

# families of wine

2015/2016



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their passion for wines and vines

# Casa Vinicola Zonin

Vintners since 1821



Domenico, Michele, Gianni and Francesco Zonin.

Seven generations of the Zonin family have built their wine business into one of the best-known and most respected in the world.

**T**hesecondchildoften,Domenico Zonin was born in Gambellara in 1899 into a family of small-scale vine-growers, who had been working with vines since 1821. In 1921, Domenico planted his family's land with vines. He sold the wines he made from them and founded Casa Vinicola Zonin. At the end of the 1960s, he was joined by his nephew Gianni Zonin who, at the age of just 29, took on the Presidency of the company, with his sights fixed on a goal of producing the finest Italian wines and introducing them to the world.

He started with the purchase in 1970 of the Ca' Bolani Estate in Friuli. Gianni Zonin recalls: "There were some doubts

in my family as to the wisdom of leaving the confines of our home region of the Veneto. But I was convinced of my idea: to produce really fine wines one has to own vineyards, selecting the best terroirs and the most typical grape varieties."

Six years later, he startled the wine world by buying the Barboursville Vineyards estate in Virginia in the USA, to pursue the dream of American President Thomas Jefferson of producing world-class wines in that state. It was a dream that Jefferson was unable to realise – but which Gianni Zonin could and did. Today, Virginia is one of North America's most dynamic wine regions; the Barboursville Octagon wine, a Bordeaux blend, has become one of the best-known wines of the region.

The next Zonin acquisition was in the more classic area of Chianti Classico, where the company acquired a gem of an estate called the Castello d'Albola, in 1979. Then, the following year came Abbazia Monte Oliveto, in San Gimignano, the homeland of Tuscan white wine, Vernaccia. Moving west, in the 1980s, the Zonins bought the Castello del Poggio in the finest part of the Asti and Barbera region, and then Tenuta Il Bosco in the Pinot Noir country of Oltrepò Pavese. In 1999, Zonin was seduced by an enchanting spot lying in the Maremma, close to the Mediterranean scrubland and lapped by the waves of the Tirrenian Sea. He returned for the third time to Tuscany in order to purchase the Rocca di Montemassi.

The Maremma is one of Italy's newer quality wine regions, and far from the only such area to have caught Zonin's attention. In 1997, he showed his understanding of the potential of the south of

Castello d'Albola



the country by buying Feudo Principi di Butera on the island of Sicily and, in 2000, Masseria Altemura in the Salento Peninsula, in Puglia.

The Zonin family's nine Italian estates now cover a total of over 4000 ha of land in Italy's seven finest wine-producing regions: the Veneto, Friuli, Piedmont, Lombardy, Tuscany, Sicily and Puglia. Of this total landholding, around 2000 ha are planted with vines, while a further 500 ha, of which 90 are under vine, are to be found in Virginia.

Gianni Zonin remains president of the company which now has 550 employees, including a team of 32 oenologists and agronomists, consultation with renowned oenologist Denis Dubourdieu, and a 2013 turnover of €154m.

More than a decade ago, Domenico Zonin became the first son to join Gianni, and gained experience in both Napa and Bordeaux that he put in service of the company. He was joined by his two brothers, who between them represent the seventh generation of the company's history: Francesco Zonin is in charge of sales and marketing, while Michele Zonin controls the firm's finances. The company has grown so much in recent years, particularly in the export markets, that a reorganization became called for.

In September 2014, Domenico Zonin was appointed Chief Executive Officer (Amministratore Delegato) of Casa Vinicola Zonin, while also holding the position of president of Unione Italiana Vini. The dynamic Massimo Tuzzi has become Chief Operating Officer. The new company identity – 'Zonin 1821' – was created by award-winning agency RobilantAssociati, to express the strength of a contemporary company that stands on the strong beginnings of 1821.

Apart from its portfolio of great regional estate wines, Zonin is well known for the wide selection of wines sold under its own brand. Leading these are the sparkling wines, like the famous Zonin Prosecco. Anyone wanting an introduction to Italian wine can follow their way around the country using a range of 'Zonin Regions' – premium-priced native varieties including examples of Pinot Grigio, Chianti and Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. They can then move upwards to the Zonin 'Classics', the super-premium priced range and the 'Jewels', such as the traditional Amarone della Valpolicella and Ripasso.

Zonin is a keen supporter of wine tourism, offering tours of the vineyards and wineries, visits to the company's museums, and professional and detailed tutored tastings that match

wines with typical local food products. An innovative event that's been created by the company is the Sommeliers' Themed Lunches, where top sommeliers are brought together in prestigious restaurants – such as Nobu Berkeley in London, where the first event was held – so they can network. Another initiative is the 'Gastronomy Experience', where international press and leading sommeliers are brought together for a 'menu trip' that takes them to meet butchers, fishermen and chocolatiers, among other artisan producers. Zonin USA's first TV show 'From Italy With Love' (FIWL) was first broadcast on the Cooking Channel in October 2014, the month when the company won the award for Best Social Media Communication of the Year.

After nearly two centuries of family winemaking, president Gianni Zonin says that the family wants "to be closer and closer to our clients and, by promoting high-quality Italian wine, we are endeavouring to spread our country's culture."

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