



## HISTORY

The ancient village of Bolgheri is located in the township of Castagneto Carducci in the province of Livorno. It extends over an area between the inland hillsides and a coastal strip between the towns of Cecina and San Vincenzo. This part of the coast was once dominated by the Etruscans and boasts a viticultural tradition which goes far back in time.

Starting in the 17th century, the della Gherardesca counts, founders of the village which had risen on the site of an older hamlet and the ruins of a castle destroyed in 1393, gave a new impulse and Energy to the economic development of the area, to the point that it became one of the most fertile and productive of the entire coast. Two large vineyards had already been planted by the end of the 17th century, one at San Guido and the other at Belvedere. The decision to plant in the middle of the plain can be explained, at the time, by the greater fertility of the soil and by the easy accessibility to an important road, the Via Emilia, which at that time brushed San Guido. Immigrant workers, “the Lombards” (a typical Tuscan dish is the so-called “Lombard soup” which consists of water and beans with sage, garlic, bread, and olive oil, a dish which is as simple as it is tasty) accepted low pay, but wanted important quantities of wine, about whose quality they were not particularly fussy. In the mid-18th century it was Count Cammillo Pandolfo della Gherardesca, a renowned expert on wine, who gave new impetus to the production of wine at Bolgheri. He charged Clemente Moratti with the job of overseeing and administering his estates: an overseer of superior talents who was able to make the properties of the count prosper. At Bolgheri Moratti constructed large fermenting cellars and planted vineyards around the town of Castagneto Carducci.

The son of Count Cammillo, Guido Alberto della Gherardesca, was another major protagonist of the story of the wine of Bolgheri. In 1833 he became “the principal steward and cellar master” of Grand Duke Leopoldo II Hapsburg of Tuscany and, thanks precisely to this office and assignment, he became aware not only of the superiority of French wine but also of the superior organization of their producers. He charged Giuseppe Mazzanti with the responsibility for wine at his properties, a decision which gave new impulse to the estate holdings at Bolgheri, at Castiglioncello, and at Castagneto. Mazzanti demonstrated an intuitive understanding of where to plant new vineyards, while Guido Alberto was capable of immediately grasping the differences between the wines produced at the various sites. Accordingly, in 1816, the Capanne vineyards - the place where the first vineyard of Sassicaia was planted - was created, while the “fondi di Castelluccio” ( “the Castelluccio holdings”) were planted in the spot where we now find the vineyards of Antinori.

This, in a nutshell, is the “ancient” history of the wines of Bolgheri. A production which predated the arrival of the phylloxera louse in Europe and, for this reason, one which could not exist today. But the production techniques themselves were profoundly different from those of the current epoch and basically different even from those which existed up until the Second World War. Between the initial post-war years and the first years of the 1980's the viticulture of Castagneto Carducci knew few changes, limiting itself to following the events of Italy's economic recovery, and consequently of renewed consumption, one based more on quantity than on the quality of the products consumed. There were, on the one hand, small



vineyard plots, inherited from the sharecropping system and oriented towards a production for family use, even when the sharecropper succeeded in acquiring the property. Here wine production continued to be oriented towards family consumption or towards a small-scale commerce in demijohns. Fermentation took place in small spaces rarely suited to the purpose, and the wines themselves were for immediate consumption and rarely lasted out the year. In contrast, there were a few large vineyards, part of the historic “estates” of the zone or an occasional wealthy landowner. These properties were administered directly by the owners, enjoyed a certain degree of mechanization, and had more rational fermenting facilities. But the wines themselves were rather similar, and were aimed, in addition to sale in demijohns, toward sale to large cooperative wineries. In the 1960's this type of viticulture had a further development thanks to the introduction of economic incentives. The new vineyards, planted with material from commercial vine nurseries, privileged the omnipresent Sangiovese and Trebbiano, with a notable loss of the genetic variability of the traditional vineyards and a notable reinforcement of the tendency to choose vines and rootstock with a capacity to produce very large quantities of grapes. At this point it is worth mentioning three firms which began bottling their own wine.

The della Gherardesca counts of the Castagneto estate, who bottled a white wine, a red wine, and an estimable Vin Santo under the “Castello di Donoratico” label, a production which gradually proved to be of limited profitability and ceased at the end of the 1970's; The Antinori marquises, with their Rosé of Bolgheri”, a production based on grapes from the vineyards of their “Belvedere” estate which has continued to this day with the rosé currently called “Scalabrone”, a Bolgheri DOC Rosato. The production was amply advertised from 1970 to the mid- 1980's: large billboards on the old Aurelia highway announced to drivers passing through that “ Bolgheri Rosé is produced here”. Marquis Mario Incisa della Rocchetta, who began to bottle and distribute his “Sassicaia” starting with the 1968 vintage. This wine represented the true innovative breakthrough for the wines of the Castagneto Carducci area.

The story of Sassicaia has its own particular history, in its initial phase one totally detached from the rest of Bolgheri and its wines. Sassicaia originated as a personal research effort on the part of Marquis Mario Incisa, who aimed, in a zone where only rough and rustic wines were produced, to recreate a style which resembled the wines of Bordeaux which he knew and loved. In 1944 he obtained cuttings of Cabernet from the Marquis Salviati family of Migliarino in the province of Pisa which he then planted at Castiglioncello, an area protected from the influence of the nearby sea. An influence which was blamed for the lack of success in the local wines previously produced at the site. Production techniques followed the French model as well, with a long aging in small oak barrels. The local populace, habituated to drinking the wines of the previous vintage as early as February, was totally unable to understand this wine.

Re-tasting the same wine after several years of barrel aging, it became immediately obvious that it had notably improved and that the project was approaching the goal which the count had set for himself. In the early 1960's, Mario Incisa decided to continue the project and planted the Sassicaia vineyard, this time not far from the sea, in the same spot in which Count Guido Alberto, between 1816 and 1822, had established several “plantations” (on the model of the modern vineyards – no longer of mixed cultivation - of today). Sassicaia remained a wine sole for family consumption and for a few intimate friend until the 1970's. Marquis Mario Incisa had married Clarice della Gherardesca, the sister of Carlotta della Gherardesca, the wife of Nicolò



Antinori. And it was the Antinori firm which accepted the proposal to market the Incisa della Rocchetta wines and introduced their head winemaker, Giacomo Tachis, who was to become one of the world's most famous oenologists, to Mario Incisa. In 1972 the Sassicaia of the 1968 vintage, with what was to become its definitive label, that which we know and recognize today, was born. In 1974 Mario Incisa requested an opinion on his wine from Luigi Veronelli, Italy's principal wine critic, and it was immediately love at first sight. Veronelli began to communicate to the Italian market his passion for the wine and, at the same time, the first triumphant international successes began to arrive. From the blind tasting of the English magazine "Decanter" (at the end of the 1970's), which saw Sassicaia rout an army of famed and well trained competitors to the success of the 1985 vintage, which placed first against the Médoc's finest of the same vintage, it was a series of victories and prizes, one after another, which made this wine an oenological legend in its own time.

In 1983 a first set of production rules for the appellation was approved in order to codify and protect the Bolgheri production zone. At the public hearing an assembly approved, though not without some doubts and hesitations, rather traditional rules which contained significant omissions and oversights. Sangiovese and Canaiolo were permitted for appellation wines, but only for the rosé category, as were Trebbiano and Vermentino for the white wines. The greatest error was the lack of approval of production rules for red wines, a category the appellation. And fermentation and bottling outside the zone were also permitted. The novelty of an official appellation and the additional luster which it brought proved to compensate for the technical limits of the appellation regulations. The fine red wines, instead, were forced to continue their course on the market as "Vini da Tavola", mere "table wines". In International markets the appearance of simple table wines high both in quality and in price was somewhat disconcerting for consumers, particularly Anglo-Saxons. For their mind set, it was impermissible for prestigious wines to lack the protection and control of an official appellation, and this came to be classified as a "typical Italian mess", and a special category of wines called "Super Tuscans" was unofficially created to gather together high level wines such as Sassicaia, Tignanello, Vigorello, and others, generally based on Cabernet and Merlot or, at times, international varieties blended with Sangiovese and aged in small oak barrels.

After the introduction of the Bolgheri appellation, between 1984 to 1994, therefore, two contrasting tendencies distinguished the wines produced in the township territory of Castagneto Carducci: white wines and rosé wines with an appellation name and protection and table wines known as "Super Tuscans".

Appellation wine production immediately stabilized an overall level of 200,000-300,000 bottles per year, produced by a small group of houses (variable over time (six to ten firms, with a fairly equal number of bottles, with the exception of the rosé wines, firmly in Antinori hands).

Despite this production, the territory of Castagneto Carducci and Bolgheri did not become known as an area with an important quality potential inasmuch as Sassicaia was perceived as a sort of generic "Tuscan" wine due to the way it was distributed, and the appellation wines, be they white wine or rosé, did not have a sufficiently significant personality to define the character and style of a terroir. Probably the only wine with a strong link to the territory was the "Scalabrone" of Antinori, a wine already called Rosé di Bolgheri (a name which the introduction of an official appellation no longer could be used on a label, as it had so successfully been in the past). The development of the red "table wines", instead, took a



different path: between 1978 and 1984 a small group of houses, having verified the perfect adaptability of French varieties to the territory, decided to begin producing wine, a fact which demonstrated a renewed interest in quality in the wake of the success of Sassicaia. These producers, with one exception, did not come from the local agricultural world but were outsiders to the zone, of different origin and with different professional experiences in their lives. Among the first was Piermario Meletti Cavallari, who moved to Castagneto Carducci from northern Italy in 1977 and founded Podere Grattamacco. His Grattamacco Rosso first saw the light in the 1982 vintage. Michele Satta was another “man of the north” who, having moved to the area as an estate manager, subsequently created his own small estate. The Belvedere property of Nicolò Antinori was divided between his two sons, with Lodovico Antinori's share becoming Ornellaia and Piero Antinori's, after an initial phase as the Belvedere estate, was renamed Guado al Tasso. The first wine to arrive on the market was the Ornellaia 1985, then S.Martino of the Cipriana estate, and only in the early 1990's the Paleo of Le Macchiole and the Guado al Tasso of Piero Antinori. These producers were strongly determined to create outstanding wines which would immediately win public favor. And accordingly the “Bolgheri” phenomenon began to take shape. The zone showed an important ability to make exceptional wines, above all those using French varieties, in addition to those based on the native Sangiovese and Vermentino. In this period it became substantially clear that the dichotomy which had been created between appellation category white and rosé wines and red “table wines” of outstanding level and international notoriety needed to be resolved.

The papers delivered during the “Mondovini” conferences in 1989 and 1990, which dealt with the rapport between grape variety and environment, and the talk delivered by Professor Mario Fregoni at the 1990 event, a discussion of the need to give a new status and significance to high quality table wines clearly, defined the terms of the problem and the solutions to be sought.

Fregoni set out, for the first time, a new concept (the quality pyramid) which would be embodied in the reformulation in law 164 of 1992 (the law – still currently in effect –governing Italy's controller wine appellations) of the previous appellation system and suggested a revision of the “Bolgheri” appellation aimed at bringing these red wines under the appellation aegis.

The idea of “zoning” as an instrument to better understand and define the viticultural potential of various sites where the vine is cultivated was also launched, with the objective of clarifying the rapport between the soil and micro-climate of the different areas of the production zone and the principal grape varieties cultivated in the appellation. Both of these ideas were taken into consideration by the producers and the township's governing authorities, who accepted the responsibility of coordinating initiatives aimed at bringing them into effective practice. The re-formulation of the appellation rules was somewhat complex and time-consuming: it was much discussed over a three year period and it was with the assistance and participation of Professor Fregoni during the preliminary phases that the definitive proposal was finally formulated. Based on the conviction that low yields per hectare brought out the character and personality of the terroir, the new production rules were quite elastic in terms of the percentages of the various grape varieties to be utilized and, instead, rigorous in defining the production parameters. Among these parameters were the number of vines per hectare and the quantity of grapes which could be produced both per hectare and per individual vine.

This proposal, rather innovative for its time, was a source of much discussion within the National committee which oversees Italy's wine appellations, discussions which concluded with



a positive verdict. The new and modified production rules took effect with the 1994 vintage which, following the concept of a quality pyramid in the production zone, permitted the production of:

Bolgheri Rosso (Bolgheri red wine).

Bolgheri Superiore (superior level Bolgheri red wine).

Bolgheri Sassicaia

(the last of these limited to vineyards on the land owned by the San Guido estate).

These three red wines and the rosé wine could originate from the following grapes:

Cabernet Sauvignon (with a minimum percentage of 10% to a maximum percentage of 80%).

Merlot e Sangiovese (optional), in varying percentages (from 0 to 70%).

The framework for white wine was a more traditional one, and the following types were approved:

Bolgheri Bianco (Bolgheri white), based on Vermentino with complementary percentages of Trebbiano and Sauvignon Blanc.

With this new appellation law a large part of the production of the zone now fell under the protective umbrella of the appellation regulations, on the whole without any particular problems. A certain number of experimental wines remained initially outside of the appellation framework, but over time they have demonstrated a constantly high level of overall quality and have been very well received on international markets. We are dealing with wines such as the Masseto of Ornellaia (100% Merlot), the Paleo (Cabernet Franc) and Messorio (Merlot) of Le Macchiole, which constituted examples of how a felicitous adaptation of certain grape varieties to special conditions of soil and micro-climate (the famous terroir of the French) could generate wines of exceptional personality. These pioneering wines were joined by others such as the Lienà Cabernet Sauvignon and the Lienà Cabernet Franc of Chiappini, the Dedicato a Walter Cabernet Franc of Poggio al Tesoro, the Tarabuso Cabernet Sauvignon and the Aldone Merlot of Terre del Marchesato. A recent modification of the appellation rules, accordingly, changed the percentages in the permitted blends to the following ones: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, or Cabernet Franc: 0-100%; Sangiovese: 0-50%; Syrah: 0-40%. The appellation white wine, Bolgheri Bianco, also saw a modification of the grape percentages of the blend which increased the importance of Vermentino by limiting the maximum percentages of Trebbiano and Sauvignon Blanc to 40%. At the end of the 1990's the extension of the Bolgheri vineyards had stabilized at a figure of some 625 acres (250 hectares). But from this moment on a new impetus came into play, a massive arrival of new investments on the part of viticultural entrepreneurs of real stature and substantial experience, determined to maintain the high level of quality and prestige of the wines of the zone gained by years of committed work on the part of their predecessors at Bolgheri. DOC vineyards now surpass 1,000 total hectares. Names of the caliber of Angelo Gaja (Ca' Marcanda), Girolamo Guicciardini Strozzi, Ambrogio and Giovanni Folonari (Campo al Mare), Allegrini and Lo Cascio (Poggio al Tesoro), Berlucchi (Caccia al Piano), Guido Folonari (Donna Olimpia), industrialists such as Knauf (Campo alla Sughera), and Antonio Moretti (Podere Orma) have initiated production in the zone. But local figures have also increased production: Zileri Dal Verme has begun to produce his own wine under the name



of Castello di Bolgheri, Guado al Tasso has planted new vineyards, with an important commitment to Vermentino as well, the Antinori have involved themselves in new initiatives such as Argentiera (with the Fratini family as partners) and I Pianali (a branch of the Biserno estate in nearby Bibbona), Tringali-Casanuova (Casa al Piano) and Rosa Gasser (Greppi Cupi) have perfected their house style, and new producers have demonstrated an ability to create wines of the same important quality level as the major names of the zone: Enrico Santini, Giovanni Chiappini, Casa di Terra, I Greppi, Sapaio, I Luoghi, Le Fornacelle, Terre del Marchesato, Aia Vecchia, Batzella, Campo al Noce, Le Grascete, Iris Ferrari, Luigi Serni Fulvio, Fittipaldi, and Mulini di Segalari. Future years will be dedicated to verifying and controlling the quality levels achieved by these new wines and producers, to modifying the appellation production rules and, possibly, over a longer period, creating a common style for the wines of Bolgheri, a style which will be defined only gradually and spontaneously thanks to the adaptation of the various grape varieties to that ensemble of factors which the French sum up with one word: terroir. What is certain is that the overall quality level of the territory of Bolgheri is regularly quite high thanks to a series of elements: a special micro-climate, a luminosity which derives from the reflection of light off the nearby sea, the composition of the soil, the work of man. In a phrase: the heritage of the happy insight of Maria Incisa della Rocchetta, who introduced new varieties and techniques to the zone, revolutionary and innovative ones for the Italy of the 1950's.