

REPRINTED FROM

WINE ENTHUSIAST

2007
WINESTAR
AWARDS

DECEMBER 15, 2007

Winemaker of the Year CARLO FERRINI

Wine and milk might not share much in common, but to Carlo Ferrini one is the direct consequence of the other. As a child growing up in Florence, this Tuscan native loved cows, pastures and clover fields and vowed one day to become a dairy farmer. He enrolled in the University of Florence's agricultural faculty, but somewhere between microbiology and final exams, he was sidetracked by viticulture and enology. The ultimate goal was to work outdoors, in nature, and either wine or milk could get him there. In the end, wine would win his heart.

"I am a firm believer in destiny," he says. In his early 50s, Ferrini sits in an elegant drawing room at Castello di Fonterutoli in Chianti Classico filled with antique prints and leather-bound books. His weathered hands are stained purple and red because the harvest is underway.

Carlo Ferrini's destiny has delivered him one of the most successful wine careers in Italy. He consults for estates across the national territory, from Trentino in the north to Sicily in the deep south, making him representative not only of a distinctively "Italian" winemaking style, but more importantly, of specific regional territories: each with their own traditions, grape varieties, climates, geographies and personalities. His client roster reads like a who's who of the Italian wine world. Ferrini makes wine for some 40 estates including San Leonardo, Barone Ricasoli (Castello di Brolio), Casanova di Neri, Castello di Fonterutoli, Ruffino, Donnafugata and Tasca d'Almerita just to name a few. And his wines are excellent: His top bottles consistently score 92 points



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and higher in the Wine Enthusiast Buying Guide. For these reasons, Carlo Ferrini is our Winemaker of the Year.

Inspired by the Bordeaux tradition, Ferrini's greatest achievements are red wines that are lush and fruit-driven, thanks to the careful attention he dedicates to grape quality. They are modern with excellent extraction, yet they remain expressions of a specific territory. He believes in making wines that taste great when they are young, but that also show potential for aging. And he is among the first in Italy to radically shift focus onto the vineyard. He once famously said that he could imagine working in the vineyard without the winery, but never in the winery without the vineyard.

No doubt, Ferrini is passionate, meticulous and hardworking. But he also has that elusive extra quality that catapults him from being an excellent winemaker to a true wine star. That quality is his disarming charm. His clients refer to him as a "friend," never as a "consultant."

Filippo and Francesco Mazzei (brothers and owners of Fonterutoli in Chianti Classico, Belguardo in Maremma and Zisola in Sicily) place such trust in Ferrini that they have put him on their board of directors; he makes executive decisions regarding matters outside the cellar, such as marketing and acquisitions. For example, Ferrini helped select vineyard locations for their Sicilian project and was instrumental in designing their new \$20 million winery in Chianti Classico. "Carlo was born with us and has grown with us," says Francesco Mazzei. "That makes him very special to us, more than any other winemaker could be."

CASTELLO DI
FONTERUTOLI



ZISOLA



Teruzzi & Puthod



TENVIA
BELGVARDO

Giacomo Neri of Casanova di Neri in Montalcino (producer of the excellent 2001 Tenuta Nuova Brunello di Montalcino and 2001 Cerretalto Brunello di Montalcino) has worked with Ferrini since 1994 and says that the tight personal relationship developed between them over the years is the number one reason they work together. “Carlo is extremely present, extremely active and extremely likeable. Ferrini works for other wineries in the Montalcino area including: Donatella Cinelli Colombini, who dedicated a wine to him, All the employees at her winery are women, except Ferrini, and her IGT Toscana Sangiovese-Alicante-Merlot blend Il Drago e Le Sette Colombe (“the dragon and the seven doves”) is named after her all-female staff with Ferrini as “the dragon.” About one year ago, Ferrini also started working with Transavanguardia artist Sandro Chia at Romitorio di Chia estate in Montalcino.

Another new Ferrini client is fashion designer Roberto Cavalli who released his debut label 2004 Tenuta degli Dei Cavalli Selection in Italy in November, It is just the latest in a long list of enological hits by Ferrini, Some of Tuscany’s most memorable wines showcase his signature style, including Brancaia Chianti Classico, Fattoria La Massa Giorgio Primo Chianti Classico, Castello di Brolio Chianti Classico Riserva, Poliziano Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, Tenuta San Fabiano Calcinaia Cerviolo, Tenuta Sette Ponti Oreno and Castello di Terriccio Lupicaia, Tenimenti Ruffino also engages Ferrini and is currently in the process of finalizing a stylistic overhaul of its top wines with the enologist’s help,

Early in his career, Ferrini was technical director with the Consorzio del Chianti Classico, a position he held throughout the 1980s, From this vantage point, he acquired a profound knowledge of Tuscany and its micro territories, Sangiovese and its clones, “Working for the Consorzio was like being a doctor in Africa,” he says: “I got to see everything, and learn everything first hand in the trenches,” He

made contacts, fine-tuned his vineyard practices and learned to identify the best vineyard sites. Today, he is regarded as the foremost expert in Tuscan winemaking and is largely credited with the revaluation of the Sangiovese grape. In 1992, he started his own business as a consultant in both viticulture and enology, a rare distinction at the time.

It would not be long before Ferrini’s growing expertise made him attractive to winemakers outside Tuscany. His clients are in Trentino, Friuli, Abruzzo and Puglia. But the one region that competes for Ferrini’s affections after Tuscany is Sicily, where the winemaker has a second home. He makes wine for Donnafugata, Feudo Maccari, Tasca d’Almerita and Zisola on the enchanting Mediterranean island.

Ferrini started working there in 2002, at the height of the Sicilian wine renaissance, and has been bringing the island closer to a great red wine ever since. Antonio Rallo of Donnafugata praises him for his “humility and humanity” and says that the fact Ferrini comes from outside Sicily helped his winery achieve new perspective on the native Nero d’Avola grape. “He brought his vast experience with him but he also came to learn and ask questions about our grapes,” says Rallo. “This created the foundation for a collaboration in the true

sense of the word.” “He didn’t come here to make a Ferrini wine,” says the Count Count Tasca d’Almerita.” “He came here to make a Tasca wine.”

Ferrini delivers a holistic approach to winemaking that relies on solid teamwork, attention to the vineyards and his own physical presence. He logs in countless travel hours each week—sometimes as much as 6 hours in his car per day—to make sure he is regularly present at each winery he represents, including the ones that are far away. He spends even more time in the vineyard studying plant density, setting shoots and monitoring the ripening grapes. Ferrini found the career he desired so badly and he did so without having to milk any cows.



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