



Inspired by Italian Genius



Benetton
ITALIAN EXCELLENCE SINCE 1973

The Finer Things in Life

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Excellence meets originality. Maurizio Zanella is proud of the art collection that he has put together over the years, "a collection of works made by friends, not bought through galleries."

Maurizio Zanella, founder and chairman of the Ca' del Bosco vineyard, is living proof that small gestures change lives. "It all began in the late 1960s when my mother bought a weekend home in Erbusco, a town in the Franciacorta region between Bergamo and Brescia. She set up a small farm there so that we could eat healthier foods than what we could get in Milan where we lived for the better part of the year. I was an angry young man at the time and, after I got myself into a bit of trouble, my parents thought it would be better if I got out of the city and cooled my heels in Erbusco."

The Maurizio Zanella who receives us in the magnificent Ca' del Bosco meeting room has come a long way from the rock-hurling boy that he once was. "I enjoyed spending time with the man who oversaw my parent's farm, but the light bulb really lit up in my head after a trip to France. I visited the Champagne region and some vineyards and came back home full of enthusiasm and ideas for producing wine in Erbusco."

In a candid interview, Maurizio Zanella, founder and chairman of the Ca' del Bosco vineyard, talks about perfecting the art and science of winemaking and his dream of growing Italy's notoriety for fine sparkling white wines.



Zanella's parents recognised that something important was happening and decided to encourage their son. As he was still too young to drink, let alone to get a mortgage and set up a business, they helped from behind the scenes. "My father would arrange things with the bank first then I would go thinking that I was negotiating the deal myself," Zanella laughs.

Zanella was not yet 20 years old, "but the freedom and the faith that my parents had in me gave me the basis that I needed. I returned to France to study wine production and was lucky enough to find an excellent oenologist who was willing to take a chance and come back to Italy with me. Along with my parents' overseer, we studied ways to improve Franciacorta wines. This involved changing the local mindset. Until that point vineyards had always aimed for quantity while disregarding quality. I wanted to do just the opposite."

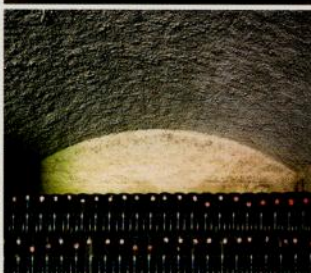
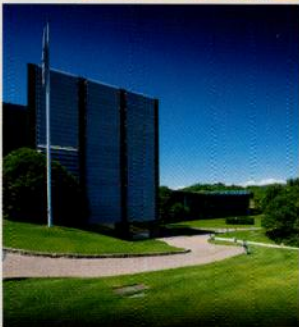
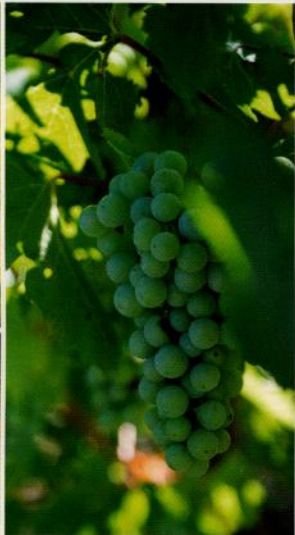
Today Ca' del Bosco is recognised as one of the finest producers of sparkling white wines in the world, wines that are everything but French wine's poor cousins. "We base our production on traditional French *méthode champenoise*, where a second alcoholic fermentation occurs in the bottle, but we have added our own touch to the methodology. I worked for years to develop a way to wash and dry the grapes before they were pressed so that impurities are not passed into the wines. People thought I was crazy or even blasphemous, but I succeeded. Yet I am most proud of the method I developed and patented for *dégorgement*, the process through which the spent yeast is removed from the bottle after the second fermentation in an oxygen-free environment. I have even sold my machinery in France."

While Zanella attributes much of his success to the intrinsic qualities of the earth and climate in Franciacorta and to "good timing," the fame and recognition that *metodo Franciacorta* wines have obtained speaks of something more.



"I started producing fine wines at a time when people were starting to appreciate them. I was also lucky because in the 1970s, if you really wanted to succeed, you could. To be successful you need to dream, invent, go beyond the obvious and stay unsatisfied. A job without a dream behind it will never be more than a way to pass the time. But for a dream to become reality, you need to have people who can help you make it come true. I found them."

Ca' del Bosco's success has brought success to the entire Franciacorta region and Zanella, rather than feel that something is owed to him, is proud to share. "A product, if it is an isolated case, will never earn worldwide credibility. A famous wine needs a famous territory behind it. As president of the Consorzio Franciacorta, a consortium of the approximately 200 associates including 106 wine producers in Franciacorta, I am proud that we earned DOCG status in 1995. We are in a kind of David and Goliath situation because France has been producing sparkling white wines for almost 300 years and we have been for less than 50, but I am sure that we will gain notoriety as consumers become more sure of their tastes. Franciacorta wines are by no means a second-tier product - neither in quality nor in flavour - we compete directly with French wines. I want to make our entire region a region of taste, where small producers will find a market for the top-quality products that they produce locally."



Ca' del Bosco was an official partner at the sixth annual Azimut | Benetti Yachting Gala held this year in Portofino and at the 140th Anniversary Gala Dinner.