

Espansione

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Editor in Chief

A woman on the cover. “Finally” they commented in the editorial office after eleven front pages dedicated to successful men in their respective fields of activity. And what a woman, we add: Giannola Nonino, a Friulian entrepreneur, wife and mother, closely bound to the land from which she draws vital lymph for her activities. Grappa, thanks to the Noninos, is no longer a pocket-sized form of warming for the peasants of the north. It is a class product, the result of a lot of work and careful attention. And it smells of love, the love that Giannola Nonino and her family show towards their land that they know like their own pockets and they want to make known to the world. Also for this reason, in 1977, the literary prize was born with Mario Soldati as the president of the jury and which later had an international section.

Grappa with a scent of love

Giannola Nonino “I love my roots that have given life to our world”.

Stefano Cosma

*The **Family**. Together they are a great team*

The pressure of a still cannot equal Giannola Nonino's strength, which is not discontinuous like distillation, but an overwhelming source of energy for Friuli and for her large family. Welcoming and caring, as well as direct and non-conformist, she made her love for her husband Benito (59 years of marriage!) and for the mother earth the nourishment with which she raised her daughters and made the world of grappa grow. “The pandemic must make us return to mutual respect, must make us understand the importance of the rural civilization! We must safeguard the air, the man, and the earth to give our children and grandchildren a healthier planet - he says -, we must give value to the word love”. An appeal she addresses to everyone, which is not an improvised slogan, but the consistent continuation of what she has done in her life. We don't say her age, but several times she has proudly declared herself to be a “trentottina”, the interpretation of which we gracefully leave to the readers. Hers is a continuous struggle, like the one she lovingly makes with her husband “because it's nice to make peace in the evening, there is no winner except grappa and work”. As a good Friulian, work is in the foreground, ever since she was a little girl accompanying her father to deal with customers, educated to be a thinking person, to never give up, to have respect. “My sister and I had to have a degree and be self-sufficient, but I was also always ready to sneak out of the house while my parents were napping: that's how I met Benito, who didn't consider me and winning him over became a challenge”. He was reserved and she was so in love with him that she went to her father and told him “on his behalf I'm asking you for my hand in marriage”. Her only regret is that she didn't learn English. “Although I love my roots,

Friulian should be learned at home, not at school, where instead English must be taught to travel the world and German because Austrians love us.” Since the first months of marriage, Giannola's has been a first person commitment, challenging her mother-in-law's mistrust and asserting her skills.

Before the Noninos grappa was little more than a pocket form of heating for the farmers of Northern Italy.

Grappa is a female word, as pomace and quality and so also the new Nonino generation is female: the sisters Antonella, Elisabetta and Cristina, as well as the daughter of the latter, Francesca. The youngest takes care of the social media and tells how today customers are more and more prepared. She follows the USA and the Russian markets, she studied Economy, she is a sommelier and she has passion, devotion and commitment.

Francesca Bardelli Nonino uses small stories to approach the customers and create a digital affective tie “I don't make sponsoring, I'm interested in quality. I was surprised and moved to discover that there are people who have our brand tattooed”.

Her mother Cristina takes care of distillation, without forgetting the Italian market and marketing: “In the family each has his/her points of view and strategies which later we share to trace the guidelines.

Italy gives us great satisfactions, after decades of strictness and efforts we see the results: with the takeaway we have compensated the losses of the Horeca almost totally. In the GDO the traditional line works, where the customer acknowledges the qualitative excellence and the artisanal method, whereas the Monovitigni need to be presented”.

Antonella follows the communication, the Prize and the press office, she is multitasking too, like her sisters: for 15 years she took care of the stills and the aging in barriques.

“To communicate the Nonino revolution I have always travelled and for years I followed the Far East, lately Austria and Germany. The future is making grappa known to bartenders and making it appreciated by the younger public through the creativity of mixology”. A target she is pursuing through cocktail competitions, especially in London.

She is also responsible for the Borgo Nonino, with bedrooms and 7 aging cellars under seal and 2455 barriques.

Finally there is Elisabetta, the CEO of the company – 38 employees, with a turnover that in the latest years ranges between 13 and 14 million Euro – trained by her father, following the American and Canadian markets, who today is also responsible for the staff, she takes care of the insurance sector and of law adjustments.

Grappa turned into queen

It was summer 1962 when, for the first time, she went to conquer the most beautiful pomace in the suitable areas of Friuli, which her father had made her know since she was a child. It wasn't easy at first, many of the producers looked askance at a girl in a miniskirt who wanted to deal with them, but it was an exceptional school of life. “I even got my C (truck) driving license and during the lunch breaks of the employees I used to drive my “Leoncino” to pick up the pomace, taking with me bottles of grappa to give to those who helped me load it. Aware of the high quality of the product, when we were invited for dinner I started to bring it as a gift, but at the end of the meal we were served cognac and whisky: they kept grappa for the bricklayers”. It was not considered a distillate sufficiently refined and Giannola realized they had to transform it from

Cinderella into a Queen. But it took another ten years of trials. “We began our battle to revolutionize the quality of the product and its image. Against the custom that wanted the distillation of assembled pomace, we decided to select the skins of a single vine variety: the choice fell on the precious Picolit. Here began the problem: when I asked the vintners to separate the marc, they thought I was crazy. I devised a plan: I had to convince their wives, who were not economically independent but were becoming emancipated, to become my allies. In exchange for 2,500 lire per quintal, I offered them 2,500 lire per kg and the deal was made.

However, the communication of this innovative idea was missing and I turned to Luigi Veronelli who enthusiastically agreed to be present at the distillation saying “I am the one who must thank you for ennobling grappa”. On December 1, 1973 Benito realized the miracle, with a drop by drop artisanal distillation, he obtained the first Monovitigno® Picolit: in those drops I found the same scent of the vineyards from which the grape skins came. That day the revolution of Grappa began, as well as its redemption to conquer the world. On January 27, 2020, the Nonino Distillery since 1897 in Percoto (UD) became the first Italian and first spirit brand of grappa to be awarded in San Francisco by Wine Enthusiast as “Best in the World 2019”.

After creating grappa Monovitigno from Picolit pomace, Giannola and Benito discover that the most representative varieties of Friulian vine-growing were dying out, as their cultivation was not allowed. Schioppettino, Pignolo and Tazzelenghe. Ribolla Gialla, on the contrary, was allowed only in the Collio white blend. So in 1975 they establish the Nonino Prize – Risit d’Aur (gold vine shoot in the language of Friuli) with the aim of stimulating, awarding and having officially recognized the ancient autochthonous Friulian vine varieties”, preserving the biodiversity of the territory. In particular thanks to Professor Antonio Calò they succeed in their aim, but Giannola doesn’t stop: in 1977 she creates the Literary Prize, with Mario Soldati as the president of the jury, and since 1984 there will be also an International Section. “We have had many foreigners because in the statute we had decided not to award who had received an acknowledgement in the two previous years: so we anticipated the Nobel five times. Temerity and luck often helped me, as when I telephoned in Brazil to Jorge Amado, speaking Venetian, and to my surprise his wife answered me in dialect because she was the daughter of immigrants, and they came to Percoto”. In 2000 we had already programmed to promote it round the world, but the pandemic stopped this will, not the next edition: 29 January 2022.