



HOW DARE YOU CALL IT SPARKLING

WINE: CA' DEL BOSCO CUVÉE PRESTIGE EDIZIONE 44, FRANCIACORTA, ITALY (\$45)

PRESENTER: Jacob Gragg, brand ambassador

Ca' del Bosco brand ambassador Jacob Gragg—who, full disclosure, is a friend of mine—gave me some well-intentioned advice during the tasting: “I wouldn’t feature the presenters as part of the brand’s coverage,” he said, the day before over a local beer. “Nobody cares about us as much as the wine.” But then, as if to spite himself, Gragg proceeded to give the most interesting and thorough presentation of the day, proving that it is indeed worth featuring the presenter, as they truly can make all the difference in how the brand is perceived by members of the trade.

Known as one of the pioneering producers of Franciacorta, Ca' del Bosco is the region's second-oldest winery still producing today. The Lombardian DOCG region is Italy's sparkling champion, releasing contenders formidable enough to compete with serious Champagne. And yet Gragg was reluctant to mention the famous French region by name, preferring to use the term “bubbly” in reference to both it and Franciacorta.

“Our earliest vintages were still wine, but in 1976 we started making bubbly wine. We prefer the term ‘bubbly’ to

‘sparkling’ because [the former is] a little too generic, and we think Franciacorta deserves a little more presence than that,” Gragg elaborated. “Franciacorta is different than that place we won’t name in northern France in a couple ways, the biggest of which are soil and climate. The third way is a little more subtle, but I think it’s the most important: philosophy. If you think of that northern France region and most classic grape-growing wine regions in the world, the one thing that ties them together is tradition. [What many consider the best method for making sparkling wine is] even called the ‘traditional method.’ Franciacorta, when [its eponymous wines were first released by that name] in 1961 by Berlucchi, a different producer, was in business and finance. Everybody in Franciacorta all came from somewhere else—none of them came from winemaking. So all of them brought different mentalities in how they might do things in the winemaking process, and that allowed for not only technology and innovation but also reinvention.” Ca' del Bosco's founding family, the Zanellas, were no different.

It was a fascinating perspective on the

TASTING NOTES

“Gold color, with toasty and savory notes of brioche and lemon curd. Round body with a persistent, long finish and soft bubbles. Exactly what I want every day. Rich and luscious.”

—*LeeAnne Arnold, sommelier, Audrey and June*

“Good fruit and excellent quality. Bready/yeasty notes.”

—*Jon Kearns, beverage director, Yolan and The Joseph*

region that I had not yet considered. I sipped on what I might have mistaken for grower Champagne while Gragg noted that the wine, the Cuvée Prestige Edizione 44, is Ca' del Bosco's flagship release and in this vintage comprises 81.5% Chardonnay, 17% Pinot Nero, and 1.5% Pinot Bianco, 29% of it reserve wine; the cuvée always features at least 20% of reserve wine from the best vintages, and the winery is known for being painstakingly transparent about where it comes from and how it's made. When the DOCG was established in 1967, the larger proportion of Chardonnay was not allowed; today, however, the grape takes up much of the region and speaks to Ca' del Bosco's—and Franciacorta's—willingness to evolve.