

# LEGACY OF 'THE SPIDER AMONG THE BARRELS'

BY HOPE GAINER



**Giovanni Allegrini's influential art of  
winemaking in the Fumane region of Italy**

**Photo above: Giovanni Allegrini, wine brand founder  
and "The Spider Among The Barrels"**

In the 'valley of many cellars', the Valpolicella is nestled in the Fumane region of Italy, known locally for its winemaking since the 16th century. Generations later, in the 20th century, Giovanni Allegrini elevated the region's esoteric winemaking legacy to what would become a global entity thanks in part to his innovative agricultural instincts.

Allegrini's novelties included using *barrique* sized oak barrels besides the customary Slavonian oak barrels; he lessened the aging duration of his wine productions to retain the fruity aromatic flavor of his very favorite grape – the Corovina; and he developed new drying methods that conceptualized what he called the 'Terre di Fumane.'

An unusual and enthusiastic wine innovator, Giovanni Allegrini earned the nickname, "The Spider Among the Barrels," because he'd jump from barrel to barrel in enthusiasm when presenting wine tastings to guests.

### THE ALLEGRINI DYNASTY

Building the Allegrini wine dynasty did not happen overnight. In 1983, when Giovanni passed away unexpectedly at the age of 63, sixth-generation siblings Marilisa Allegrini and her brothers Franco and Walter (now deceased), spearheaded the family wine brand's expansion efforts.

At that time, they were a modest producer of about 8,500 cases per year, consisting of lighter Valpolicella Classico and the stronger Amarone made from raisined grapes from the Veneto region.

Today, the Allegrini family produces 350,000 cases annually (worth \$36 million) of a more diversified mix of wines. 20 percent of their sales occur in the United States. "Reaching the U.S. market was our biggest dream, but we also expanded to Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom – and now Asia," explained Marilisa, who serves as CEO. "We practice sustainable viticulture and have organic certification. We want to minimize impact on the environment, both physically and aesthetically. Our land is our greatest asset. What we do today impacts what we leave for our children tomorrow." The Allegrini's are preparing to pass



[[l-r]: Caterina, Francesco, Franco, Silvia and Marilisa Allegrini

the torch to the seventh generation: Marilisa's daughter Caterina, Walter's daughter Silvia and Franco's son Francesco.

### ATTENTION TO EXCELLENCE

The Allegrini focus has been on quality. Between their three estates (one in Veneto and two in Tuscany), they have released more than 60 wines rated 90 points or higher by *Wine Spectator*. They started in Veneto and expanded to Tuscany, adding Poggio al Tesoro in Bolgheri and Poggio San Polo in Montalcino, thus opening new doors for their children to make their mark.

Marilisa has personally made it her mission to take their superior *Amarone* wine on the road and also enhance the image of their Valpolicella wine. Last year she was the only vintner appointed to the board of SACE, the export bank, showing the importance of wine to Italy's economic recovery.

### ACQUIRING THE RENAISSANCE MASTERPIECE: VILLA DELLA TORRE

Always up for the next challenge, Marilisa and Franco bought Villa della Torre, a 16<sup>th</sup> century estate surrounded by the Palazzo della





Villa della Torre

Torre estate vineyard, which their father had managed near the family's Fumane hometown. Nobleman Giulio della Torre commissioned the Italian Renaissance villa to be built by architects Giulio Romano and Michele Sanmicheli, with works by artist Giovanni Battista Scultori.

"I used to play in the villa and dreamed that one day it would belong to my family," said Marilisa. "Now our dream has come true. I am passionate about art, creative expression and beauty. I think these things are essential in the world of wine; wine and art are natural partners."

Since the Italian government cannot take care of restoring all derelict properties in the country, Marilisa feels it's the responsibility of entrepreneurs to play their part in preserving Italy's artistic legacy. Renovating Villa della Torre into Allegrini's hospitality headquarters became her pet project. She personally directed the interior design and furnishings, as well as the seamless and thoughtful integration of new technology to preserve the villa's ancient history.

In 2016, Villa della Torre opened as a five-star boutique hotel, with 10 luxury guest rooms available. The Allegrini family celebrated with a series of special guest dinners, including one to host Italy's Prime Minister, the U.S. Ambassador, Alibaba Founder Jack Ma and superstar singer Sting. Vinitaly, the largest wine exhibition in the world, each April brings over 20,000 people to the region and VIP events are often held at Villa della Torre. Wine tastings and cooking classes are offered at the villa, as well as weddings, honeymoons and special events like hot air ballooning and art exhibitions.

What does the family hope will motivate the next generation of Allegrinis? "Love and a strong sense of duty," Marilisa said proudly. ●

To learn more about Allegrini wines and Villa della Torre, visit [website.allegrini.it/en](http://website.allegrini.it/en).



Dawn at Allegrini



## LA GROLA 2010 LIMITED EDITION

Celebrating 30 years of production, La Grola wine by Allegrini was released in 1983 and marked the cultural and oenological revival of the Valpolicella. On the occasion of this anniversary, the Company decided to commission Milo Manara, one of Italy's best-loved Comic-Strip artists, to interpret La Grola and the local legends that surround it. According to the ancient legend, it was on this amazing hill that Corvina Grapes borned, thanks to the miraculous intervention of a crow ("Grola" in Veronese dialect) that made the fortune of that vineyard.