

# Wine Spectator

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## Italy's Next Generation

12 GREAT ESTATES PASS THE TORCH FOR THE FUTURE

GAJA • FONTODI • MASCIARELLI • ELENA WALCH • AND MORE



**BAROLO BOUNTY:  
99-POINT VINTAGE  
IN PIEDMONT**

**CALIFORNIA  
SAUVIGNON BLANC**

**HOMEMADE  
CHARCUTERIE**

From left: Bernardo Manetti,  
Julia Walch, Karoline Walch,  
Miriam Lee Masciarelli  
and Giovanni Gaja

*“Wine symbolizes joy and togetherness and creates memories. We have the knowledge of previous generations, but are open to change. Gen Z wants something sustainable and in tune with nature. They want wine, they just don’t know it yet.”—GIOVANNI GAJA*



32 Young leaders in Italian wine

## COVER STORY

**32 Italy: The Young and the Restless** At renowned family-run estates across Italy, daughters and sons from a new generation have assumed leadership roles and are making palpable, positive impact. Some focus on the business side, delivering sales and marketing savvy in a changing industry. Others are assessing and fine-tuning the vineyards and cellars for best practices and sustainable wine quality for the coming decades. In all their various roles, these young men and women are bringing 21st-century eyes to their wineries with the goal of continued longevity front of mind • *Bruce Sanderson and Alison Napjus*

## Features

### TASTING REPORT

**54 Piedmont’s New Benchmark** The classic-scoring 2021 vintage for Piedmont delivers an exceptional crop of Barolos, including the highest ratings on record for a number of the region’s leading estates • *Bruce Sanderson*

### WINE

**68 Dorsey: A New Brand From Old Vines** Star Napa winemaker Thomas Rivers Brown has struck vineyard gold, securing fruit for his debut Dorsey Wines project from Detert Family parcels in To Kalon • *James Molesworth*



Scions of Italian wine (clockwise from top left): Giovanni Gaja, Bernardo Manetti, Julia Walch, Karoline Walch, Miriam Lee Masciarelli

PHOTOGRAPH BY LORENZO COTROZZI  
LOCATION PROVIDED BY PALAZZO PORTINARI SALVIATI  
AND SALOTTO PORTINARI BISTROT DI VITO MOLLICA  
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY FRANCESCA FATTORI

# ITALY'S NEXT GENERATION

TWELVE WINE FAMILIES PROVING THE  
COUNTRY'S GREAT ESTATES ARE IN GOOD  
HANDS FOR THE FUTURE

**G**enerational succession is important in the wine industry. It keeps control of estates and vineyards in the hands of family members, who tend to be motivated by passion rather than by spreadsheets. Though it doesn't always guarantee the future, it represents a culture and determination to uphold the past while looking ahead.

Italy has a long history of multigenerational wineries. The Antinoris, Frescobaldis and Mazzeis are contemporary examples of families who have adapted and innovated on tradition to produce wine over centuries of cultural, political and economic change.

In this story, we profile a dozen Italian producers whose new generation is making a difference in the family business—a small representation of the many young people making important contributions to the legacy of their ancestors in wineries around the country.

Some stepped in after the death of a parent; others are working side by side with parents, many alongside siblings.

But despite differences in their background experiences,

the generation that will steer the industry over the coming decades reported some common themes. The need for communication to younger wine consumers is a primary concern. For them, that means less emphasis on technical information and more on stories about the people behind the wines and the uniqueness of the places where they are grown.

In addition, they understand climate change and are following paths that are environmentally sound for their *terroirs*. They acknowledge the values of younger wine drinkers by working in more sustainable ways and explaining how enjoying wine in moderation can be part of a healthy lifestyle. The concept of their heritage is palpable, but they are also open to change, to experimentation, to keeping their wineries relevant over time.

In the following pages you will meet 20 dedicated young women and men. Their impacts span viticulture to wine-making to engagement with fledgling wine lovers around the world. Continued quality drives their present-day efforts, while passing the legacy of the family business to their own sons and daughters informs their futures.

BY BRUCE SANDERSON AND ALISON NAPJUS

# MASCIARELLI

## MIRIAM LEE MASCIARELLI: SEEING OPPORTUNITY IN AN EVOLVING WINE WORLD

**M**iriam Lee Masciarelli was just 18 years old the first time she officially represented the family winery. Her father, winery founder Gianni Masciarelli, had died just three weeks earlier. “Dad was supposed to do a tasting with 120 people in Connecticut,” Miriam, now 39, recalls. Despite the family loss, the business demanded a Masciarelli presence, and so, she went.

Over the past two decades, Miriam’s commitment to the winery reflects that early experience. “I grew up in the cellar. My dad [started] making wine at home. Villa Gemma was the first winery,” she says, referring to the wines produced at the original estate, which have become the winery’s flagship labels. “And when he introduced me to the winery, he always said you have to be able to do everything. Logistics, cellar, production, in the vineyards.”

She studied economics and business in Rome, but her father’s untimely death meant she went back and forth between classes in Rome and work at the winery, about three hours away in Abruzzo. After graduating, she gained outside experience, working in wine sales and wine- and food-focused PR in New York before returning to Abruzzo.

“Now, mostly, I’m in charge of trade, communications and marketing,” says Miriam, but thinking of her early years in the winery, she adds, “but a part of production also, always.” And Miriam shows both her father’s pioneering spirit and natural curiosity as she considers new techniques or changes for the future. “Right now, I’m studying a lot about glass. My personal project is all about [understanding] the most neutral container: glass,” she says, adding, “It’s not that we keep doing something just because this is how it was before.”

While most winery owners quickly cite challenges ahead, Miriam instead sees opportunities. “In the 1980s, my father would travel and people would say, ‘Where is Abruzzo?’ Abruzzo is very popular in Italy, but [still today] not so well-known outside of Italy. It’s a treasure to be discovered.”

And Miriam uses her background in economics as a lens for the future. “Everybody talks about sustainability of nature. But nobody talks about sustainability of growth. We can’t always grow and grow, and produce and produce. The economic curve is a U. I think 2027 will be a great year.”

Masciarelli’s business has a solid bread-and-butter line of high-volume wines that offer good value and introductory expressions of the region’s wines. But in the 1990s, Miriam’s father was a pioneer who saw the potential in high quality bottlings from Abruzzo, capable of aging, from estate fruit and produced in more limited volume. The momentum has been slow in Abruzzo, but today many area producers are following suit while moving the region’s wines to a more modern palate stylistically.

“I see a bright future [for Abruzzo wine]. The wines now are

more elegant, the style has changed a little bit—not so rustic anymore. Many producers are thinking of quality and not quantity. And I think it’s a very unique region, with the mountains and sea close together, lots of hills, lots of medieval history [and heritage].”

Miriam’s younger brother, Riccardo, 18, is still in high school, and her sister, Chiara, 25, recently joined the winery as brand manager. But when she thinks about the long-term future and what she might leave behind, Miriam says, “I would like for my children to have the same admiration for me that I have for my parents.”

Her adult life has been shaped by a close working relationship with her mother, Marina Cvetic Masciarelli, who stepped in after her husband’s death and who with her young daughter not only kept the winery afloat but helped it thrive. “Like me, my mother is a very strong personality. Sometimes, as two different generations, we have a different point of view. But at the end of the day, I respect her, in the job and as a woman. She trusts me.”

And Gianni has been a lifelong inspiration. “Sometimes, if I have a period of doubt, I read interviews [of] my father from 20 years ago. [He comes across as so] very innovative in these interviews—they seem like it was a conversation [that happened] just three days ago.”

—A.N.



Marina Cvetic Masciarelli and Miriam Lee Masciarelli

COURTESY OF MASCIARELLI