

Bartales

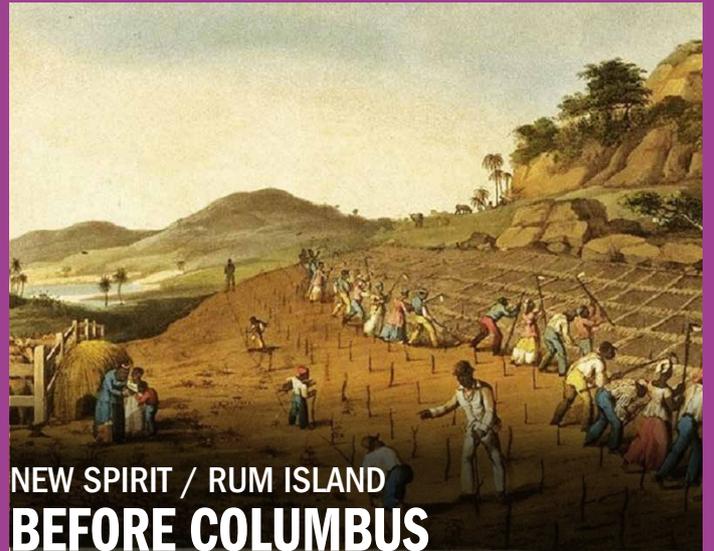
Best of

N. 34 | OCTOBER 2021

SUPPLEMENT OF BARTALES



FACE TO FACE / PERFUMES & POT STILLS
REBELLIOUS SPIRIT



NEW SPIRIT / RUM ISLAND
BEFORE COLUMBUS



HOT SPIRIT / TYPICAL SPIRITS
THE ELEGANCE OF MANDARINS



NEW SPIRIT / AGALIA
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REPORT / VERMOUTH DI TORINO
THIRTY YEARS OF QUALITY



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SUGAR RULES

Don't be fooled by clichés. Don't let yourself be beguiled by easy associations: sea and sun, palm trees and sugar. The mind works by association, fooling us more often than we think. Rum, velvet beaches, pirates and the Caribbean... it's not always like that. Or rather, the history of sugar cane is long and more intricate, an exciting story that from the Pacific laps the Mediterranean to take root in the heart of Sicily. And the result? Six hundred years before sugar cane made its way across the ocean, "cannamela", a.k.a. sugar cane, arrived at the court of Frederick II of Swabia, following the Arabs who used it instead of honey. In this edition, you'll read about an unusual "white spirit", the rum of Sicily, of Avola to be exact, which was also referred to by Tomasi di Lampedusa in his masterpiece, "Il Gattopardo" (The Leopard). A spirit that disappeared, so why are we covering it? Because right now a major innovation is taking shape in the Italian spirit industry: the relaunch of Avola rum, the Sicilian distillate made from pure sugar cane juice, that makes use of 200-year-old farming and processing techniques, thanks to Corrado Bellia, the former director of Avola's Almond Consortium. This comes at just the right time, with the introduction of new European legislation that regulates the characteristics of rum in clear and precise terms. A revolution? It would seem so.

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DRINK RESPONSIBLY



That girls can do anything, as her t-shirt states, is more than just a wish or a principle – it is a clear affirmation that leaves no doubt. You sense this by looking at Monique ten Kortenaar, and understand it by listening to the story of her extraordinary, adventurous and energetic life.

Dutch, master distiller of Luca Bols, the oldest European liqueur company, Monique or Mo as her fans call her, with

a powerful physique and rare determination, shows me her spirit called “Otenba”, a gin (independent and produced by crowd funding) that has just been released in Italy.

As we look out from one of the most beautiful terraces in Rome and gaze at the majestic grandeur of the Gardens of Lucullus, I look at the essential and cool bottle of this gin, which is halfway between a gin and a genever (gin’s ances-

REBELLIOUS SPIRIT

Monique ten Kortenaar
and her passion for gin
From chemistry to distillation

BY MELANIA GUIDA

tor). In fact, it is both – gentle and lovable like a genever, determined like a gin.

“Otenba”, nomen omen. In Japanese it means “indomitable”, “rebellious”. In fact, that is what they call undisciplined girls. An adjective used to draw attention to breaking of the rules. “It was born as a tribute to my grandfather Jacob, a perfumer, who did a lot of business in Japan,” explains Mo, “and to whom I owe a lot. My passion for perfumes, for example.

It all started there, with those countless bottles lined up along the cabinet that I admired as a child. That was how my interest in essences, botanicals, mixes and blends was born. I chose “otenba” also because it’s a word that describes me very well. Just like my gin, I am also a bit of a rebel.”

Then came her studies, a degree in food chemistry and hard work at the distillery. I sip the “Otenba” experiment with



curiosity: lemon grass, pandan (the plant that in southeast Asia is used to flavour rice), and sencha tea. Lovable and gentle, smooth. Perfect, I would imagine, with a neutral tonic and orange peel.

What is it like being a woman in a male-dominated world? “Well, initially no one talked to me. They would always turn to a man who, perhaps having less expertise, referred them to me. Of course, in a distillery there is also physical work, but that never scared me. I’m strong enough. Professionally it was not an easy journey. But training and skill are appreciated. Now those in the industry acknowledge that I am an authority.”

How do you think bartending will evolve post the pandemic? “The situation is really tricky. Many people, professionals, have left or are about to leave their companies. They change career and it’s



Shaking perspectives



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difficult finding qualified people. It won't be easy."

Describe a typical day for you at the distillery? "Initially I did everything. From selecting the botanicals to all the technical aspects of the job. Now, since the previous master distiller left, I focus on blends, training the guys who, even now that I am in Rome, are constantly phoning me. Then I also take care of management and admin." And between all this, you still find the time to be a mum (three children) and sing (she is the vocalist of a rock band in Amsterdam)? "Yes, of course," she laughs. "We were due to do a show in Iceland, but they suddenly closed all borders... It's a shame. I'll settle for family holidays with my children;

family is very important to me."

If you had not created a gin, what would you have enjoyed developing? "A whisky. I love the Scottish spirit. Peated whiskies, especially. Similar to Laphroaig or Lagavulin, if you know what I mean."

What are your thoughts on the Italian spirit industry? "Italy is synonymous with hospitality. Italian bartending really is a guarantee of professionalism. I know many Italian barmen here in Rome – Patrick (Pistolesi), Mario (Farulla), Matteo (Ciamicali, hired by Monique's distillery as a junior distiller) and I cannot but appreciate their professionalism. And the spirit industry is aligned with Italian excellence. What can I say? You're all really special."

Melania Guida

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BEFORE COLUMBUS

A Mediterranean spirit, Sicily's white gold, the ancient treasure of Avola
Forgotten and, just recently, relaunched

BY GIULIA ARSELLI

When we think of rum, we immediately think of the Caribbean, pirate raids, the atmosphere surrounding unknown islands that may hide legendary treasures and the sugar cane that Christopher Columbus introduced across the seas during his second voyage. But the history of sugar cane dates back long before that, with a journey that started

in the seas of the South Pacific and that also made a stop in Europe.

This story brings us to the largest island in the Mediterranean – Sicily. Here “cannamela”, a dialect term for sugar cane, arrived with the Arabs, who in 800 AD started farming it to produce sugar as a substitute for honey. This took place 600 years before sugar cane arrived in the Caribbean. That sugar was to be-



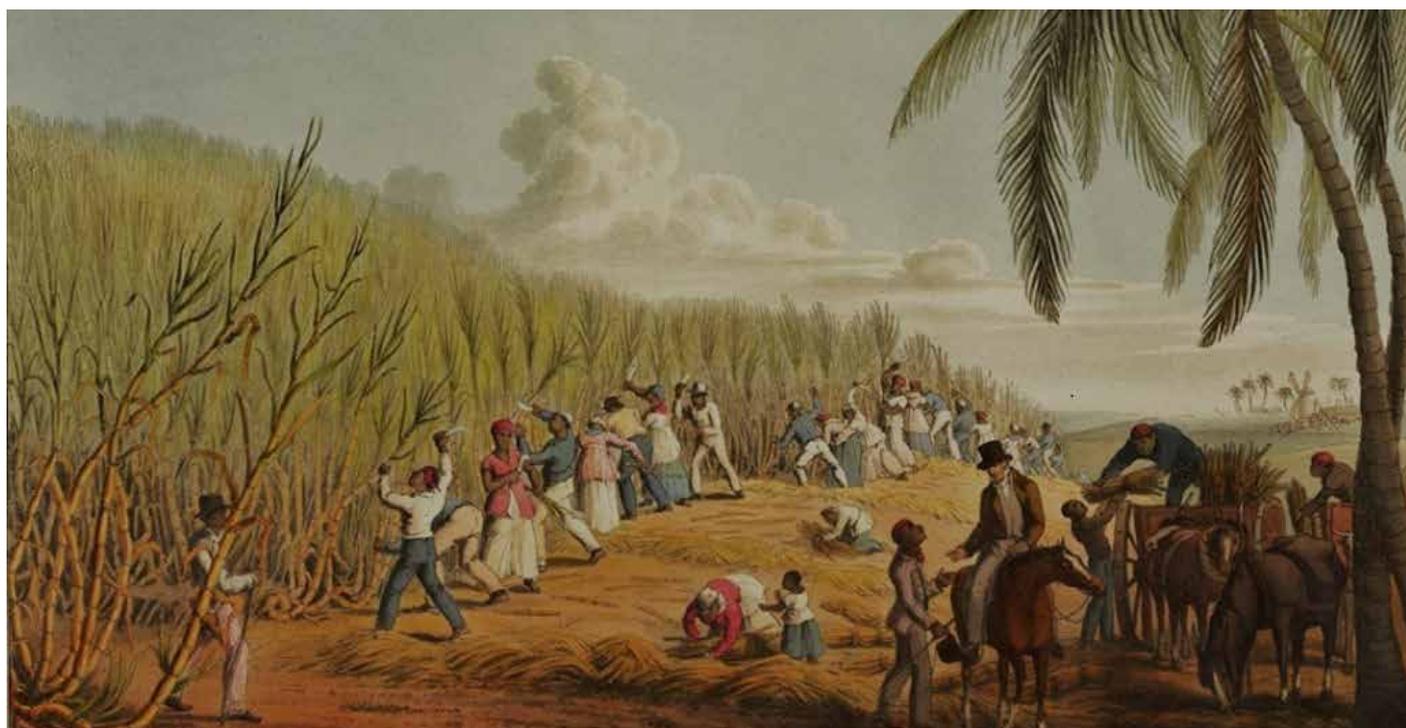


ART AND HISTORY
 ON THESE PAGES, A FEW PAINTINGS SHOWING THE HARVESTING OF SUGAR CANE.

come the white gold of Sicily. Frederick II of Swabia greatly increased production and the province of Palermo became one of the main centres for extracting cane sugar.

Production decreased exponentially during the 1600s, probably due to the changing climate and scarce water supply. As we know, the plant requires large quantities of water.

Between the second half of the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s, production was concentrated around Avola, specifically in the fiefdom of the Pignatelli Aragona Cortes Marquises, who continued to produce sugar and, as documented, also a rum, which they sold at a high price. Accounts of the presence and processing of sugar cane in Avola date back to before and after the earthquake





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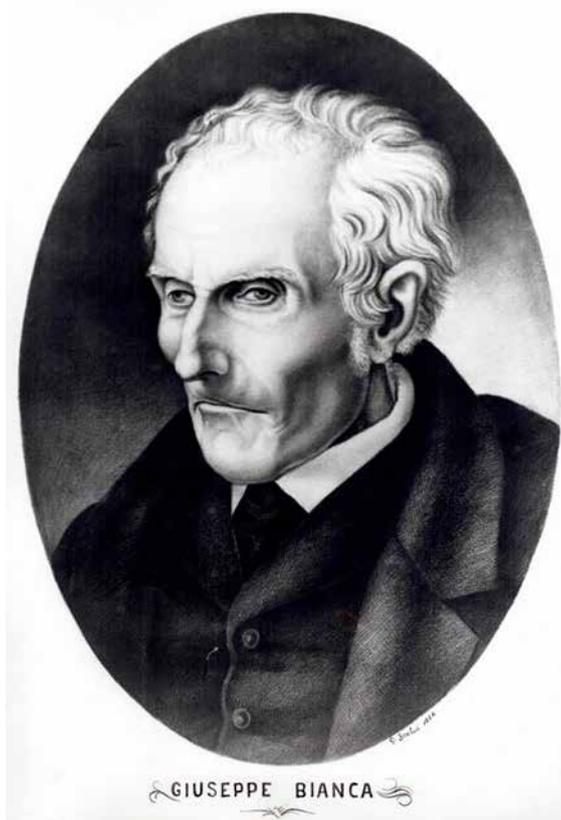
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of 1693, destroying the ancient city that was later rebuilt. The accounts of the time, between 1700 and 1800, speak of voyagers, such as French painter Jean-Pierre Houël.

However, it was botanist Giuseppe Bianca who provided a detailed description of the presence of sugar cane in his work “Monografia agraria del territorio di Avola” (Agricultural monograph of the territory of Avola) in 1878.

This book talks about the production of Sicilian rum according to the techniques of the time. “Rum jelly was served following a meal. This was Don Fabrizio's favourite dessert, and the Princess took great care to order it early in the morning.” In his masterpiece, “Il Gattopardo” (The Leopard), Tomasi di Lampedusa did not forget to mention the spirit, which

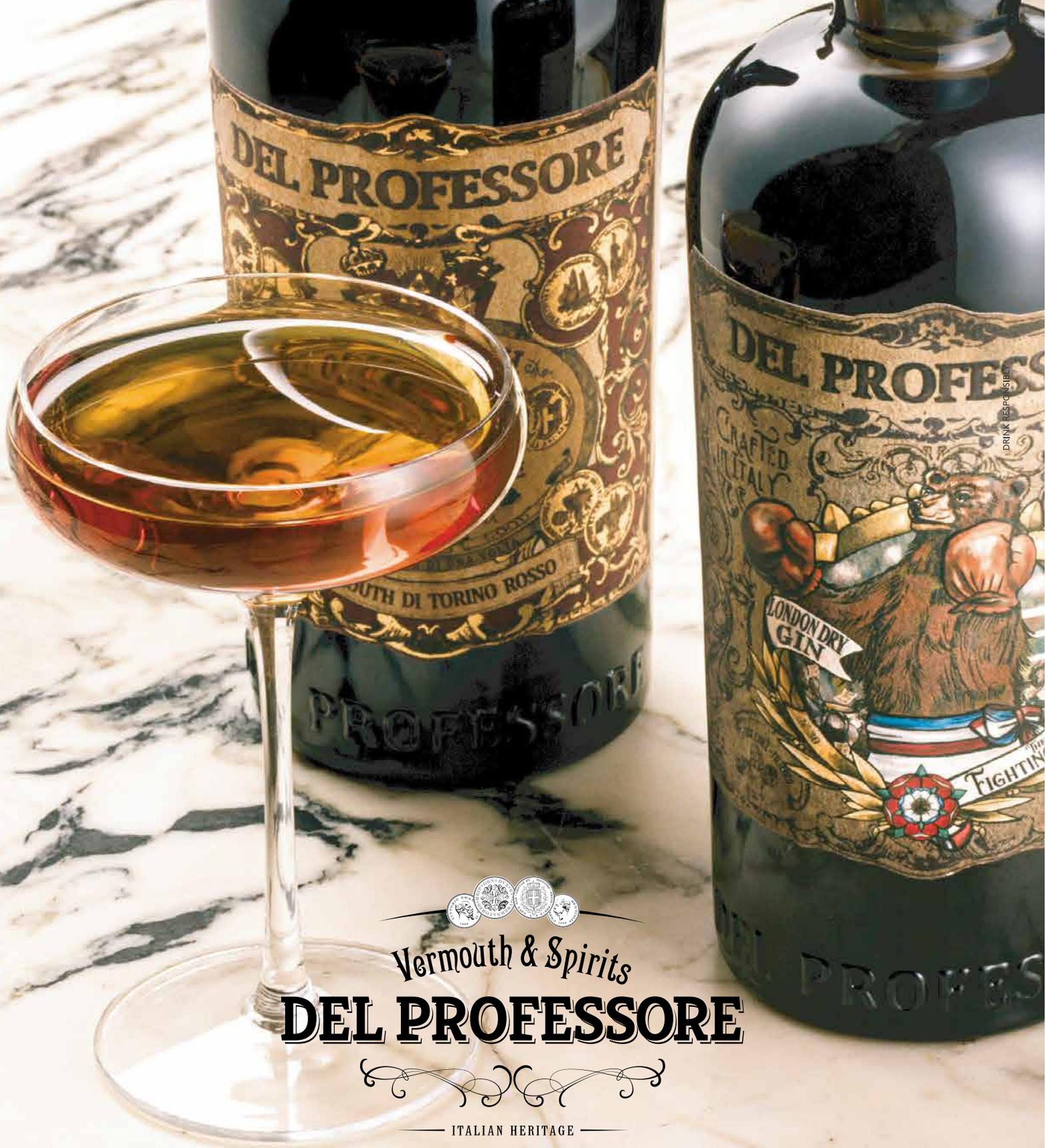




was already well distinguished for its use in pastries, an art that Sicilians have mastered.

This year, the Italian spirit industry is seeing a major innovation. Avola Rum, the Sicilian distillate made from pure sugar cane juice, has been “re”launched in Avola. This exciting project is the work of local entrepreneur, Corrado Bellia, already director of Avola’s Almond Consortium.

The revival of this old type of production was made possible thanks to the aforementioned work of Giuseppe Bianca and the growing and processing techniques of the plants described in it 200 years ago. Trusting in the hot summers and mild winters of Sicily, Corrado Bellia, known among his friends as “Ron Carrau”, planted what is currently possibly



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— ITALIAN HERITAGE —

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ITALIAN HERITAGE

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the only sugar cane plantation in Italy.

The process is well-known. The leaves are removed from the cane, which is then squeezed to obtain its juice. What remains, the bagasse, is recovered for production of biomass and fertilisers. Fermentation of the juice can take from 4 to 10 days. This is followed by bain-marie discontinuous distillation. This delicate operation shows off the skill of distiller Giovanni Fauci of the Distilleria Giovi, which has been running for 40 years and is located close to Messina. After resting, the distillate is bottled at 52% ABV. Just recently brought to market, this rum is produced in small batches: transparent in colour, complex flavour, smooth and full aromas with floral and fruity hints

that cannot but intrigue agricultural rum enthusiasts.

The project has been brewing for some time in the heart and mind of Corrado Bellia. Pride and resourcefulness have allowed him to bring back to life a territorial excellence that is added to local almonds and the esteemed Nero d'Avola wine.

“The first batch will produce 200 bottles and farming more hectares of sugar cane will allow us to reach 1,000 bottles by Christmas,” said Bellia, who is convinced that “this distillate will not fail to intrigue those who are won over by niche products that express the terroir of their origin.”

Giulia Arsellì

THE ELEGANCE OF MANDARINS

The secret formula of Napoleon's liqueur and recipes from the best Italian tradition

BY ALESSANDRO PALANCA

Mandarin liqueurs bring a flavour to mixology that is otherwise difficult to substitute. The balance between sweet and sour, a moderate alcohol content, a texture that is sometimes silky, almost creamy, and the taste of citrus, often en-

riched by hints of spiciness that bring complexity to the aromatic structure, are the strengths of this liqueur which is a part of the popular tradition in Italy.

Like many other typical liqueurs, still today mandarin liqueur appears in many Italian homes following a meal. It is





served cold and often produced according to recipes that families pass down from generation to generation.

Italy boasts many respectable examples of the product, but our French “cousins” boast a brand that has created a revered place for itself on the world stage: Mandarine Napoléon. The origins of this liqueur date back to 1892 and to Frenchman Antoine-François de Fourcroy (Paris, 15 June 1755 – Paris, 16 December 1809), a physician and chemist who was later nominated as a member of the “Comité de Instruction Public”, the “Comité de Salut Public” and director general of education during the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. Accredited by some as Napoleon’s personal physician, legend has it that Antoine-François de Fourcroy created a liqueur from mandarins that were macerated in cognac, and which was thoroughly enjoyed by Napoleon. At the time, citrus fruits were rare and exotic, and many people did not have the opportunity to taste them. In Napoleon’s

day, mandarins only grew in limited areas of southern Europe such as in Corsica (Napoleon’s homeland), Sicily and Andalusia, where they had been brought from China via Tangier in Morocco.

In 1892 the recipe of this liqueur was discovered by Belgian chemist Louis Schmidt, who reworked it to create a liqueur of his own called Mandarine Napoléon. This recipe has reached us today and is still jealously and secretly guarded by the De Kuyper Distilleries which bought the brand in 2008.

An ethereal or essential oil is a concentrated liquid containing volatile aromatic compounds from plants. An oil is “essential” in the sense that it carries a certain aroma, or essence, of the plant. The dried peels and oils of the mandarin are placed in strong alcohol to extract the essential oils, aromas and the key elements making up the flavour. This is known as maceration.

Only mandarins from Sicily and Corsica are used in making Mandarine Na-

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poléon, to which a mix of spices is added made up of Chinese green tea and black tea from Sri Lanka, angelica from Belgium, cloves from India, nutmeg from Indonesia and cinnamon from Sri Lanka. The mandarin peels are dried and then infused in alcohol. The liquid mixture is distilled in Arnold Holstein copper stills from which an 88% spirit is obtained, which is then aged for two years. Aged cognac, sugar and water are added to round off the liqueur that is bottled at 38% ABV. The characteristic amber colour of Mandarine Napoléon is obtained thanks to a natural colourant extracted from cochineal.

In Italy there are some very good brands of this enjoyable liqueur. Founded in 1868 thanks to the herbal experience of Girolamo Varnelli, the Varnelli Distillery of Pievebovigliana is the oldest

liqueur producer in the Marche region. Through four generations of herbalists and with meticulous professionalism, it has retained the old artisanal production methods and kept its recipes secret to ensure the product's high-quality standards. Production takes place in Muccia (Macerata), in an elegant building designed in harmony with the surrounding countryside. Faithful to the company's original approach, modern systems combine with traditional production methods.

Mandarins are Chinese in origin, but Calabria and Sicily have always been regions that were suited to farming this fragrant citrus fruit. Since the Aragonese domination, farmers' wives in Sicily made citrus liqueurs and marmalades according to recipes passed down from mother to daughter, using those familiar practices that require skill and patience. Obtained



es. Its alcohol content and fragrant aroma take over the senses from the first sip. It is pleasant on appearance, to the nose and on the palate, and should be enjoyed neat on the rocks or in the characteristic dark chocolate shot cup.

Camomile in colour with intense and bright golden nuances, on the nose Mandarino Varnelli presents intense and persistent citrus scents, with mandarin breaking through. Fresh and slightly creamy, delicate flavours of white spices, vanilla and flowers emerge. It is very balanced and persistent on the palate and in perfect harmony with the nose. It starts off with an initial note of mandarin and citrus and then moves towards a complex balance of spices: white pepper, cinnamon, curry and vanilla.

In 2019, Giardini d'Amore – a Sicilian brand of top range artisanal liqueurs – introduced “Femmes” (22%), a liqueur made from a single, prized ingredient: the mandarin, the sweetest of citrus fruits. Focus on quality, artisanal ability, exclusivity and refined raw materials are the key to the “Femmes” project.

VARNELLI
TOP LEFT, THE
VARNELLI
PREMISES IN
MUCCIA.
RIGHT, A
FAMILY
PORTRAIT.

from fine essential oils of sweet Italian mandarins extracted from the peel using a traditional method, Mandarino Varnelli (32% ABV) combines the enjoyable flavours of citrus and those of selected spic-

150 VARNELLI

1868-2018



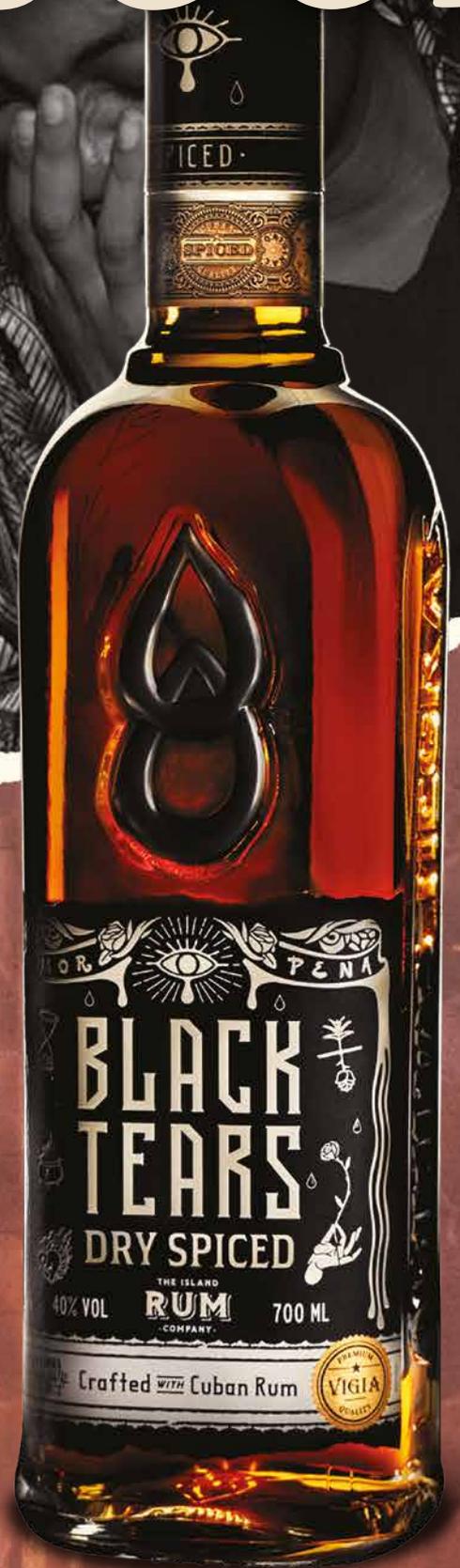
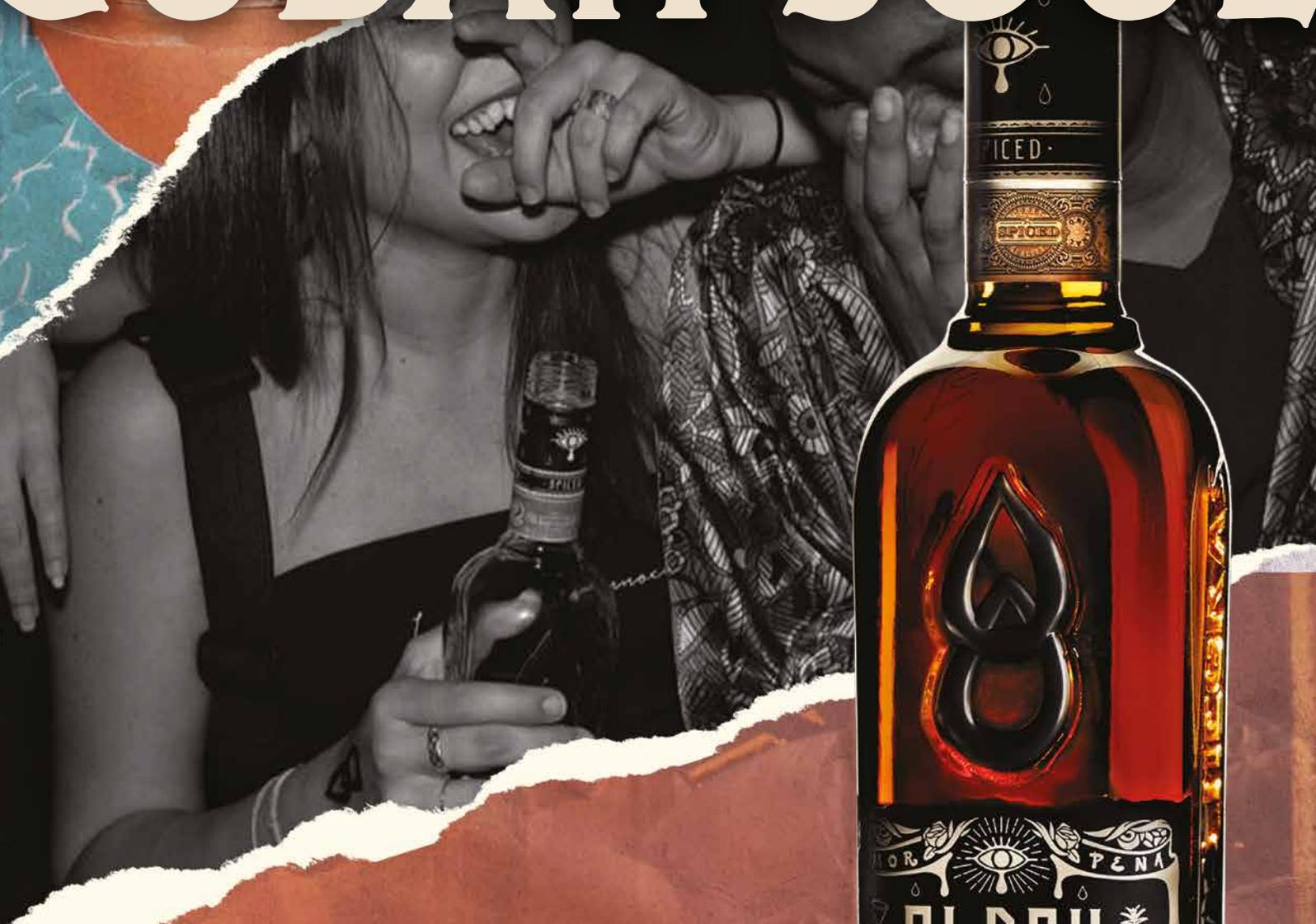
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BELOW, THE
FOUNDERS OF
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D'AMORE.

Giardini d'Amore-Liquori is a bold project born in 2011 when the founders tapped into the opportunity of buying an old factory from an elderly local artisan, who committed to passing on ancient knowledge in tradition, techniques, and recipes to three enthusiastic youngsters. In Roccalumera, just a few kilometres from Taormina, the business model was conceived: to reinterpret those old recipes obtained with total dedication and growing passion with a modern flavour, thereby giving the Italian tradition of artisanal liqueurs a new identity.

In Dijon we find Briottet, the historic French brand of liqueurs that today is managed by the family's sixth generation. Born as a wine retailer in 1836, the business was revolutionised in the early 1900s by Edmond Briottet, who foresaw

the enormous potential and growth of Crème de Cassis, which still today is the business' flagship product.

The generations that followed maintained its traditions and today the business is headed by siblings Claire and Vincent Briottet. Although the business has achieved international fame, production is still limited to ensure the best quality of the product. Mandarine Briottet has an ABV of 25%.

Alessandro Palanca



OUT OF THE BOX

“Zammarra”, verdello lemon and prickly pear pads. The Sicilian agave distillate is born, brave and visionary

BY VITTORIO BRAMBILLA

It is recognised that Sicily is a land which has always amazed with products that have their roots on the island. Most recently, the island is attracting the attention of the entire national spirit industry. After Avola rum, it is now the turn of a new distillate that is inspired by Mediterranean colours, fragrances, and plants.

Agalìa, an agave distillate, gets its name from “agave” and “Rosalia”, the patron saint of Palermo and protectress of Sicily. Behind this project, which talks of Sicily in every detail, is a team of the

finest experts, who have offered their experience without leaving anything to chance. With passion and skill, the idea of this unprecedented project took shape thanks to Michele Di Carlo, expert in mixology and distillation, sommelier Federico Vincenzi, food entrepreneur Davide Fregonese and Augusto Prusso, who has interests in the insurance sector. The recipe, which is the result of much research and experimentation, is jealously guarded by Michele Di Carlo.

The agave, locally known as “zammarra” or “zabbara”, finds ideal growing



conditions in Sicily. Its sensory profile is the identifying feature of the distillate, which includes other Sicilian botanicals such as verdello lemon and prickly pear pads. With an exclusively Sicilian production chain, in May of this year the first batch of the distillate was bottled, for a total of 2,876 half litre bottles with an ABV of 43.3%.

What is immediately striking about Agalìa is its unconventional, ‘out-of-the-box’ character, the result of what is certainly courageous, innovative and, in our view, visionary ingenuity. In a production environment which often seems to be a continuous recurrence of distillates produced by “third parties” imitating each other, aiming for a detail that (hardly) attempts to be different, searching for a story to make its own for the telling, Agalìa already becomes an experience in one’s imagination alone.

A Sicilian agave spirit? Who would not

be intrigued and persuaded? It is with products such as Agalìa that the X-factor comes into play, acting as a catalyst for all the senses, leading us with reflection and respect to an encounter we are best prepared for. This is significant at a time when agave spirits, not coincidentally, continue to gain market share.

The impressions evoked by this distillate immediately strike the eye. Its transparency with reflections that go from yellow to green remind one of grass and earth. On the nose, one immediately picks up candied fruit, the pleasant freshness of citrus and slightly savoury hints of olive. Agalìa is perfectly balanced between the palate and nose. Its persistent freshness is accompanied by a gentle smoothness that wraps itself around the mouth. It may seem to have a strong kick, but not to the point that it hides the hints of agave that come through with citrus and herbal tones. Producers

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BEVI RESPONSABILMENTE



AGALÌA
 FROM LEFT TO
 RIGHT, DAVIDE
 FREGONESE,
 MICHELE DI
 CARLO,
 FEDERICO
 VINCENZI AND
 AUGUSTO
 PRUSSO.

state that there is absolutely no added sugar. Distillation is completely natural, respecting the raw material without any added touches.

Extreme care has been taken with the packaging which is also inspired by Sicily. The spirit is packaged in a bottle that contributes to that sense of exclusivity characterising the product. The bottle made from transparent glass stands out thanks to its bold profile with a square base, with the sides that narrow slightly, and its elegant screen printing of the Agalìa logo. On each bottle a numbered tile made from Caltagirone ceramic is applied. This is a further tribute to Sicilian tradition.





Caltagirone ceramic is one of the most famous artisanal products of the island and has very ancient origins. According to experts, following the Arab conquest of Sicily, it was Arab potters, who from 827, fostered the art of pottery with the technical processes they were familiar with. Each tile has a blue stylised profile of Sicily surrounded by yellow and blue petals.



The progressive number of each bottle is handwritten on the back of each tile. The bottle is then placed in a tin that incorporates the distinctive elements of the brand, the logo and a symbol of the island. Due to the significant research that defined the journey of the product, Agalìa is recognised as an “innovative start-up”.

It is recommended to enjoy Agalìa neat at an ideal temperature of 16/18°C and mixed in cocktails.

Vittorio Brambilla



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THIRTY YEARS OF QUALITY

PGI certification and the birth of a consortium protecting Italy's "ambassador" wine

BY GIULIA ARSELLI

In June, the Consorzio del Vermouth di Torino IGP (PGI Vermouth di Torino Consortium) organised two tasting events for the sector's press at the Banca del Vino of Pollenzo in Bra (Cuneo) and the Palazzo Parigi Hotel in Milan. The occasion was the 30th anniversary of PGI certification (Protected Geographical Indication) awarded to Vermouth di Torino. The success that the rediscovery

of this noble wine has had - a wine that is an ambassador of Italian culture and traditions - is proven by the continuous excitement that stirs the sector and its small and large producers.

On 10 June 1991, the Council Regulation on Geographical Indications recognised "PGI Vermut or Vermouth di Torino" as an aromatised wine. Another important milestone for Vermouth di Torino





was reached in 2017 with the birth of an organisation that further promotes and protects the product: the PGI Vermouth di Torino Institute. Its first and current president is Roberto Bava. Significant support for the initiative also came from Federvini and the Regione Piemonte, which worked towards ensuring that specific characteristics were recognised and attributed to PGI Vermouth di Torino.

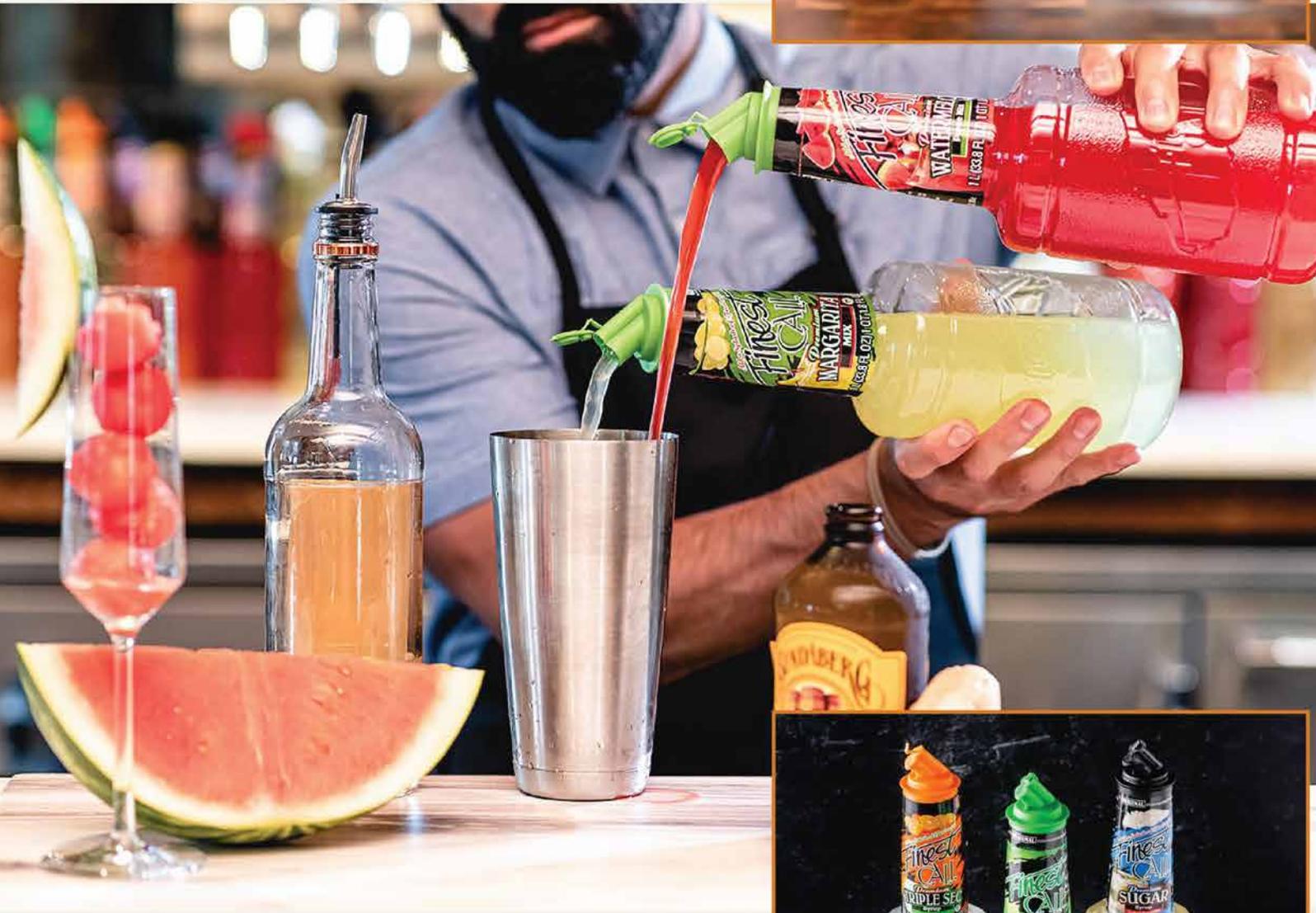
Ministerial Decree 1826 of 22 March 2017 sent to the European Commission states the following ratification: “Vermouth di Torino is the aromatised wine obtained in Piedmont using one or more Italian wines, with the addition of alcohol, flavoured mainly with artemisia (wormwood) together with other herbs and spices.” However, in Italy there already was a document that regulated





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Vermouth production: Royal Decree no. 1696 of 9 November 1933, which contained guidelines relating to minimum ABV, the amount of sugar and base wine and the type of flavouring substances. The Vermouth di Torino Institute worked to create the PGI Vermouth di Torino Consortium, born in 2019 and that was presented during Vinitaly in Verona.

The Vermouth di Torino Consortium integrates the work conducted by the institute of the same name, bringing together growers and transformers of official Piedmontese herbs, rectifiers and bottlers and companies owning brands that independently manage their own supply chains. It promotes and enhances its denomination, protecting the information that goes to the end consumer and provides technical support and professional training to companies and producers.

Among its main responsibilities is also a supervisory role to ensure that the Geographical Indication denomination is correctly applied to consortium products. A specific policy was defined that enhanced and protected the brands

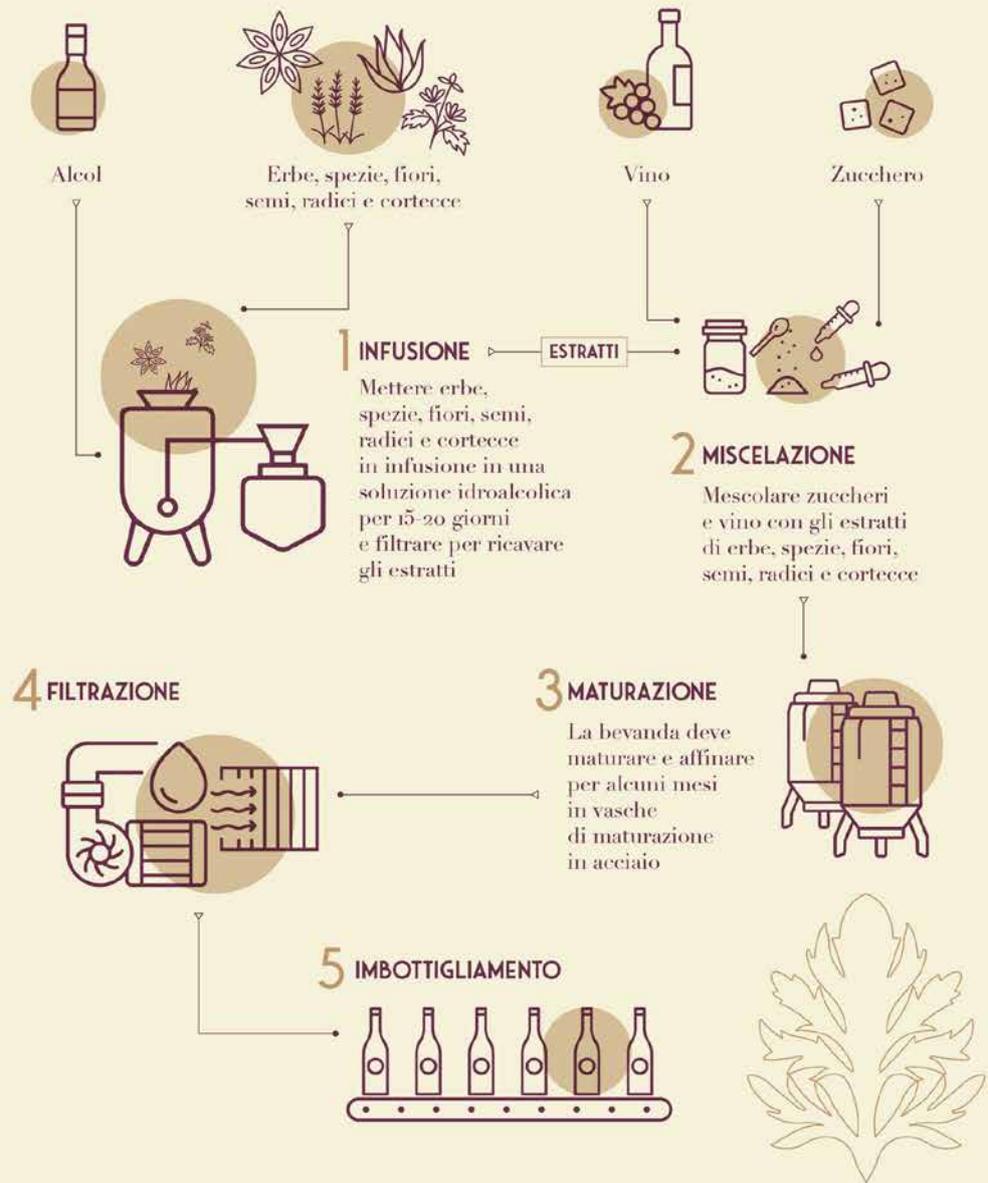


falling under the consortium. Since then, the PGI Vermouth di Torino Consortium has grown and today includes 23 brands, big and small, some historic and some less so, and is still led by President Roberto Bava.

This voluntary consortium is unique within the European sector of aromatised wines. A matter of interest concerns the need to draw up a new statute. The statute would be recognised by public entities and, most of all, ensure the voluntary

PEOPLE
 AT THE TOP, THE GROUP OF BRAND PRODUCERS MAKING UP THE CONSORTIUM. ABOVE, ROBERTO BAVA.

COME SI PRODUCE IL VERMOUTH DI TORINO



nature of the consortium becomes obligatory with direct powers of intervention. Such an example is the French Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne, an organisation that brings together those involved in the production and sale of champagne, producer brands, growers, enologists, cooperatives and dealers. During the event, the numbers demonstrating the success of PGI Vermouth di

Torino were illustrated.

In 2019, 4,500,000 litres of the product were sold, with a decline of 17% due to the pandemic in 2020. The stars of Vermouth di Torino are the plants that belong to the wormwood genus, in particular the species *A. absinthium* and *A. pontica* grown and harvested in Piedmont. The base is a white, rose' or red wine, aromatised with a blend of natural

extracts obtained from a very rich palette of herbs and spices. It can be sweetened either by sugar, grape must, caramelised sugar or honey. The amber colour is exclusively obtained thanks to the addition of caramel.

A fundamental requirement of Vermouth di Torino is the quality of the wine: white or red, it must have the structure and acidity to support the aromas and balance the sugar. Once the alcoholic base has been selected, the extracts of the aromatic herbs and spices, flowers, seeds, roots and barks are added which were previously infused in a hydroalcoholic solution for 15-20 days. These are then mixed with the sugar and the wine and allowed to mature in ageing tanks. Finally, once the drink has been filtered, bottling takes place. PGI Vermouth di Torino must have a minimum ABV of between 16% and 22%.

Classification is based on the colour (white, red, amber, rose') and the degree of sweetening: 130 g/litre for sweet ones, between 30 g/litre and 50 g/litre for Extra Dry. PGI Vermouth di Torino Superiore must have a minimum ABV of 17% and be made with at least 50% Piedmontese wines that are aromatised with herbs (other than wormwood) grown and harvested in Piedmont. Fifty-three brands of PGI Vermouth di Torino were at the tasting, divided by their different types.

Food pairings were done with chocolate, including the premium range of Assedium Ritual Pastry of Cuneo, the Gianduiotti of Baratti & Milano in Turin, the Nocciole d'Elite of Emanuele Canaparo of Cravanzana (Cuneo), in addition to PGI Amalfi lemon peels, focaccia and fresh peach slices.

Giulia Arselli



THE BRANDS OF THE VERMOUTH DI TORINO CONSORTIUM

Antica Distilleria Quaglia
Antica Torino
Arudi
Cav. Pietro Bordiga
Calissano – Gruppo Italiano Vini
Carlo Alberto
Carpano – Fratelli Branca Distillerie
Casa Martelletti
Giulio Cocchi
Chazalettes
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Drapò – Turin Vermouth
Erbe Aromatiche Pancalieri
Gancia & C.
La Canellese
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Martini & Rossi
Peliti's
Giacomo Sperone
Tosti1820
Ulrich
Vergnano

MAGIC POTION

An ancient secret recipe for the famous liqueur from the “city of witches”

BY ALESSANDRO PALANCA

It is one of the Italian spirit industry’s ambassadors to the world. Its story is a muddle of truth and legend, a mix of popular beliefs and ancient apothecary art that make Liquore Strega one of the most iconic liqueurs in the world. An ancient popular legend dates it back to magic rituals performed by so-called witches.

According to various beliefs spread around Europe in previous centuries, the sabbath was a gathering of witches where witchcraft was practised. The city of Benevento, in the Campania region of Italy, continues to intrigue due to its fame as the “City of Witches”. It was customary to perform pagan rites in ancient times. In the case of Benevento, it appears that these obscure rituals took place along the banks of the Sabato river. Or that witches and warlocks from all over the world met at night around a magical walnut tree, and that they created a magic potion to unite the couples who drank it forever. These legends linked to rural beliefs sparked stories and later many books on the topic. Unique and with an unmistakable flavour thanks to exclusive use of natural ingre-



dients, Liquore Strega is the result of a production process that is much more complex than in an ordinary liqueur.

Production of Liquore Strega started 158 years ago. In 1860 many liberal uprisings opposed that conservatism which effectively stopped Italy from becoming an independent national state. Southern Italy was devastated by land ownership, but was preparing to experience one of the happiest periods of the modern age. The dawn of industrialisation was coming, and it was in Benevento that one of the first



Benevento - Palazzo Alberti
Fabbrica Liquore Strega



LIQUORE STREGA
 IN THE MIDDLE, A HISTORICAL PHOTO OF THE BENEVENTO PREMISES AND INSIDE THE FACTORY. AT THE TOP, THE "SABBATH" AND THE SABBATH WALNUT.



small industrial miracles took place: the birth of Liquore Strega by local Giuseppe Alberti. That small liqueur factory built near the railway station that aided transport would later extend to cover an area of 30,000 square metres. Its processing starts with the grinding of about 70 herbs,

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1821
Girolamo Luxardo



SPICES
 ABOVE, THE BOX WITH THE AROMAS USED IN THE LIQUEUR. RIGHT, THE WILD MINT. ALONGSIDE, A HISTORIC IMAGE OF THE LIQUEUR. SANNIO MINT, KNOWN AS "MENTASTRA", IS THE MOST DISTINGUISHING INGREDIENT TOGETHER WITH SAFFRON.



seeds, roots and spices, each with unique aromatic properties. These are imported from all over the world and selected with great care by the herbalists of the plant. Among them are Ceylon cinnamon, Florentine orris, Italian Apennine juniper, fennel, Sannio mint, which grows wildly along the riverbanks of the region. This ingredient is certainly what most characterises and identifies the region we find in Liquore Strega.

The wild mint, locally known as "mentastra", is mixed with other botanicals. Strega's characteristic yellow colour comes from saffron which is added to a distillate of aromatic herbs. After distilling the aromatic component in historical swan neck stills, the product is aged for at least 6 months in oak barrels where a broad and elegant aromatic structure develops. After aging, the liqueur is bottled at an

ABV of 40% and is distributed all around the world.

At the premises is the beautiful Spazio Strega, a company museum that preserves the history of the brand. Objects, images, equipment and aromas, inevitable imitations are proof of the company's constant dedication to quality but also attachment to tradition, something that has always set apart the work of the Alberti family. All along, the museum introduces the visitor to the secrets of the legend that inspires Liquore Strega. In the imitations hall are hundreds of counterfeit bottles from all over the world that attempted to emulate the original product in vain.

In the herbalist shop, the visitor can touch the botanicals that give origin to Liquore Strega, the historical wooden drawer that holds the secret recipe of the product and the old processing tools.



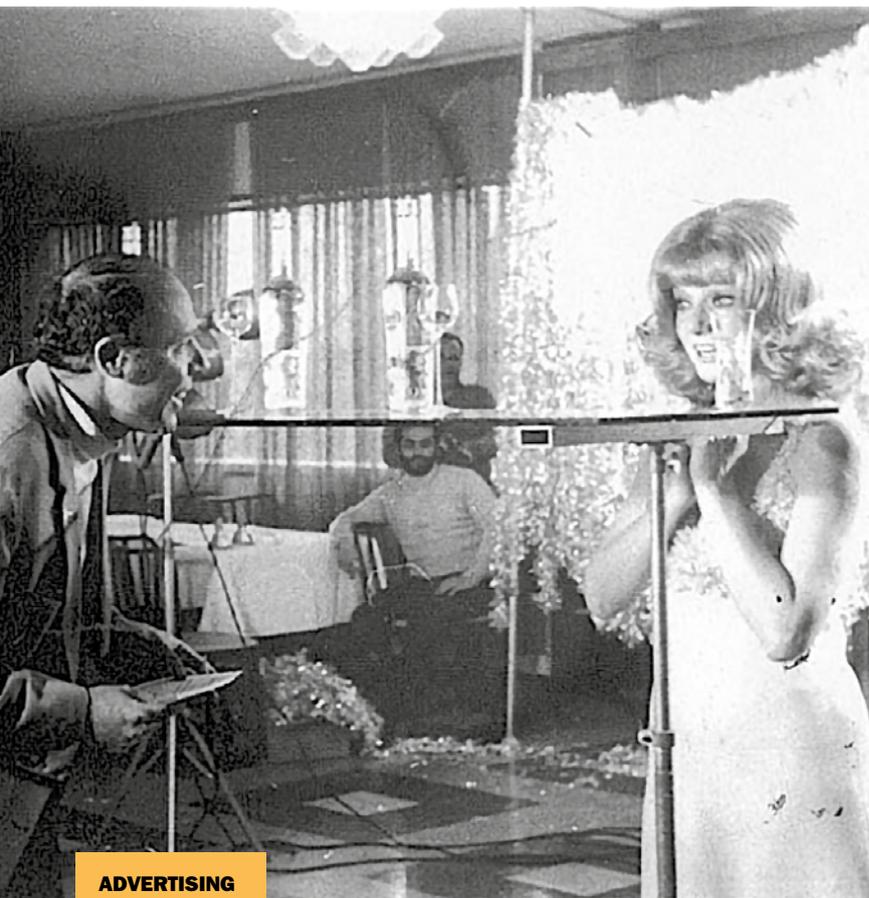
The workers who prepare the mixture only know the quantities of numbered ingredients, but not the whole recipe, which is jealously guarded by the Alberti family. Some ingredients are kept under lock and key.

The hall dedicated to the famous Premio Strega tells the story of the literary award with a collection of historical images, with covers of the winning books and the historic black board that for years has been used to announce the winner. But the notoriety of Liqueure Strega also comes through in cinema and music. Many directors have paid homage to the elegance of the liqueur in cinema: “Two Women” (1960), Luchino Visconti’s “Obsession” (1943), Soldini’s “Bread and Tulips” (2000), “Romulus and the Sabines” (1945) by Mario Bonnard with Totò, and “Fantozzi in Heaven” (1993) with Paolo



CINEMA
THE LIQUEUR APPEARED IN MANY MOTION PICTURES. TOP LEFT, HELENA JANECZEK, WINNER OF THE 2018 PREMIO STREGA.

Villaggio. In literature, Liqueure Strega appears in novels “The Godfather” by Mario Puzo in 1969 and in “The Sun Also



ADVERTISING
FROM THE TOP,
A HISTORIC
PHOTO OF THE
PREMIO
STREGA AND
THE ADVERT
WITH SYLVA
KOSCINA.

Rises” by Ernest Hemingway. Some of the most famous artists and advertisers of the 20th century were involved in the advertising of Liqueure Strega, such

as Marcello Dudovich in his Art Nouveau style, and Fortunato Depero, an exponent of the “second futurism”. With the arrival of new media, there was no shortage of television adverts in the Italian advertising show, “Carosello”. The adverts from the 1960s were famous, where Sylva Koscina said: “The first sip enchants, the second bewitches” and “A misunderstanding is resolved with a sip of Strega”.

Today Liqueure Strega is carefully tracking the new cocktail culture that has revolutionised bars around the world. Its versatility, whether neat or mixed in highly characteristic drinks, used in the kitchen or for confectionery and its transverse flavour means that it is indispensable on bar shelves. Ownership and management of the company are still in the hands of the Alberti family that for decades has known how to combine artisanal ability and technology.

Alessandro Palanca

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