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The Wine Legacy of the Marzotto Family

Seeking heritage and authenticity across Italy, the founders of Santa Margherita have created a dynamic portfolio of premium brands



written by
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published
October 24, 2019



The Marzotto family villa in Portogruaro. Photo courtesy of Santa Margherita USA.

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The Marzotto family is one of Italy's most prominent wine families. The Marzottos' commitment to both tradition and innovation over the past 84 years has enabled the Santa Margherita Wine Group to grow from a single winery into one of the country's largest family-owned producers of quality wines. Founded in 1935, the original Santa Margherita winery began with the vision of family patriarch Count Gaetano Marzotto, who foresaw a way to rejuvenate the farmlands between the Dolomite Mountains and the Adriatic Sea in northeastern Italy's Veneto region. A progressive thinker, Marzotto sought to build a viable business—not just for himself and his family but for his employees and their descendants.

“You have to remember the past, but you have to look to the future,” says Stefano Marzotto, one of the four brothers who make up the younger generation now leading the iconic wine group. “If people can see the future, they can work very well.” Marzotto explains that Gaetano was interested in developing a company that would create a livelihood for its employees but that would also contribute to their quality of life. “My grandfather believed that people couldn't live working [only] 120 days a year like farmers usually did at that time.” Marzotto says. “He was always telling us that we have a social responsibility to others, so for him it was very important to create new places and new [opportunities] for labor.”

Returning to traditional agronomy that supported a multitude of crops—grains and vegetables as well as fruit—Gaetano Marzotto built a company that honored heritage while fulfilling his dreams of a sustainable future for everyone involved. And he was prescient: To this day, the Santa Margherita wine group's estates have third- and fourth-generation leadership, growers, and employees.



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Count Gaetano Marzotto, the founder of Santa Margherita, and his wife, Margherita Lampertico. Photo courtesy of Santa Margherita USA.

His success over the years enabled Gaetano to build a state-of-the-art winery in 1961—he named it Santa Margherita for his wife. He was also able to expand his holdings, and these efforts helped lead the way in establishing Prosecco and Pinot Grigio as the Veneto region’s signature wines. Santa Margherita was among the first producers to vinify Pinot Grigio as a single-varietal wine that showcased the grape’s fresh, fruit-forward profile—now considered a benchmark style for the category.

In the decades that followed, the company acquired new wine properties throughout Italy, each with its own regional identity, distinctive terroir, and native grapes. The current generation—brothers Stefano, Gaetano, Luca, and Nicolò—inherited their grandfather’s estate, as well as his respect for legacy lands and his vision of sustaining them for the future. Today they regard the company’s properties, which extend from the family’s spiritual homeland in the Veneto to

Alto Adige, Lombardy, Tuscany, Sardinia, and as far south as Sicily, as a “wine mosaic” of estates that represent the best of Italy.



Wine mosaic (clockwise from top left): Kettmeir vineyards (Alto Adige); Santa Margherita vineyards (Refrontolo); Lamole di Lamole vineyards (Chianti Classico); Ca' del Bosco winery (Franciacorta). Photo compilation courtesy of Santa Margherita USA.

Authenticity and Sustainability

Though each has its own identity, a common theme among the estates is a commitment to authenticity—through cultivation of local grapes—and an investment in sustainability both in and beyond the vineyards. Each winemaking team is tasked with stewardship of the land by committing to using low-intervention viticultural techniques, including green mulching and applying natural products instead of chemicals in the vineyard. Says Stefano Marzotto, “We have been very loyal to the land.”

That was apparent to Eric Crane, the director of training at [Empire Distributors](#) in Atlanta, who visited the estates in September on an educational tour. He says he was impressed with the “sense of community and respect for all parts [of the winemaking process]—the land, the production, and the commitment of the company.” Even at the ownership level, Crane says, the Santa Margherita Wine Group is “concerned if the farms are okay, if the vineyards and the growers are okay. They farmed with care and with respect for the territory and the grapes.”

At [Lamole di Lamole](#), a winery in Chianti Classico that was acquired by the Santa Margherita Wine Group in 1993, a painstaking restoration of the estate’s stone-terraced vineyards has resulted in a rejuvenation of historic vines and an organic certification in Europe for the brand. Lamole’s four distinct vineyards of varying elevations yield wines with rich characteristics from traditional Tuscan varieties. The Santa Margherita Wine Group has submitted the restoration project to Unesco to be considered for recognition as a World Heritage Site.

Organic farming principles are in place, where possible, in the Marzotto family’s other vineyards as well—and all the estates are focused on biodiversity, conservation, and energy efficiencies. For example, the Santa Margherita winery in the Veneto uses energy from 100 percent renewable resources, including 6,500 square feet of solar panels, which allows the winery to be energy independent. The company has also committed to the “zero kilometer” model by producing its own bottles at its on-site glass production facility, also powered by solar grid. Up to 65 percent of the Santa Margherita Wine Group’s green glass bottles are made of recycled materials. Finally, in all its wineries, production processes, such as filtering, use only vegetable-based products.



From left to right: Brothers Stefano, Nicoló, Gaetano, and Luca Marzotto. Photo courtesy of Santa Margherita USA.

Innovation and Integrity

Upholding Gaetano's patrimony, the Marzotto brothers have invested in best practices for the family business, and in projects for keeping the estates up to date—if not ahead of the curve—with current technologies and production techniques.

In 1994 the Santa Margherita Wine Group purchased a majority stake in Ca' del Bosco, a pioneering premium producer of traditional-method sparkling wines in the Franciacorta region. Following 10 years of research and development, the enology team at Ca' del Bosco designed a unique method for washing harvested grapes to ensure the pristine condition of the fruit before processing. After being chilled and hand selected, the grapes are cleaned by means of an exclusive air-bubble bunch-washing system. They are then crushed without oxygen and fermented in small oak barrels or vats.

A comparable level of care is maintained throughout Ca' del Bosco's winery, a state-of-the-art, gravity-fed facility that doesn't use any pumps in its production process. The Santa Margherita Wine Group's [Cantina Mesa](#) in Sardinia is also a gravity-fed winery.



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Though it's among the wine group's most traditional estates, Lamole di Lamole embraces innovation as well. For example, the winery uses an optical grape sorter and ages wines in the Ovum, an egg-shaped wooden barrel manufactured by the historic French cooperage Taransaud. The barrel promotes natural microoxygenation and circulation and helps vintners achieve a better balance of tannins and fruit flavors in their wines.

[Kettmeir](#), an estate in Alto Adige that Santa Margherita acquired in 1986, celebrated its centennial this year; it too has a pioneering history. Kettmeir was an early adopter of modern wine production techniques, such as low-temperature skin contact during fermentation. It was also among the first to sell its wines in bottle rather than in traditional casks, and it was one of Italy's first producers to export its wines. Beginning with the 2019 harvest, the Santa

Margherita Wine Group's Torresella vineyards in the Eastern Veneto region are getting an Italian sustainability certification.

Tiffany Tobey, a sommelier at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas, visited Santa Margherita's estates on the same educational tour as Eric Crane and shares a similar impression of the producer's legacy. "I had no idea," she says, "that [Santa Margherita] had placed such an emphasis on family, tradition, and preservation of uniqueness in the beautiful land they thrive on. Each property told a different story of life, evolution, and farmer camaraderie."



Stefano Marzotto. Photo courtesy of Santa Margherita USA.

Looking to the Future

In the characteristic style of Italy, the Marzotto family embraces the tradition of food and wine as an integral part of life. "One of our key objectives is to continue to make the pairing of food and wine as exciting an experience as possible," says

Stefano Marzotto. “We offer those who drink our wines a guarantee: We will continue to lead and inspire the industry by promoting and pairing food with our Italian wine.” He adds that the company will continue to increase its footprint throughout Italy, choosing the sites and partners that best represent the Marzotto family’s ideals of authenticity, diversity, and quality.

“We believe that everybody is curious and wants to try new things,” says Marzotto. “We want to be the face of Italy and to say that this is what Italy offers.”

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