

When Passion for Wine is a Family Tradition

Marina Melchionda (July 29, 2009)



We met Raffaele and Teresa Senatore at Fancy Food 2009. In Ciro' Marina, Calabria, their family has been producing award-winning wines for four generations. They shared their "American Dream" with us.

Just a few weeks ago New York hosted the greatest food fair of the country, Fancy Food 2009. Our readers had a chance to live the event with us, reading our articles on the different conferences organized for the occasion, and virtually meeting the exhibitors through our pictures, videos and interviews. From porchetta to parmigiano cheese, salami and all kinds of preserved vegetables, they could almost smell and taste the delicacies presented to the American market on those three days.

When the Jevits center closed its doors, however, our journey in the best of "Made in Italy" was far



from ending. We kept in touch with many of the producers who had participated, curious about their activities, business and, why not, their personal story. In particular, we had a chance to spend a few hours with a couple of wine producers from Calabria, the region to which this year's edition of Fancy Food was dedicated. We decided to meet them after tasting their wines at the Gattopardo Restaurant, during a dinner with producers and public representatives from the Calabria region. Everybody at the restaurant was extremely impressed by the taste of the different kinds of the wine which they produced and that perfectly accompanied our big meal. From breaded artichokes to stuffed rigatoni, and sautéed baccalà the Senatores offered a perfectly matching wine for every course.

The following day they welcomed us to their sober stand, decorated only with

elegant bottles of wine, goblets, and a table with chairs where tasters could sit to savor a red, a white, or their sweet rosé. They didn't want to use any fancy decorations, perfectly aware that their products could present

themselves just as they were.

On the wall, a huge poster portraying four men represented the four generations of the Senatore family operating in the wine production field. Raffaele and Teresa took over the business just a few years ago: "I did not want this family tradition to end, my father and grandfather put so much into it that it seemed to me a real sin to abandon our lands in Cirò", explained Raffaele.

Cirò Marina, a medieval town located on the Ionian sea, is their hometown, but it is also the territory where, according to tradition, the best wine from Calabria is produced. This is for historic reasons, since the tradition of wine producing in those territories is proved to date back to the times of the Brettians: terracotta wine vases with production seals have been discovered in the various territories occupied by those peoples in the areas surrounding Cirò.

The Senatores started producing their DOC and IGT wines when Raffaele's great-great-grandfather Francesco Senatore - started cultivating his own grape in "Corfù Vecchiù", the first piece of land owned by the family. It was just a small beginning, but it brought the following generations to enlarge their properties that now cover a total of 40 hectares of land, 28 of which planted with vineyards. "In the 1930s my great-grandpa Antonio enlarged the business with the help of his brother Raffaele. They built the old stone winery in a new piece of property, Corfù Novu, which is still today our personal pride and joy. Now my brother and I are developing a new complex in the fraction of San Lorenzo in Cirò Marina. It, together with an other piece of land that we have named "Monaco", constitutes the new branch of the company, allowing us to produce all together 30.000 bottles of wine a year".

For this quite modest production the Senatores use only state-of-the-art techniques, adopted through constantly consulting with scientific bodies and with qualified universities and specialized centers. "We can define our products almost 'organic' for the great care and attention we have in preserving the equilibrium of the environment that hosts and, I would say, welcomes us", says Raffaele. "Of course it is the viniculture itself that requires us to use 'artificial products and techniques, but I can proudly assure you that our wines are the fruit of our great love for nature".

The company produces 7 kinds of wine, which have all won prizes in national and international contests for their outstanding quality and genuine taste. "Ciro' Classico Arcano", "Ehos" (made from Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes), "Ciro' Bianco Alei", "Ciro' Rosato Puntalice", "Gaglioppo Merlot" (made from Gaglioppo and Merlot grapes) and "Silo" have all received awards at the latest editions of the "Tre Bicchieri" contest by Gambero Rosso. The "Nerello", moreover, was awarded with the "Diploma di Gran Menzione" by the Consorzio enologico internazionale (International Wine Consortium) in 2009.

"Our passion and art is recognized all throughout Europe. That's one of the reasons why we regularly host classes for both Italian and foreign sommeliers in our winery. They come to visit our lands, learn about our production, and of course taste our wine and discover their composition, and



quality", Raffaele told us with great pride.

Since their wine is not yet present on the American market, Teresa and Raffaele came to the Fancy Food to meet the numerous importers participating. "We would like to see our wine on the shelves of the best specialty stores of the country, in the goblets of elegant wine-tasting shops. We are not looking for mass distribution here, our production is still too small".

During the Fancy Food, the stand was visited by sommeliers, gourmets, restaurant owners, and distributors. We are sure we won't have to wait long too find this outstanding wine from Calabria in the best selected wine lists of the country! Cheers!

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