

WINE TRAVEL FOOD

GAMBERO ROSSO®

ITALIAN CLASSIC METHOD STAGE 2 A MEMORABLE FRANCIACORTA VERTICAL TASTING

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WE PAY HOMAGE TO FRANCO ZILIANI WITH A UNIQUE VERTICAL FRANCIACORTA TASTING

Berlucchi is synonymous with Franciacorta. The winery has given birth to the appellation with the Pinot di Franciacorta in 1961. We would therefore like to dedicate a marvellous Franciacorta vertical tasting to founder Franco Ziliani, who recently passed away at the age of 90. Together with 10 international journalists, we had the chance to taste 8 vintages with a focus on Riserva Palazzo Lana Brut Extrême. Berlucchi, Winery of the Year in the Vini d'Italia 2022 guide, exceeded expectations.

words by Marco Sabellico - photos by Francesco Vignali



Francò Ziliani, oenologist and **President of Guido Berlucchi & C.**, one of the most renowned Italian wineries, passed away at the age of 90 on December 26. With Arturo, Paolo and Cristina the future of the company is in good hands. To them and to the whole big family go Gambero Rosso's deepest condolences. We are sure that they will carry on with creativity and determination the dream of one of the great creators of the modern Italian wine scene. Sit tibi terra levis, Franco.

We're happy to pay homage to Franco with a memorable vertical tasting of Franciacorta that we had with 10 international journalists: Guido Berlucchi & C. has been freshly awarded as Winery of the Year in our Vini d'Italia 2022 guide. A prestigious goal, well deserved, to which the company founded by Franco Ziliani, Guido Berlucchi and Giorgio Lanciani arrived with years of hard work, commitment and investments, structured growth projects, with a strategic vision, Guido Ber- ►

BUBBLES SPANNING TWO MILLENNIA

1955 — Franco Ziliani meets Guido Berlucchi and suggests the idea of a spumante wine

1961 — The classic method Pinot di Franciacorta is born, the progenitor of modern Franciacorta

1962 — The first Berlucchi Rosé is born. It is the Max Rosé

1967 — The Doc Franciacorta is born

1955 **1960**



1990 — The Franciacorta Consortium is born

2000 — The hectares of property are now 50.
Guido Berlucchi passes away

1999 — The renewal of the vineyards begins according to the most advanced viticulture techniques

1996 — Arturo, Paolo and Cristina enter the company with specific powers

1995 — Franciacorta becomes Docg

2001 — The cellar technology is completely renewed

2004 — The path towards organic conversion and the commitment to sustainability begins. The Palazzo Lana line is born

2011 — Berlucchi completes the passage of all Cuvées into Franciacorta Docg

2006 — The first bottles of line 61 are ready

2017 — Arturo, Paolo and Cristina acquire the ownership shares from Franco Ziliani

2016 — The Ziliani family acquires all of the Berlucchi shares

2019 — On Vini d'Italia the Franciacorta Nature 61 '11 wins Bubbles of the Year

2021 — Guido Berlucchi & C. is Winery of the Year for Vini d'Italia 2022 guide 115 hectares owned - 4 million bottles - Franco Ziliani turns 90 and a special Cuvée is dedicated to him a few days before his death

1990

2000

2010

2020



►lucchi, today, signifies 4 million bottles of Franciacorta a year obtained from 100 owned hectares of vineyards and from the 550 hectares belonging to wine growers.

Everything began when Franco met **Guido Berlucchi**, owner of vineyards and of a historical winery, to whom he succeeded in transmitting the enthusiasm of his project. The first bottles, after some experiments, came out in 1961, they were just three thousand.

The history of **Guido Berlucchi** is the history of Italian classic method sparkling wine and of Franciacorta. Those first 3,000 bottles of Pinot di Franciacorta in 1961 led to the discovery of an extraordinarily suited territory, which today is one of the cradles - numerically the most important - of the Italian classic method. ❖

Franciacorta Riserva Palazzo Lana Brut Extrême

A masterpiece in vintages

2010 It has a deep straw yellow colour with brilliant coppery reflections; the nose is intense and captivating, with notes of red berries of great finesse; very elegant with the complexity brought by the notes of yeast. On the palate it is very fresh and creamy in the development of the bubbles, harmonious and full, progressive and soft in the development, without harshness, with a long and savoury finish, of great character and extraordinary harmony. ►

The invention of Franciacorta Berlucchi, the masters of the classic method



Berlucchi is synonymous with Franciacorta: after having actually given life to the appellation with Pinot di Franciacorta 1961, for years due to the considerable sparkling wine production it was not included only to re-enter in style in the first decade of this century.

The label of which we tasted the first 8 vintages, the Riserva Palazzo Lana Brut Extrême, is the spearhead of this reality that Vini d'Italia 2022 has elected as Winery of the Year and which is a particularly elegant, territorial and powerful version of Franciacorta.

According to the Gambero Rosso Vini d'Italia guide, Guido Berlucchi & C. is the **Winery of the Year for the 2022 edition**. A prestigious, well-deserved recognition to which the company founded by **Franco Ziliani, Guido Berlucchi and Giorgio Lanciani** arrived with years of hard work, commitment and investments, of structured growth projects, with a strategic vision, which have seen it conquer the Italian market with the famous Cuvée Imperiale, the label that has taught Italians what a classic method sparkling wine was. After having actually given birth to Franciacorta with Pinot di Franciacorta 1961, Berlucchi for the needs of numbers and market had turned to other prestigious DOC and DOCG areas for the supply of grapes. Then, in the middle of the first decade of the new century, he made the decision to return in force to Franciacorta. Since then, all the bottles of Guido Berlucchi & C., from the Cuvée Imperiale to the prestigious 61 and Palazzo Lana selections are Franciacorta Docg. On the occasion of the presentation of the 2022 Guide we invited Arturo Ziliani to Rome for a vertical of the maison's most exclusive label, the Palazzo Lana Brut Extrême, which opened with the 2004 vintage. A prestigious project born from the passion for Blanc de Noir in the land of chardonnay and some vineyards of extraordinary vocation.

«Palazzo Lana was born from cellar tests carried out over the years on a Pinot Noir cuvée. Some of the grapes are from the Brolo vineyard, planted in 1999 - says Arturo Ziliani - We never had high-level pinot noir grapes before with continuity, so we decided to plant this vineyard in a very suitable terroir. The Brolo vineyard is called like that because it is the name that in the Brescia area we give to the fields surrounded by dry stone walls, dedicated to the most valuable crops. So, having this vineyard exposed to the north, on medium-deep morainic soils, which had always given high-quality grapes, we decided to replant

high-density sparkling wine clones: consider 10,000 plants per hectare. Here the grapes ripen more slowly, due to the northern exposure and the cold currents. The result is a base of great freshness, rich in aromas and finesse, just what we wanted. The results of the first 5,000 bottles of the 2004 vintage convinced us that we were on the right track. Then the vineyard of Quindiciopio was added, planted on the hill adjacent to the winery, on a slope, at 6,200 plants per hectare, which has a warmer exposure and gives bases of structure and fullness, ideal for completing the aromatic picture of the Brolo. They are light and pebbly morainic soils. Following suit is the Gaspa vineyard, planted in 2001 above the cellar. At full capacity today we do not exceed 12,000 bottles. The maturation times on the lees from 5 years of the beginning have gone to 10, and we are very happy with the result. We have titled this Riserva, dosed Extra Brut, after the place where it all began sixty years ago, Palazzo Lana Berlucchi in Borgonate Corte Franca, which is still the headquarters of the company today.» Guido Berlucchi today is run by Arturo - oenologist and managing director - with siblings Paolo and Cristina. Franco Ziliani, after having sold them his shares of the property, remained President. Today at the base of the success of the four million Berlucchi bottles (for 10 years the production has grown in quality, not in numbers...) there are 115 hectares of owned vineyards, to which are added the 550 hectares of the contributors, and a technologically state of art wine cellar. «The secret is in the choice of grapes and in the pressing, which must be very slow. We use Coquard presses, which allow optimal fractioning of the musts.» But the real winning weapon are the three passionate siblings, who carry on with determination the vision of that young winemaker who sixty years ago cultivated a dream that he managed to transfer to his friend Guido Berlucchi and with him to make it come true.

2009 Intense straw yellow, with brilliant antique gold reflections and a very minute and continuous perlage; the nose is intense and rich, with intense and very clear notes of currant, blueberry and yellow peach, furthermore very multifaceted with notes of bonbons that fade into candied citrus; the mouth is powerful in structure with length and fullness of fruit tones, enlivened by a fresh acidic vein. A wine of extraordinary, vital dynamism.

2008 It has a beautiful bright colour, intense straw yellow with pink gold nuances and very fine bubbles; the nose is intense and fresh with notes of aromatic herbs that usher a component of red berries and candied orange and spices. In short, a nose of great complexity and extraordinary finesse. The mouth is vertical, supported by important acidity and still opens austere with tones of ripe golden apple. Long finish on the fruit.

2007 Visually it has a beautiful coppery and brilliant straw yellow colour with a very fine chain of perlage, continuous and minute; the nose opens up intense and progressive with clear dominant notes of candied citrus and red berries, but also yeast, vanilla and mountain hay. It is subtle and complex. The mouth is wide, offers structure and fatness, balanced by a vital acidic vein, which results in a creamy and fine effervescence that caresses the palate and speaks of ripe yellow fruit. The finish is long, spicy, progressive, of great character and fades into tones of strawberry tree honey.

2006 Great vintage and great wine. Persuasive and captivating starting from the bright straw colour with the usual antique gold reflections, the nose opens up to complex notes of malt, barley candy and toffee, which fades to notes of alpine butter, licorice and citrus; on the palate it is fleshy, full, broad but also vertical, rich in sapid fruitiness, taut, fresh, one of the best of this label. A captivating ending that Gino Veronelli would have defined as "peacock tail"...

2005 Excellent. The colour is a coppery straw yellow of great youthful brilliance, perlage is *comme il faut*. On the nose, this vital exuberance translates into vital and intense notes of small fruits, from raspberry to cherry, to currant and blueberry that dynamically turn to citrus peel and spices. The



The Vertical tasting took place in the presence of Arturo Ziliani (also on the right) on December 15, 2001 at Chorus, in Rome. Marco Sabellico, Gianni Fabrizio, Giuseppe Carrus and Lorenzo Ruggeri participated.



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► mouth is nothing short of majestic, dense and extraordinarily fresh and balanced in creaminess. Powerful, harmonious, progressive and long. Wonderful.

2004 The first vintage is still fresh, vital and clear in its brilliant coppery golden cloak. On the complex and evolved nose, it offers hints of yeast, honey, woody notes and mountain herbs, candied fruit and a touch of spiced bread. On the palate it is delicate, persuasive, soft and enveloping, with a fruit that is still dynamic and vital, a nice acidic backbone that lengthens the persuasive finish. Really surprising for its age... And still far from its sunset.

FRANCIACORTA RISERVA DI FAMIGLIA

2001 This is a cuvée of chardonnay and pinot noir, bottled in magnum, which Arturo set aside in 2001. It was a sort of dress rehearsal of the new course that began with the restructuring of the cellar and the new equipment, to test the effect of new technologies. This was never marketed. A very elegant and fragrant wine, clear in the tones of toasted bread and yeast, savoury, elegant, airy and complex at the same time. It has structure, elegance, fruit, freshness and complexity, and a very long and enveloping finish. Too bad it can't be purchased... What a grand finale!

