

SPIRITO di VINO

Culture and Quality for a Luxury Wine-Style

Asia

Women of wine

NATALIA GUICCIARDINI STROZZI REPRESENTS HER COMPANY WELL, AS DO HER SISTER IRINA, CHIARA SOLDATI AND VALENTINA ARGIOLOS. THEY ARE JEWELS IN THE WINE WORLD. ITALIAN, YOUNG AND EXPERT

YUNNAN

The iconic kingdom of Shangri-la

HONG KONG

Bobby Wong the pioneer

CHAMPAGNE

The Plénitude of Dom Pérignon

SICILY

Fascinating Tasca d'Almerita

BORDEAUX

The triple life of Pascal Chatonnet



Bimonthly Year 5 No. 20
HKD 65 / RMB 65 / SGD 9 / MYR 22 / THB 200 / IDR 20,000



They are young, they have
illustrious surnames,
and they bring a new sensitivity
to the winery. The
businesswomen of Italian wine
look to the future.
With culture and professionalism

by Stefano Zurlo photos by Malena Mazza

Here above, in an elegant red dress, Natalia Guicciardini Strozzi, older sister of Irina, and like her, involved in the winery of the same name and the family estates, a company that has been around since 994 (www.guicciardinistrozzi.it). The two sisters are direct descendants of Lisa Gherardini, the wife of Francesco di Bartolomeo del Giocondo, who was the celebrated «Mona Lisa» painted by Leonardo da Vinci, with a smile that bewitched the world. Adjoining page, right, clockwise, necklace of diamonds and rubies set in white gold, Bartorelli Rare and Unique. Earrings from Chopard's Copacabana collection in white gold with pear-cut pink sapphires, briolette-cut pink sapphires and briolette-cut albaite (136,350 euro). Hypnotique earrings, Les Talismans collection, in white and yellow gold, two tanzanites, 124 brilliant-cut diamonds and multi-coloured enamel, Chanel Joaillerie. Ring in white gold, amethyst, sapphires and diamonds from the High Jewelry Limelight Party collection, Piaget (www.piaget.com). Wines: rosso Igt Isola dei Nuraghi Is Solinas from Argiolas (www.argiolas.it); Chianti Titolato, Tenute Guicciardini Strozzi (www.guicciardinistrozzi.it)

SPIRITOdivINO
52

Enrico Sui Limmarco

ITALY (SEDUCTION IN THE VINEYARD)

The preciouses ladies of wine



SPRITTO DI VINO

53

Pack your cribs and fables away in the attic. The ladies of wine have no time to embroider the past: they are in the cellar or among the vines, and being photographed together at a convention in Milan. This is the first female generation to come to the fore, to take risks and responsibilities, no longer just decorating a male picture. No; they fill it with substance, with decisions, with strategic choices and marketing. There is wonderful get-up-and-go: the problem is eliminating prejudice without trampling all over history and traditions. It seems easy, but this smiling disruption can make you dizzy. Irina Guicciardini Strozzi, from a family that features resplendent in history books and relates the superb tale of Florence, tells us: "One day, at a fair in Germany, a lady asked me: 'excuse me, you are a princess - why do you work?'" Her sister Natalia, whose business card bears the English word 'princess', adds another chapter: "I don't know how many times someone whispered to me: 'what is a noblewoman doing in jeans?'" Perhaps a superficial objection, but it expresses the discomfort at the choice of the two ladies, young and aristocratic, to put their profile outside the frame of a centuries-old canvas depicting endless repetitions of a male model. But no.

Different paths, but a common landing place in the Guicciardini Strozzi estates, a company that has been around since 994. In short, over a thousand years, since the heart of the Middle Ages, which may hint at the wall the two princesses have scaled. Irina says: "I started with ballet, then at 14 I was just about to go to the Bolshoi when something clicked. I had my first wine tasting, knew that my place was in the winery, and began to get ready". And here she is, aiming to bring Vernaccia and other noble varieties abroad. Of course, Irina Guicciardini Strozzi speaks five or six languages, including Russian, English and German. Of the fable, if you like, the happy end remains, but everything has changed. Irina spends most of her time on planes and in hotels, discussing prices and degrees proof around the world, and keeping an eye on the bottom line. Just like her sister Natalia. "I danced too", she says, "for 17 years, including four at the Mariinski in St Petersburg with Nureyev. Then I did a sommelier course in Rome and that experience steered me home, and to the world of wine". Now she, too, is experiencing the globalization of the business: "I speak five languages, too, and I travel. We often leave together and then Irina and I share out the tasks, meetings, and appointments". The family tree has to be updated: climbing up the branches and leaves of the Strozzi, powerful bankers and great rivals of the Medici, we find

no less a personage than Lisa Gherardini; that is, Leonardo's Mona Lisa. Those days are gone: "Of my past", adds Natalia, "I retained my passion for theatre. Theatre is my second job, not a hobby. I am not an actress, I go abroad to act. It's just that after I have gone over the script, maybe I answer the emails. And then, if I am away for an opera, I take advantage and visit a client or two".

Valentina Argiolas has also shaken off her bonds. Of course, nobody ever chained her to the dogmas of her ancestral Sardinia, but there was a risk of her remaining behind, or at best, alongside the men of the family. And how! And yet she, too, found herself taking that little, enormous step. Taking over the reins of the winery, accepting hard work and the gratification that comes with it. Getting out there in person. Her travels abroad. The communication. The events. That spark of creativity that transforms a bottle into a multiplier of sensations, emotions, and reflections. "My grandfather Antonio, who founded the winery and died in 2009 at the venerable age of 102 and a half, would often tell us that my grandmother Bonaria had played an extremely important part in the foundation of the company. It was an important, but background, role, at least to all appearances. These days, I am right in the fray. This job, going abroad, meeting other

**This job, going abroad,
meeting other people: all this
helps to broaden
the horizons that sometimes
restrict us Sardinians**

people, our sales in emerging countries: all this helps to broaden the horizons that sometimes restrict us Sardinians. Wine helps me to go beyond, to grow, and to understand nuances; but then, almost as if by magic, I find myself debating and conversing with artists from Sardinia, and a writer like Marcello Fois sculpts our identity. And our Turriga has brought us a minor oenological miracle: go out into the world, but don't cut your roots. Then, sure, there are the difficulties, actually the difficulty. I am a mother of two children aged six and three, and a

Valentina Argiolas, above, represents the third generation in Cantina Argiolas di Sardinia (Cagliari), in Sardinia: "Wine helps me to go beyond, to grow, and to understand nuances. but then, almost as if by magic, I find myself debating and conversing with artists from Sardinia, and a writer like Marcello Fois sculpts our identity. My grandfather Antonio, who founded the winery and died in 2009 at the venerable age of 102 and a half, would often tell us that my grandmother Bonaria had played an extremely important part in the foundation of the company. It was an important, but background, role, at least to all appearances" The flagship labels produced include Turriga, an intense red blend with a prevalence of cannonau that is aged for 18-24 months in french oak barriques, and Vermentino di Sardegna is Argiolas: "our Turriga has brought us a minor oenological miracle: go out into the world, but don't cut your roots," says Valentina. (www.argiolas.it).



pang of guilt strikes me, relentlessly, every time I board an airplane. I remember one day it exploded while I was in New York. Then, with time, I learned to live with it." Chiara Soldati, who runs La Scolca winery with her father in Gavi, Piedmont, describes the same burden. She uses more positive terms, though: "I have an adolescent son aged 13, but I believe it is possible to combine a presence in the winery with the commitment of motherhood. Admittedly, it isn't easy, it's all about calibrating your time as well as you can. If a meeting finishes late in the evening, maybe I will skip dining out and rush to the airport to grab the last flight. I know, it is difficult, but I also know that we businesswomen must perform a difficult balancing act". Soldati, granddaughter of the writer Mario, fiercely defends the spaces of freedom and creativity she has carved out over 20 years for herself, the first woman from a family that has lived among the vines for five generations: "Degrees and esteem are earned in the field, but I must say that we women are forgiven less". It doesn't take much to ignite the usual old prejudice. Or perhaps, we think that the fair sex are weaker and vulnerable. And yet, women also bring sensitivity and

This is the first female generation to come to the fore, to take risks, no longer just decorating a male picture

creativity into the mix. "I learned to recognize wines like people", concludes Chiara Soldati. "I really like vertical tasting: you sense a nuance, you grasp the difference between one year and the next, you discover tastes and defects, you let the memories flow". It is like cradling the person you love. And going around the world with them, proudly. Yes, because every glass contains a piece of our civilization. The ladies of wine have learned to recognize it and to offer it to those unlucky enough to not know it yet. 🍷

Top, from left, Natalia and Irina Guicciardini Strozzi, Chiara Soldati and Valentina Argiolas. They were photographed in Palazzo Bovara in Milan, on the occasion of the 'Women and wine, the other half of the glass' encounter, under the aegis of the Vendemmia di Montepulciano, a world's finest wines tasting experience in the famous fashion street of Milan, where style and the art of "savoir vivre" come together (2016 edition will be next 3-9 october): they exhibit incredible desire to prove themselves, and great care to preserve their history, traditions and roots. Adjoining page, Irina Guicciardini Strozzi heads the family winery, Tenute Guicciardini Strozzi, together with her sister Natalia, father Girolamo and mother Irina. She is, aiming to bring Vernaccia and other noble varieties abroad. Founded in 994, the casa possesses four estates in Tuscany, in San Gimignano, Grosseto, Roccastrada, and Castagneto Carducci; and one on Pantelleria island (www.guicciardinistrozzi.it).



e
the
ng

e people",
ou sense a
next, you
It is like
with them,
vilization.
it to those

re, the other
art of "savour
ng page, Irina
ble varieties
(mistrozzi.it).

