

Family Owned But Not Small, Tommasi Spreads Its Wings

Ambition driven by size propels a generation to seek new territory and challenges.

BY LESLIE GEVIRTZ



The name **Tommasi** is synonymous with Amarone and Valpolicella. The family has been making wines in Italy's Veneto region since 1902. Now, 20 years after the 4th generation "officially took over from our fathers ... We own a total of six wineries in six different regions of Italy," says one very proud Pierangelo Tommasi.

He freely admits that it was ambition that drove his generation. That and its size.

"There are nine of us. Six are full-time employees in the wine business and the other three members of my generation run the other business of the family, which is hospitality," Pierangelo explains.

It is his cousin, Giancarlo Tommasi, who is the "wine guru. The enologist. But I'm here. So I'm taking the credit anyway," he grins. A self-described managing director in charge of the export market and communications and marketing, Pierangelo is the smiling face of Tommasi. You will spot him on YouTube videos and can follow him on Twitter, unlike most European producers who still shy away from social media.

While his father, grandfather and great-grandfather concentrated on wines made within the Veneto, his generation expanded to “Montalcino, where we can produce Brunello, In Maremma in southern Tuscany, in Puglia for Primitivo, and in Basilicata where we produce Aglianico.” They also have an estate in Lombardy near Lake Garda where they produce sparkling wines and rosés. The Veneto vineyards, where their famed Amarone is produced, still make up the majority of the production.

Expansions Are on Hold for Now

The six wineries combined have nearly 1,483 acres (600 hectares) under vine. They produce about 260,000 9-liter cases a year. Of that total, the Estate Amarone represents roughly 16,700 9-liter cases and the Ca’Florian Amarone Riserva 1,170 six-packs. They make about 6,350 six-packs of the Estate Brunello and 670 six-packs of Colombailo Brunello Riserva each year.

“We wanted to give ourselves new and more opportunities to develop in the wine business by expanding outside of Veneto,” he says.

Pierangelo looks up at the ceiling of the restaurant in lower Manhattan and adds, “Thank God we’ve been a successful company. A company that, at the end of year, actually makes a profit, and at the end of year has invested in the company. So today, we seriously have enough to run [our operations]. No more expansions are planned for some time.”

Besides, Pierangelo notes, “we already produce two of the so-called three kings of Italy—Amarone and Brunello. And we don’t want anything in the Barolo area.” And he argues that some consider the Paternoster Aglianico del Vulture that Tommasi owns to be “the Barolo of the South.”

Barolo might have other thoughts.