

The Future Is

FAMILIAL

ON **TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES'** RECENT PARTNERSHIPS
WITH FOUR ICONIC ITALIAN WINERIES *by Wanda Mann*

The relationship between an importer and the producers it represents is never merely transactional. Yes, importing wine from one country to another requires a mastery of shipping logistics and alcohol regulations, but trust is at the heart of the enterprise. When a winery entrusts the fermented fruit of its labors to an importer, it does so with the expectation that it will be represented in the best possible light. Indeed, the best importers are allies, ambassadors, and strategic partners that guide brands toward growth and acclaim. This is no easy feat. But according to four prestigious Italian wineries that recently joined the Trinchero Family Estates (TFE) portfolio—namely Ceretto, Famiglia Cotarella, San Polo, and Tenuta Regaleali—the Napa-based importer (perhaps because it's a producer itself) gets it right.

A Bond Between Families

Family was a recurring theme in the conversations I had with representatives from all four producers. Likewise a family-owned company with winemaking roots, TFE has an intimate knowledge of what it takes to sustain and grow a wine business for future generations.

"This is a connection between two families, not just a commercial transaction," said Dominga Cotarella, CEO at Famiglia Cotarella in Umbria. Alberto Tasca, CEO of Tenuta Regaleali in Sicily, similarly touted the "like-minded values between our family and the Trinchero family, both as producers and as independent families. We uphold similar values in business, including company longevity and competence of our teams, and we are confident that we share our investment in sustainability and commitment to the next generation." That sentiment was echoed by Federico Ceretto of Ceretto in Piedmont, who believes that in addition to the "integrity and values of the Trinchero family and management," their shared heritage creates a special bond: "We are Piemontese families. We understand each other completely." And Carlotta Allegrini of San Polo in Montalcino put it even more simply: "It feels like we are family."





The family behind San Polo: Marilisa, Carlotta, and Caterina Allegrini.

SAN POLO

Confidence is critical when it comes to winemaking. The Allegrini family has it in abundance—and they've earned it. Renowned for their award-winning Amarone della Valpolicella, they certainly had no need to venture into Tuscany. But when the love of winemaking is in your DNA, tackling a new territory is not merely a challenge but an opportunity. After all, said Carlotta Allegrini, who manages the estate with her sister Caterina, their mother, Marilisa, “fell in love” when she visited the San Polo property and was prompted to buy it in 2007.

Founded in 1994, San Polo is a young estate that benefits from ideal topography. Located on the cooler side of Montalcino in the original Brunello production zone, it's home to high-altitude vineyards located at 1,476 feet above sea level; its Brunello comes from the top of the hill, where the Sangiovese Grosso grapes provide “acidity, structure, tannins, and complexity,” said Carlotta. They also transitioned from smaller barriques to larger barrels to minimize the influence of oak because “[it] has to be in balance with the rest of the wine. We don't want to cover the notes of violets and berries. The wines have to be elegant,” she added.

Winemaker Riccardo Fratton's sustainable stewardship of San Polo helped it receive the coveted CasaClima certification in 2013; it was certified organic in 2017. “We can't just talk about sustainability; we have to do it. It is important to respect the earth and respect the people who work for us,” said Carlotta. In addition to eschewing chemical weed killers, the team plants cover crops to enrich the soil; they also use recycled paper and glass in their packaging. Using the principles of sustainable architecture, the winery—already built at the time of the Allegrinis' purchase—is situated entirely underground to blend in with the natural beauty of the landscape. The subterranean structure also maintains a constant temperature, which limits energy consumption.

The alliance between San Polo and TFE was sparked by a conversation Marilisa had with the latter's CEO, Bob Torkelson, when they met in 2017 at the ProWein wine fair in Germany. “They immediately clicked and started talking about the future,” said Carlotta. In 2020, the agreement was signed. “It's a true partnership,” she added.

Tasting Notes



Ceretto 2017 Barolo (Classico), Piedmont, Italy (\$75) A reined-in beauty: Graceful, fragrant, and focused, it's evocative of a garden of roses in earth. Red cherry, cranberry, and red licorice add to its profile. **94** —Meridith May



I Vignaioli di Santo Stefano 2020 Moscato d'Asti, Piedmont, Italy (\$23) From 30-year-old vines planted on the hillsides in Santo Stefano Belbo, this 5.5% ABV Moscato has abundant aromatics and charming perlage that reveals tangerine cream and peach nectar. Moderate acidity balances the deliciously sweet palate. **93** —M.M.



Cotarella 2017 Montiano, Lazio IGP, Italy (\$80) From volcanic and fine gravel soils, this 100% estate-grown Merlot spent 12 months in new French oak. It's dignified and muscular, with wet stone and chewy tannins. Licorice, black olive, and balsamic show a savory side, while blackberry is plush and juicy on the finish. **96** —M.M.



Falesco 2018 Vitiano Rosso, Tuscany, Italy (\$14) This blend of 34% Sangiovese, 33% Merlot, and 33% Cabernet Sauvignon boasts a stark, earthy profile. Tobacco, espresso, and balsamic lead the way to sinewy black cherry that threads its way through the wine's dark passages. **90** —M.M.



San Polo 2019 Rubio, Tuscany, Italy (\$25) Located in Montalcino, this estate is owned by Marilisa Allegrini and her daughters Carlotta and Caterina. Their certified organic Super Tuscan—a blend of Sangiovese, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc—possesses taut acidity along with notes of red cherry and plucky pomegranate. It's juicy, lighthearted, and easy drinking, with a touch of sandalwood and minerality on the finish. **92** —M.M.