well-trodden path of many successful wineries. Typically, there's a founder who goes looking for a great piece of land, and manages to find some unusually good terroir. The founder then lavishes attention and care on both the vineyard and the winery and has uncompromising quality standards, which allows him or her

to create wines of outstanding quality which are then launched to both commercial and critical success.

But in my years as editor of a business magazine, I've discovered that the terroir and quality winemaking is only ever part of the story. What takes a winery from being merely a producer of good wines to being an icon, is the decisions taken by the people who run it.

So in researching = this speech, I asked the people who know the Lunellis what they're really like. One person who has worked closely with them told me that they're not only closely knit, but they have an entrepreneurial bent that's unusual in much of Italy, where tradition can dominate, particularly in family companies. He told me that they must have inherited their acumen from their grandfather.

In his view, Guilio Ferrari didn't choose to sell his business to Bruno Lunelli just because they were friends, but because he saw in Lunelli someone who could take the business to greater heights. My contact said: "Lunelli had five kids and he went into debt to buy a winery, when he knew nothing about winemaking. People must have thought he was crazy."

The third generation of Lunellis, my informer went on to say, were energetic, open and willing to try new things, from turning up to digital hackathons to pioneering high altitude viticulture in the region. Notably, they exploit considerable business experience gained from outside the wine business..

So it's no surprise to hear that, last year, Matteo Lunelli won the Entrepreneur of the Year in the Business Category of the prestigious EY awards. Matteo brings considerable financial acumen to the business, having worked as a financial analyst for Goldman Sachs in New York. He gave that up after he got a call from his Uncle Gino, who said: "Do you want to be part of this business?"

Matteo was living in London,, but he his wife packed up their things and drove directly to Trento. He's been at the helm of Ferrari Winery since 2011 and is the CEO of the Lunelli Group, which also produces bottled mineral water, grappa produced by Segnana, and still wines produced in Trentino, Tuscany, and Umbria, along with Prosecco Superiore. His deal-making skills were shown by the acquisition of 50% of Bisol, the historic Prosecco producer.

Matteo's sister Camilla began at Deloitte Consulting, before working in Niger and Uganda with the UN and then returning to Ferrari to take charge of communications and public relations.

Alessandro, another member of the management team, began his career at McKinsey and has worked internationally with Unilever. Marcello, now in charge of oenology worked in South Africa and California as well as with his uncle Mauro Lunelli.

Another thing that makes Ferrari unique is that they've been able to get the kind of recognition and prestige for their sparkling wines that is normally reserved for Champagne.

There are many great sparkling wine areas in the world and yet none of them have achieved anything like the same level of prestige or recognition. So how has Ferrari done it?

Bocconi University in Milan runs a unique course on Fashion and Luxury Marketing, and in one of their first lectures they outline the difference between the French and Italian approaches to luxury. France, they say, is all about history and heritage and time-tested classics. Italy, on the other hand, is about La Dolce Vita – the vibrantly enjoyable art of life.

You can see this in the flamboyant cars of Ferrari, the playful fashion aesthetic of Dolce & Gabbana and Gucci, and in the post-modern designs of Alessi. Cantine Ferrari have also consciously connected their wines to this great Italian aesthetic, by making sure they're present wherever there's fun and glamour to be found.

In the past decade, the winery has, for example, collaborated with partners such as the Venice Film Festival, where their wine has been served in the Vanity Fair lounge. They've been served at the Emmys, the Oscars and at the store of fashion icon Ermenegildo Zegna in Milan.

They've become an ambassador for Italy and its way of life.

I was struck by this at Milan airport where I spent several hours a couple of weeks ago. There is not a lot to do at that airport, but there is a Ferrari café. The service is excellent, the seats are great, the food is good and the sparkling wines exceptional. For the many thousands of people who pass through that airport, Ferrari offers a taste of Italy they will carry with them across the globe.

On behalf of those travellers, as well as wine lovers everywhere, I would like to invite the Lunellis to the stage to accept this award.