

Napa Valley Register



The View from Italy by Chiara Giorleo

The great success of the Italian sparkling wine “Franciacorta”

“Franciacorta” is the production area in the province of Brescia, close to Milan, in Lombardy (north-west of Italy). “Franciacorta” identifies also the production method used to produce sparkling wine in this area: the Classic Method, the same used for Champagne in France (with a second fermentation in bottle). The term was chosen as a result of the restrictions imposed by French who, to protect their own production of Champagne in the homonymous area of Champagne, prevented the use of the term “Champagne” for wines produced outside of it. “Franciacorta” identifies the wine itself: it also includes the appellation: DOCG the top denomination in Italy.

So, as it happens in France with “Champagne” which identifies a product, an area and a method at the same time, nowadays “Franciacorta” is synonymous of great sparkling wine in Italy also thanks to the great job of the Consorzio which protect and support the brand. A great team work I rarely noticed in other Italian regions is the key of their success along with the quality of their products.

(This is also thanks to the support of the notorious communication agency located right in Napa, Balzac communication runned by Paul Wagner).

The Consorzio started in the 1990 with just 29 wine producers, it boasts now almost 200 members among grape growers, wine producers, and bottling firms.

For the third year in a row Franciacorta is the official wine of the Milan fashion weeks as it represents elegance and charm.

(a further note: even if the sparkling wines are the most prestigious and renowned worldwide, in Franciacorta some reds and white wines are produced too).

I have had the pleasure to meet some very interesting producers and taste their wines that I loved.

“Ca’ del Bosco” is one of the most known wineries, which has carried the name of Franciacorta all over the world, they are a symbol of this territory and a guarantee year by year for those who want to approach such a world; interesting the company too with art-works all over the garden and within the production area. Another big and important company is the notorious “Bellavista”, so called thanks to their panoramic

view which has been the starting point for my tour. A new look has been recently designed relying on powerful colors.

Together with “Contadi Castaldi” winery and a few more, those are well-known wineries which can tell a lot about the territory and how it is evolving. I would also include “Il Mosnel” a winery I have really loved for their elegant and perfectly balanced wines; “Il Mosnel” is smaller than the ones mentioned above but the family is one of those who founded the Consorzio.

Another winery which represents a symbol of this land is “Barone Pizzini” and the tour with Silvano Brescianini, general manager, has been greatly informative. They have a biodynamic production and a winery built on the principles of “green building”, they are the perfect answer to those who ask for organic and biodynamic wines.

There’s another winery, a small one, a brand less easy to find around which has truly impressed me and my palate “Le Marchesine”, I have tried those wines for the first time during this tour and Loris, the owner, is such an authentic person! Remember this brand everybody! The so-called basic wine is already a wonderful product.

Widely interesting has also been the tour at “Arcipelago Muratori”, a winery which is a group with different wine productions based in different Italian regions: the red one in Tuscany, the white wines in Campania (south of Italy and notorious for its whites Fiano di Avellino, Greco di Tufo, Falanghina and Coda di Volpe and anyway the notorious red Taurasi and the 2 Lacryma Christi), finally, they produce Franciacorta. A forward looking and original project which is giving enormous results also thanks to Ms Michela Muratori, [REDACTED], and her young and effective communication style. I have greatly appreciated their “Numero zero” (the no-dosage Franciacorta – see tab). In this regards I love to mention “Majolini” winery, a suggestive estate with a charming communication style. They work with artists realizing special packaging and gadgets.

I have been also impressed by the tour at “Ricci Curbastro” winery where the owner has the experience and the history like few others to tell the many stories about Franciacorta and its quality. Here I have tried a very nice rosé among the other wines and I have appreciated their hospitality with even a small museum included in the wine-tours they organize for the 8000 visitors by year they host.

Last but not least the work of “Ronco Calino” has to be supported, they are quite small and this is why they only produce Cru wines made out of the best vineyards.

Franciacorta is produced with: Chardonnay, Pinot Nero and Pinot Bianco (this one for a maximum of 50%). Wines are kept on their lees for a minimum of 18 months for the ‘no-vintage’ wines and 24 months for the ‘no-vintage’ rosè and Satèn (a specific wine made only of white grapes with lower pressure coming out only as Brut), 30 months for the one-single vintages, 60 months for the Reserves. Dosage (sugar level): no dosage (the driest one), Extra-Brut, Brut, Extra-Dry, Sec or Dry, Demi-sec (the sweetest style).