



It took seven years to complete the immense new Ca' del Bosco cellar.

# The House in the Woods

THE TASTING PANEL VISITS **MAURIZIO ZANELLA** AT CA' DEL BOSCO

by Anthony Dias Blue

In 1964 Annamaria Clement ZANELLA bought a small house on a wooded property located in Erbusco, about an hour east of Milan. The property was called Ca' del Bosc, "the house in the woods." Three years later her son, Maurizio, planted a vineyard there.

Today Ca' del Bosco farms 375 acres of vines in Franciacorta, an appellation which was granted a D.O.C. in 1967. Its first wines, made in the mid-'70s, were a generic white and a red, but in 1976 the winery began producing *spumante* wines. Two years later, when they were released, the world was surprised to discover that fine, classically-styled sparkling wines could be made in Lombardy.



PHOTO: ANTHONY DIAS BLUE

Maurizio Zanella.

Franciacorta is extremely hospitable to Chardonnay. Zanella also planted Pinot Blanc and Pinot Noir there. His exceptional wines were unlike many other Italian sparkling wines made elsewhere, which can be heavy, coarse and sometimes sweet. The bubbly made by Ca'del Bosco is much more in the style of Champagne: dry, elegant and crisp with depth of flavor and considerable finesse.

But Maurizio wasn't content just producing brilliant sparkling wines; he wanted to make exceptional still wines as well. In the early 1980s, he released a powerful and complex Bordeaux-style blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The wine, appropriately, was called Maurizio Zanella after its now-legendary creator.

Soon after, a Pinot Noir called Pinéro and a Chardonnay, both aged in small French oak barrels, made their debuts. Both are dramatic, high-quality wines, among the best of their type made in Italy. In recognition of its achievements, Ca'del Bosco was named winery of the year in 2002 by Italy's most prestigious wine magazine, *Gambero Rosso*.

Maurizio Zanella is a charming, charismatic man with a sly sense of humor and enormous energy. His immense state-of-the-art winery is neatly integrated into the landscape; its undulating roof flows visually into the rolling hills that surround it. Major works of modern sculpture are strategically placed around the property. Currently, a troupe of large blue plastic wolves festoons the roof. A life-size white rhinoceros is suspended over the crush pad.

Beneath the winery is a web of underground caves with an enormous subterranean dome at its center. What's next? "We are installing equipment that will allow us to wash every grape before it is crushed," Maurizio Zanella informed me as he drove me back to Milan after dinner. The trip, normally requiring one hour, took 25 minutes.

*Ca' del Bosco is imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants.*

and dense with bright, balanced flavors; rich, deep and fresh. **91**

**Ca' del Bosco 2003 Cuvée Annamaria Clementi, Franciacorta (\$100)** Precise, nervy and focused; refined and elegant; rich, intense peachy flavors; complex, long, edgy and tangy. **93**

**Ca' del Bosco NV Cuvée Prestige Rosé, Franciacorta (\$40)** Bright raspberry and tangy acidity; lively, nervy and fresh. **91**

**Ca' del Bosco 2003 Cuvée Annamaria Clementi Rosé, Franciacorta (\$200)** Classic, concentrated and deep, with ripe raspberry fruit; lush, layered and intense with lovely spice and balance; great length and brightness. **94**

**Ca' del Bosco 2007 Chardonnay, CurteFranca (\$75)** Lush vanilla nose; silky, creamy and bright; lovely, elegant vanilla and subtle oak; tangy and racy with great structure, purity, finesse and depth. **94**

**Ca' del Bosco 2007 Pinéro, Pinot Nero del Sebino IGT (\$75)** Beautiful ruby color; rich, spicy, earthy nose; silky texture, smooth and fresh, tangy and edgy with good structure and length; clean and balanced ripe cherry, long and juicy. **90**

**Ca'del Bosco 2003 Rosso del Sebino IGT (\$75)** Dark, dense and earthy with glints of green; velvety and lush with good structure and ripe, rich plum and spice; complex and expressive. **92** ■■

