

Robb Report

SPRING FASHION ISSUE

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STYLE
SECTION

La Dolce Vita!

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE

Discover Italy's Genius for
Living the Good Life



Steve McQueen's
1963 Ferrari 250 GT
Berlinetta Lusso

The Undisputed Kings of Italian Coachbuilding

21 Picture-Perfect Villa Vacations | Restaurant-Hopping in

the Bay of Naples | Jewelry Fit for a Renaissance Queen

Crossing the Campagna in Ferrari's New 488 Spider

MARCH 2016

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R MARZO



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1963 FERRARI 250 GT BERLINETTA LUSO;
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT WILLIAMSON



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Spirit Reborn

NONINO'S LATEST RELEASE ELEVATES HUMBLE GRAPPA TO LIQUID ART.



◆
Nonino's refined Antica Cuvée Riserva is ideally matched with a CAO Italia Piazza (below).
◆



THE GRAPPA PRIZED among connoisseurs—powerful yet elegant, and alive with the essence of fine Nebbiolo or Moscato—has a brief history, as spirits go. Until the 1960s, grappa was simply the harsh, ultra-potent tippie of rustic Italy. Haphazardly distilled by locals into a high-octane potable from the pomace of wine grapes, this firewater served very little useful purpose beyond disposing of the solid remains left in wine presses.

Most grappa producers for generations distilled whatever pomace they could get their hands on, regardless of its quality, but in the late 1960s Giannola Nonino had an epiphany. She reasoned that, just as Italian winemakers improved the quality of their finished product by meticulously selecting the best grapes, she could refine grappa by using only fresh pomace from the best vineyards and, more importantly, the most coveted varieties. She and her husband, Benito—the fourth-generation owners of Nonino Distilleries—began developing unique methods of production while still adhering to the techniques created by Orazio Nonino in 1897, when he established the distillery in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of northeastern Italy.

The Noninos embraced innovation, aging their pot-distilled grappa in smaller barrels composed of various woods, including French, Italian, and Spanish oak—an unprecedented measure at the time. In 1973, Nonino became the first house to offer grappa distilled from a single varietal, the

delicately sweet Picolit grape, and by 1984 the label was making grappa from additional varieties—Merlot, Chardonnay, and Moscato—as well as from cherries, peaches, apricots, and other fruit, as they always had. Today Nonino's five distilleries—all of which are owned and operated by Giannola and Benito and their daughters Cristina, Antonella, and Elisabetta—offer a traditional unaged white grappa called *grappa bianca*, pale gold- or amber-hued wood-aged grappa known as *riserva*, and vintage grappa.

Nonino's newest release exemplifies the brand's inventive style. Antica Cuvée Riserva (\$129) is a blend made from Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Schioppettino pomaces whose component spirits are aged 3 to 20 years in European oak barrels and then married and aged together for a minimum of 3 years. Although 86 proof, this grappa remains smooth on the palate, evoking flavors of vanilla-soaked oak and candied raspberry before culminating in a lingering finish worthy of the finest eau-de-vie.

We suggest serving the Antica Cuvée Riserva slightly chilled in a narrow-lipped glass to concentrate its aromatic bouquet, and as a cigar accompaniment, we favor the CAO Italia Piazza (a 6 × 60 gordo, \$6.60) or Gondola (a 6¼ × 54 torpedo, \$7.80), either of which will make a more polished pairing than a rustic, dry-rolled Toscano. These cigars are hand rolled in Nicaragua, but they incorporate the toasted sweetness of filler tobacco from the Benevento province of Italy and make sophisticated complements to one of Nonino's finest grappas yet.

—RICHARD CARLETON HACKER

Nonino, terlatowines.com; *CAO Italia*, cigarworld.com