

SPIRITO di VINO

Culture and Quality for a Luxury Wine-Style

Asia

Maurizio Zanella

An Icon of Franciacorta

TWO FASCINATING
DAYS IN TOKYO
WITH THE FOUNDER OF
CA' DEL BOSCO,
THE EPITOME OF ITALIAN
EXCELLENCE



FRANCE

*A spectacular evening with
Domaine Huet*

JAPAN

*Suntory
Tomi no Oka
Winery*

IMPORTER

*The Fine Wine
Experience is out
of ordinary*

ITALY

*South Tyrol,
a concentration
of quality*

Ca' del Bosco celebrated in Tokyo

That Maurizio Zanella is considered a visionary when it comes to Italy's Franciacorta is conventional wisdom. That his vision also extends to East Asia is fascinating

by Jean Charles Viens photo by Yoshio Kato





Sushi SORA embraces the quintessentially Japanese culinary of the seasonal

market regularly to hand pick the fish and feel its texture with bare hands, and will then adjust the menu according to the changing seasons. Seeking to bring his audience to a world of culinary art, Chef Imaizumi unveils his gracious and skilful hand movements right in front of the diners when preparing sushi.

The menu at Sushi SORA embraces the quintessentially Japanese culinary of the seasonal. Honouring the long-held traditions, Chef Imaizumi's dishes offer a rare glimpse to diners into the uniquely chic spirit of old Edo. Selecting the freshest fish from trusted sources, Chef Imaizumi curates the menu based upon the time of year, usually around thirty fish per day in summer, and closer to forty during winter. To provide an all-embracing and exceptional experience, the sake sommeliers are more than willing to give sushi and sake pairing advice to diners.

As explained by Chef Sommelier Fumihiko Kamo, sake is an integral part of Japanese cuisine and it bears an essential role in building relationships be-

tween drinkers. "We pour sake to each other. We hand sake carafe that is called "Katakuchi" or "Tokkuri", and pour the sake into small cup ("Ochoko"). By doing so, we show consideration for each other and deepen the sense of solidarity." Echoing to Chef Imaizumi, Kamo couldn't stress enough on the importance of "Sense of the season". Sake is capable of bringing out the umami of the fish.

For instance, in summer cool and refreshing type of sake such as "Namazake" should be served with light taste of summer fish. In autumn, Kamo would line up Hiyaoroshi on the menu, which is aged for about 3-6 months, giving it more complex aromas and flavour compared to the young sake. In winter, hot sake should be served with winter fish such as fatty tuna that is full of umami. Kamo went on to introduce two pairings; the delicate flavour of white fish or raw shellfish would go well with Daiginjo (premium sake with rice polish rate of 50%); the fat of the fish with a taste, it will match the mellow Jumaishu (pure

rice sake), which is rather lukewarm. Sushi SORA currently has 25 kinds of sake and it also offers a tasting menu that guests can experience three kinds of recommended sake including seasonal sake such as Risshun Asa Shibori and Hiyaoroshi or premium sake. Sake Sommelier recommends the best matching sake depending on the food and above all- guest's preference. Kamo believes that thoughtfulness is the key- it is important to find out each guests' preferences when it comes to sushi and sake pairing to guarantee an unforgettable gastronomic experience.

Such thoughtfulness and unyielding pursuit of excellence are certainly what make Sushi SORA shine brighter than its counterparts, and establish Mandarin Oriental Tokyo as one of the greatest luxury hotels of the century. 🍁

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Left page, sushi chef, concentrated, was in preparation of the delectable nigiri sushi. This page, from left to right, the hotel seeks to create a sense of space and openness where guests can envision themselves being in the woods; the resplendent lobby of the 38th floor; Sushi SORA combines age-old tradition with a modern outlook of the stunning views of the Tokyo Skytree tower and citypanorama.

EXCLUSIVE (ITALIAN EXCELLENCE IN JAPAN)



Benjamin Parks

This page, Maurizio Zanella, founder of the iconic Franciacorta wine estate of Ca' del Bosco at Sushi Ora at the Mandarin Oriental Tokyo. Other page, the Cuvée Prestige bearing a special label to mark the 150th year anniversary of diplomatic ties between Japan and Italy. It represents the deity Daikoku, the Japanese god of wealth, and was featured on the first Japanese bank note designed by Italian Edoardo Chiosso in 1876.

“Franciacorta is 250 years younger than Champagne and it is truly unique to Italy”

Visionary and uncompromising, determined and focused, Maurizio Zanella, the founder of Ca' del Bosco, created one of the most respected wine estate in Italy today. Over two days of extensive tastings in Tokyo, Spirito diVino Asia had a close contact with this Icon of Italian wine and an exclusive and personal look at the secret of his success. First, it begins with the wine. But, never compare Franciacorta with Champagne in the presence of Zanella. For him, each are “absolutely two different things”.

For a starter, he emphasized that “Franciacorta is 250 years younger and second, it is truly unique to Italy”. Indeed, the region only came to be officially recognized in Italy about 50 years ago. However, the truly unique aspect of Franciacorta, other than its magnificent ripening conditions, is the fact that members of its Consortium, today comprising of 113 wineries, voluntarily and unanimously decided from the outset to produce sparkling wine in the traditional method with the most stringent rules in the world and with a focus of producing only the highest levels of quality. Unquestionably at Ca' del Bosco, the winery Zanella took charges of when he was only 18 years old, he has pushed quality wine making to a point that he does not use the expression “traditional method” when it comes to describing his *modus operandi* but rather calls it the “Ca' del Bosco method”. With a maniacal attention to details, every step of the way is carefully managed to produce the purest and most delicate wine possible.

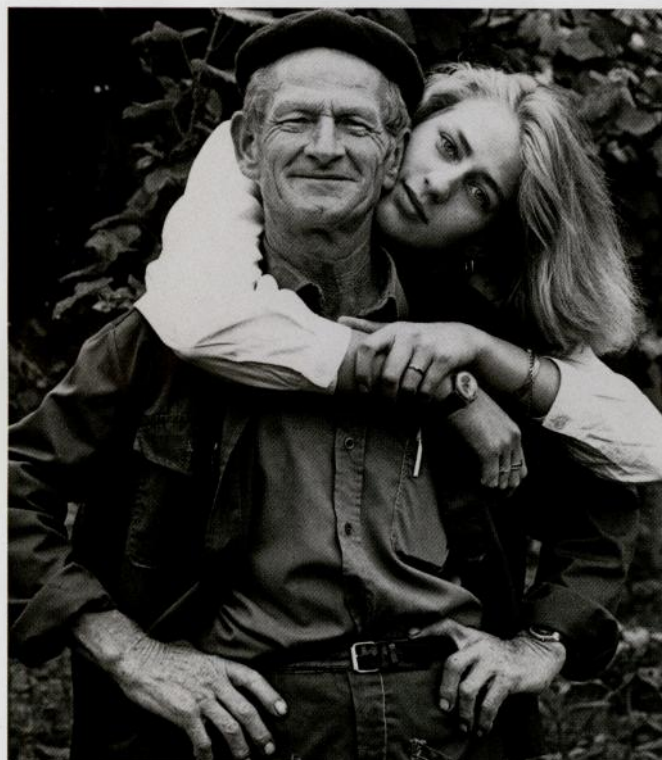
The impact of Zanella is deep in the region. With a laser beam focus on quality, he is a pioneer of many stringent rules both in the vineyard and the winery that raised Franciacorta among the best in the world. He was the first to create a style called Satèn, a blanc de blancs with slightly less pressure than other wines, which is today a category in the Appellation. During his 8 years as President of the

Franciacorta Consortium, he was one of the fiercest advocates of transforming the entire area as exclusively organic, a work in progress that will soon be attained. On his achievements as President of the Consortium, Zanella confided that his proudest is for having worked to convince 18 municipalities of the region to join together into approving a regional development plan that will become law in January 2017. This plan, unique in Italy and called “Terra

Della Franciacorta”, envisions for all municipalities to act homogeneously in the urban and rural development of the region with a focus on its cultural valorisation and the respect of its environment. If the secret of Ca' del Bosco's success begins with its wines, it follows with a relentless focus on market development across the world, especially in Japan which is today its best market outside of Italy.

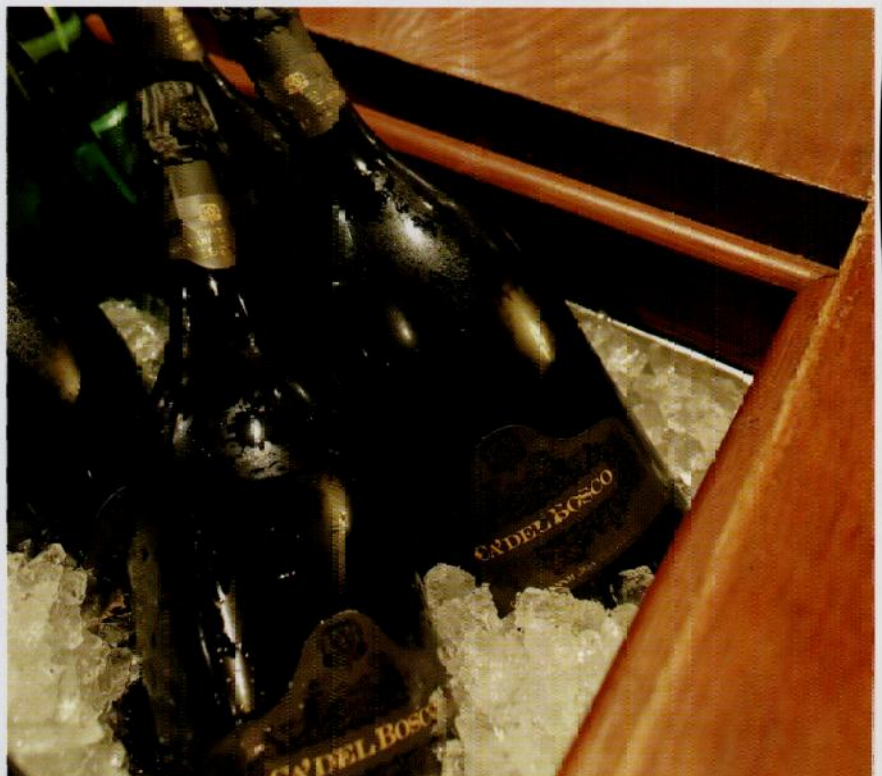
That its wines would be widely available throughout the country not only in Italian restaurants but also in the finest French and Japanese fine dining establishments is testament to the beauty and purity of its wines but also of the hard work Maurizio Zanella and its importer for 31 years, Foodliner, have accomplished together. Tomomi Tsujimoto, its vice-president, con-

fidid in me over dinner at Les Saisons, the Michelin starred French restaurant of the Imperial Hotel, “Maurizio gave us tremendous support over the span of our relationship, even visiting Japan almost each year since our beginnings in 1985. This support was extremely important”, she continued, “not only in terms of advertising, but also in training and events”. Thirty-one years ago, the wine market was still very much in its infancy for all categories and efforts were focused in the Kansai area comprising Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe. “I still remember our first tasting in Osaka in 1987”, Zanella recalled fondly, “we had 90 Certified Sommeliers at the Ritz. For them, we



Above, Antonio Gandossi planted the 1st vineyards of Ca' del Bosco (photo by Alice Spring for the book “11 Fotografi 1 Vino” edited by Skirà). Other page, top left, Zanella has a great respect for Japanese Sommeliers, right, the author's notes; 2nd Row, left, Foie Gras at The Cellar, right, Cuvée Annamaria Clementi impressed; 3rd row, left, Maurizio Zanella's red blend, right, the flight being carefully evaluated.







Historical Retrospective Tasting

In a roomful with Japanese Certified Sommeliers at the Shangri-la Hotel Tokyo, Maurizio Zanella expanded on the particularities of his "Ca' del Bosco Method" for making sparkling wines. With a maniacal attention to details at every steps, Zanella believes that wine should be akin to an art form, "where grape leads to marvellous harmony". For him, the Cuvée Annamaria Clementi, dedicated to

his mother, is "an absolute Franciacorta". With no compromise and no concession, it is made only in the finest years from the finest grapes from the various crus earmarked for this icon wine and it spends a minimum of 7 years on its lees. From its first vintage in 1989, it contributed to catapult Franciacorta into the hierarchy of the world's greatest wines. In this historical event, we tasted:

97 CUVÉE ANNAMARIA CLEMENTI 2006
A wine of contrast and confidence. Youthful still, but deep with notes of lemon curd, apple flesh, brioche and toast. The texture is beautifully creamy and mouth-filling with a perfect balance. Dense and tense, the wine has a long ageing potential. A long expressive finish.

90 CUVÉE ANNAMARIA CLEMENTI 2001
A delicate wine. Showing slightly faster maturation than the previous with notes of dried hay, apple skin and a touch of smoke and butterscotch. Creamy texture with some density and excellent balance. With a subtle and long finish.

96 CUVÉE ANNAMARIA CLEMENTI 1999
An expressive wine showing beautiful evolution. A complex nose with toast, a slight note of smoke, and delicate touches of chamomile, lemon curd and ripe apples, all finely interwoven. Creamy and beautifully proportioned mouth-feel. A complete wine with a still long ageing potential.

93 CUVÉE ANNAMARIA CLEMENTI 1995
An elegant and integrated wine at the right moment in its life. Showing dried apples, chamomile, sweet spices, and butterscotch all delicately and elegantly interwoven. Creamy and fine texture. Long seductive finish.

97 CUVÉE ANNAMARIA CLEMENTI 1989
A caressing and hedonistic wine. Beautiful complexity showing exotic spices, smoke, dried acacia and dried apples. Touches of flynt and lemon skin delight. Delicately creamy and sensual texture. Supple, yet lively and ethereal. Long finish with delicate notes of smoke, dried fruits and nuts. Beautiful and mesmerizing.

92 CUVÉE ANNAMARIA CLEMENTI ROSÉ 2006
A youthful and delicate wine. Notes of wild strawberries, herbs, and rose petals with a touch of butterscotch. Lovely. Fresh and delicately creamy texture. Long, lively and sapid finish.

95 CUVÉE ANNAMARIA CLEMENTI ROSÉ 2005
A sensual wine with density and ageing potential. Notes of flynt, wild strawberries, and orange skin. Creamy and mouth-filling with liveliness. Lovely density for further ageing potential. Long fruity finish with floral notes.

95 CUVÉE ANNAMARIA CLEMENTI ROSÉ 2003
A delicate wine with vitality. Showing a delicate evolution with dried rose petals and dried wild strawberries with subtle notes of dried leaves, butterscotch and smoke. Creamy but lively and ethereal texture. Long finish with touches of smoke, dried fruits, and nuts.

Above, a historical flight of Cuvée Annamaria Clementi in Tokyo. Other page, top left, Michelin-star Chef Thierry Voisin, Maurizio Zanella, Tomomi Tsujimoto; right, admiring the golden hue of Franciacorta; 2nd row, left, beautiful dish at The Cellar in MO Tokyo; right, Japanese Sommeliers have high standards; 3rd row, left, an exclusive dinner at The Cellar in MO Tokyo; right, Ca' del Bosco bottles at the ready.

“Maurizio gave us tremendous support, even visiting almost each year since 1985”

were a curiosity, like a Martian descended on earth!” Over the years, Zanella came to develop a deep respect for Japanese Sommeliers, “they do not suffer from the tyranny of wine critiques” he said. “For them”, he continued, “that an Italian wine would be equally good, if not superior to a French wine in a French or Japanese fine dining context is not surprising”. In fact, the previous week had been dedicated to touring the Kansai regions where Ca’ del Bosco is listed in many Japanese Michelin starred restaurants. Reminiscing over that leg of his tour, he mused, “what counts for Japanese sommeliers is that the wine meets their standards of quality which can be exact and of the highest order”. He continued, “if a wine match their requirements to give pleasure when paired with a particular dish, they are not afraid to go across geographical borders”. The result is that, “Japan is the only place in the world where Franciacorta has its own dignity and stands on its own comfortably among the world’s best wines”, confided Zanella during the photoshoot for the magazine’s cover.

Today, the Kansai market has reached a higher level of maturity and most efforts are spent in the Tokyo region. It is therefore fitting that Zanella would choose this metropolis as the site of an important retrospective tasting of several vintages of the iconic Cuvée Annamaria Clementi, the flagship wine of Ca’ del Bosco, a key moment of our short stay in Tokyo earlier this fall. A tribute to his mother, who bought a little hillside house called “Ca del Bosc” in 1964, the Cuvée Annamaria Clementi was created with “uncompromising attention to details and outmost focus on quality”. Made only in the finest years from the finest grapes from the various crus earmarked for the wine, it spends a minimum of 7 years on lees. It is this very long ageing period that helps create a unique wine of beauty. It was first elaborated by chef de cave André Dubois, a Cham-

penois of origin who joined Ca’ del Bosco in 1979 at the tender age of 65 and remained firmly in charge of the wine making processes until his death in the 1990s. Of Dubois, Zanella said that “he was more than a wine maker, he was a mentor and a spiritual leader. He brought more than simply a technical contribution to our house, he brought a culture and a philosophy”. There is no denying that the sparkling wines of Franciacorta can cross the culinary borders of any types of

cuisines and be a delightful dining companion. Our last dinner at The Cellar, the private French dining experience of the Mandarin Oriental hotel was certainly a case in point. Around a sumptuous table comprising of only 10 guests and located literally in the “wine-cellar in the sky” of the hotel’s 37th floor.

Dishes after dishes prepared especially for the guests at the expert hand of Chef Nicolas Boujéma matched beautifully to the wines. Starting with the 1995 and 1989 Cuvée Annamaria Clementi and moving on to 2007 Chardonnay Curtefranca to the 2000 Maurizio Zanella Rosso del Sebino, it ended into a wonderful crescendo of sensations with the Cuvée Prestige Rosé. Interestingly, Zanella thought the 1989 Cuvée Annamaria Clementi tasted completely different than it had at

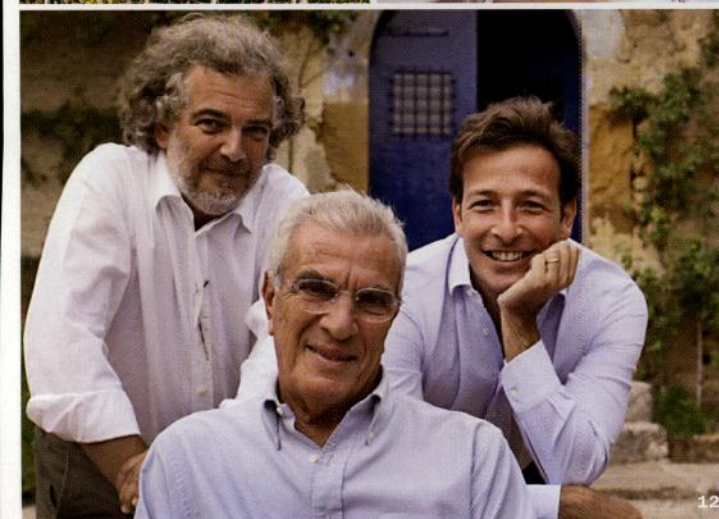
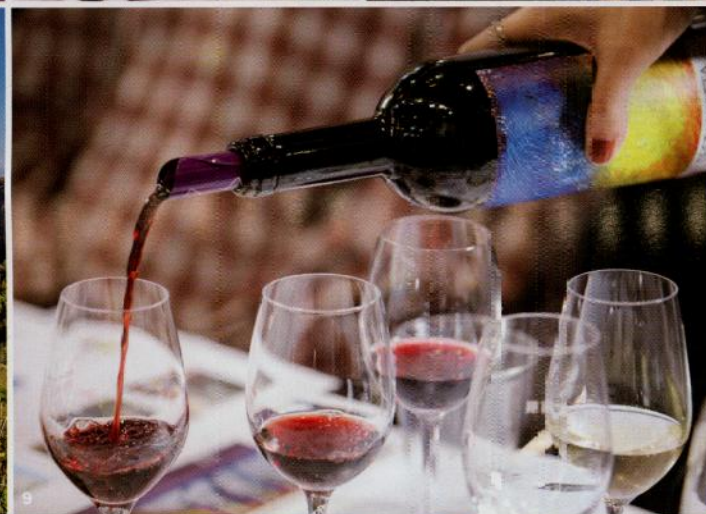
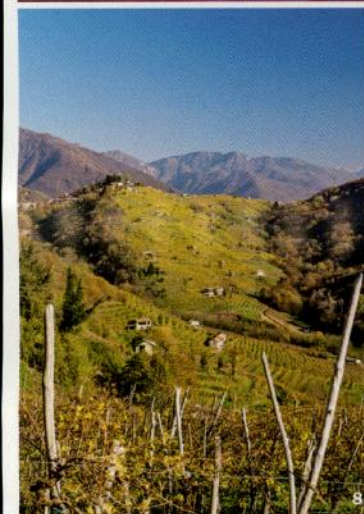
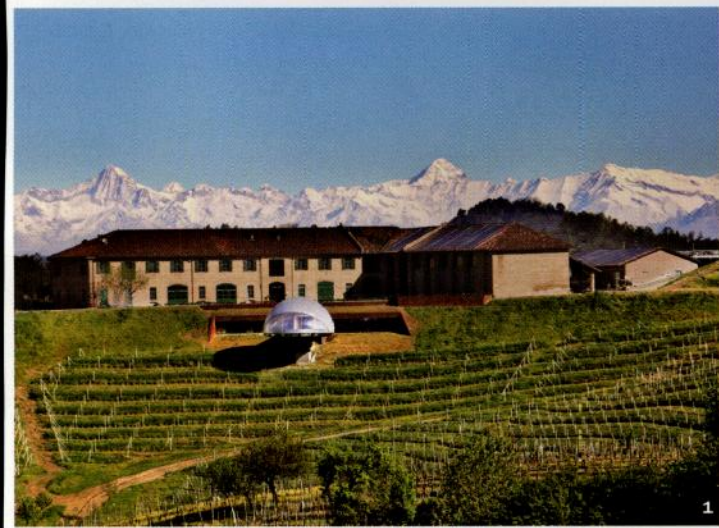
the retrospective tasting the day before. Was it the sumptuous context of our dinner versus the more formal atmosphere of our tasting in a ballroom of the Shangri-La hotel? For Zanella, it was by far better during our dinner. Perhaps he was enraptured by the beautiful company, the exquisite dishes and spectacular surroundings?

In the end, when all has been said and done, this is perhaps what matters the most about such beautiful wines as those of Ca’ del Bosco. The essential is that they give pleasure and magnify the emotions of a perfect evening which wonderfully concluded an astonishing discovery of the Franciacorta wines of Ca’ del Bosco in Japan. 🍷

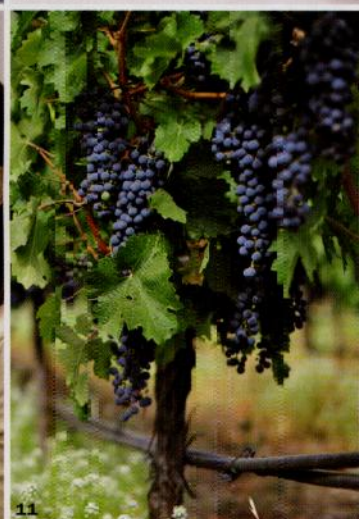
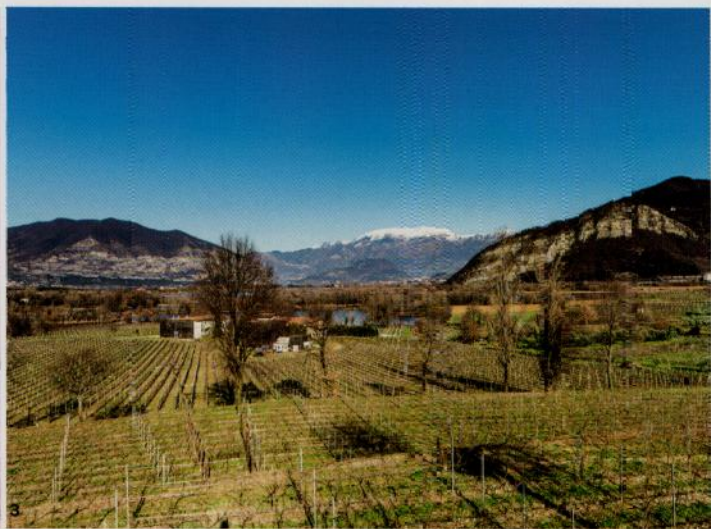


This page, the corks of Cuvée Annamaria Clementi label were removed, unfolding a world of finesse to tasters. Adjoining page, Maurizio Zanella, an epitome of Italian excellence at Les Saisons, the Michelin starred French restaurant of the Imperial hotel. With a laser beam focus on quality and a maniacal attention to details, he produces one of Italy's finest sparkling wines today.





1. Ceretto Estate Monsordo Bernardina. 2. 72 wines tasted at 15 masterclasses. 3. and 9. Elio Gratez, artist at heart, and his flagship Testamatta. 4. Overwhelming interest in Italian wines. 5. Soave Classicc are appetitif. 6. Last masterclasses cheered with enthusiasm. 7. Foreign media also attended. 8. The hills of Valcobbiasole. 10. Franciacorta truly unique to Italy. 11. To share about wine is my passion! 12. The Tasca d'Almerita, father & sons. 13. Ferrari wines ageing in cellar. 14. Pieropan's vineyard La Rocca. Other page, left, Vitality International & GrandePassione. Com: partners for 6 years. Right, Spirito diVino Asia captivating the audience.



1. Franciacorta wines. 2. Appreciating the color of Ben Ryé. 3. Franciacorta blessed with excellent conditions. 4. 2,700 glasses were used. 5. Ferrari also produces Rosé. 6. Mr. Antorello de Riu Italian Consul General with JC Viens. 7. Argolas Turrigar. 8. Franciacorta ageing on lees. 9. Member of the trade were keen on the wines. 10. Concentrating on maps. 11. Corvina used for Amarone. 12. Stunning vineyards of Dornafugata on the Island of Pantelleria. 13. Sofficone label banned in USA. 14. Argolas family with 102 years old patriarch. Other page, left, Spirito diVino now at reduced price subscription. Right, inspiring wines.