



Noninos in New York



Giannola Nonino, BTP, and Elisabetta Nonino. (Photo: Gigi Eisler)

I've been very fortunate to have met and befriended many of key family members behind the family-owned and operated Nonino Distillatori, based in Percoto in the Friuli region of Italy, who are known around the world for their award-winning grappa and amaro. I first met Elisabetta Nonino more than a decade ago over lunch at Maialino and since then have visited the Noninos in Italy where I met her sisters Antonella and Cristina and her late father Benito, and I get to spend time with Elisabetta's niece Francesca (who represents the sixth generation of the family business) whenever she's here in NYC).

But in all these years, I had never met the Famiglia Nonino matriarch and "La Regina Della Grappa," Giannola Nonino. That was until this past month when they invited me to dinner during their brief time in New York. I was embarrassed that my excuse to bow out of dinner plans was due it conflicting with a Mariners playoff game (I think she understood), but we were instead

able to meet up for caffè (along with their charming New York-based relative Gigi Eisler) on a Thursday afternoon at the West Village outpost of Sant Ambroeus. As is the case when there are Noninos in an Italian restaurant, we were treated like royalty and soon our table was filled with macchiatos along with L'Aperitivo Nonino Spritzes, a Paper Plane for Giannola (their next stop after leaving me was to visit Attaboy), cornetti filled with marmalata and Nutella, along with three

scoops of gelato with a glass of grappa to pour over, per Giannola's demonstration. And I somehow was sent home with a giant bag containing my first wrapped-like-a-Christmas-present panettone of the season.

Giannola lived up to all my expectations and everything I had heard and read about her. She was lively, innovative, incredibly stylish, highly opinionated, and family focused. She was also kind enough to ask me to thank photographer Ed Anderson for his striking portrait of her husband Benito from our visit to Percoto in 2015. I truly regret that I had to leave such a wonderful group of talented women to watch a baseball game, but I know that I have a standing invitation to visit them in Friuli, which I hope to do sooner rather than later.



Elisabetta Nonino and Giannola Nonino. (Photo: BTP)