

Q&A WITH CHIARA LUNGAROTTI

CEO OF CANTINE GIORGIO LUNGAROTTI

The multi-tasking, winemaking woman dishes on the Lungarotti family legacy, Umbrian pride and creating parallel universes.

Of each wine region in the world is assigned a guardian angel, Chiara Lungarotti is the protectress of Umbria. Often referred to as the "spiritual heart of Italy," Umbria is recognized by its saints (Saint Frances of Assisi, Saint Clare and Saint Valentine) more than its wines. Chiara Lungarotti, CEO of Lungarotti, based in Torgiano, is determined to put Umbria on the world enological map and she has embarked on her mission with a passion and intensity that far outweighs her petite frame and delicate smile. She manages a family company with wineries in Torgiano and Montefalco, a boutique hotel and restaurant, and her family runs what may be the world's most important museum of wine civilization. She is a high-ranking official with Italy's *Le Donne del Vino* (women for wine) and is national president of the *Movimento Turismo del Vino*, which organizes a national holiday for the celebration of wine, and develops Italy's \$4 billion annual wine tourism business. She does all this while staying true to her father's legacy, legendary vintner Giorgio Lungarotti, and mapping out a future for her toddler, Giovanni.

Wine Enthusiast: Lungarotti is a big fish in a small pond (an important winery in a small territory). Which is more important: promoting Lungarotti or promoting Umbria?

Chiara Lungarotti: Umbria is number one for me and then comes Lungarotti. I am proud of my land and am working hard to make Lungarotti a synonym of Umbria. Our strategy has been to create parallel universes that complement our wine. The vineyards in Torgiano and Montefalco, the Tre Vaselle, which is a boutique hotel and spa, our wine museum, the olive oil museum and our *agriturismo* (a rural bed-and-breakfast) all do this.

WE: Many Italian wineries walk a fine line between tradition and innovation. How do you find balance?

CL: I define tradition as "successful innovation." One needs to respect traditions without remaining so firmly attached to them that they appear dusty or old. Each generation must add its own innovations in order to maintain tradition, like that of making wine.

WE: Torgiano is a perfect model for wine tourism with synergies between a winery, restaurant, hotel and museums. Was that by chance or design?



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does my sister. She is trained as an enologist and I am trained in viticulture. Technical knowledge is fundamental. It's also very important to know your market: it's one thing to make the best wine in the world, and another thing to sell it.

WE: What lessons did your father leave you?

CL: The most important lesson he left my sister and me is love what you do. You can achieve anything with passion and enthusiasm and I hope to transmit the same message to my son.

CL: It was born by chance and executed by design. In the 1970s, there was no place to bring friends, visitors or clients to eat in Torgiano. We always brought them to Perugia, but going there means leaving our territory. My father had this idea of opening a *foresteria*, a small hotel where we could serve authentic local foods with our wines. Le Tre Vaselle was born in 1978. Today, we have 55 rooms, a new spa, and service standards that represent the best of Italian hospitality.

WE: Tell us more about the Lungarotti Foundation, the Wine Museum and the Olive and Oil Museum.

CL: The Lungarotti wine museum is one of the most important in Europe with 18,000-20,000 visitors each year. The population of Torgiano is only 5,000, so the impact is huge. My father had the idea for a museum and we inaugurated it in 1974. The Olive and Oil museum was opened in 2000 and follows the same model.

WE: What can Italy learn from the U.S. and what can the U.S. learn from Italy in terms of developing wine tourism?

CL: In the U.S., wineries offer tasting rooms, wine and food pairing courses, vineyard visits and are open 365 days a year. In Italy, we excel at "territory tourism": people come to visit a hilltop town, or a historic site and cap the day with wine tasting at a local winery or with a meal at a local *osteria*. The most important wine event is *Cantine Aperte* on the last Sunday of May. On that day, 1,000 wineries open their doors to teach the public about wine and winemaking.

WE: What advice would you give a young woman who wants to start a career in wine?

CL: I have a technical background and so

—MONICA LARNER