

Meininger's weinwelt

3

Australien
Down Under
gibt Gas

Next Generation
Frischer Wind
aus Baden

Rioja im Wandel
Eine Region
erfindet sich neu

APRIL
MAI
2017
DEUTSCHLAND
€ 7,80

EXKLUSIV
FÜR SIE
VEKOSTET!
WEINE VON
BUNT-
SANDSTEIN

BIO, WAS SONST?

Die Brüder Lo Franco von La Violla wurden
bei MUNDUS VINI Biofach zum 3. Mal in Folge
Erzeuger des Jahres International



la vialla was already organic when there was no authority to certify such things.

With their Fattoria La Vialla, the Lo Franco family have not only created a place that magically attracts guests but also a large organic farm consistently focused on biodynamics. Each single phase of work interacts perfectly.

Text: Ilka Lindemann





Fattoria La Vialla is a Tuscan idyll



Biodynamic farming is a focal point at La Vialla



FATTORIA LA VIALLA
Via di Meliciano 26
52029 Castiglion Fibocchi -
Tuscany, Italy
Tel. 0039 0575 430020
www.lavialla.it



Bandino, Gianni and Antonio Lo Franco run the business of La Vialla

Roughly 80 km from Florence and at a stone's throw from Arezzo, lovers of wine and culinary delights can find Fattoria La Vialla. At the big organic farm hospitality is part of everyday life, and the focus in all areas is on biodynamics... Recently La Vialla was named, for the third time running, "Producer of the Year International" among hundreds of competitors at the international MUNDUS VINI Biofach awards. This isn't the only success that the Lo Franco brothers, Gianni, Antonio and Bandino, and their staff can be proud of. In 2016 La Vialla was named "Italian Wine Producer of the Year 2016" at the IWSC – International Wine & Spirit Competition – and the Fattoria's wines always obtain great results at other competitions and tasting events. This is no coincidence; Since it was founded in 1978, the wine estate has always been run using organic agriculture. When the three brothers' parents, Piero and Giuliana Lo Franco, acquired the first farmstead and surrounding land, they knew immediately how they would run them – in harmony with nature. Before them grandmother Caterina had, instinctively, always used organic fertilizer and sown and pruned according to the lunar calendar.

La Vialla has always followed the concepts of organic agriculture, without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. La Vialla was one of the first Italian farms to obtain certification when the AIAB (Italian Association for Organic Agriculture) was established in 1983. Since 1997 the Lo Franco family have gone a step further and run their farm using the biodynamic method, for which they obtained certification in 2005. This is an expression of the holistic approach that the family have chosen for themselves and their products.

"It began with the house", says Gianni Lo Franco. "The house that our parents actually bought with the idea of becoming self-sufficient". As the years have passed however things have continued to evolve, the brothers recall. But focus was always on the organic way of thinking, and a healthy diet was important for the Lo Franco family. Today La Vialla is best described as a large, family-run, organic farm that produces wine and food, works sustainably, and also welcomes guests. What is known, in Italy, as an Agriturismo. For visitors who wish to get to know La Vialla, there are roughly 30 apartments dotted all over the property in small, lovingly renovated farmhouses.

The farm covers over 1300 hectares of land, 500 hectares of which are Demeter certified and 200 hectares are planted with vines. We spoke to Donato, agronomist who has worked at La Vialla since 2004 and is in charge of biodynamic soil management since 2007, who says: "Our aim is to make the soil more fertile and, above all, to respect nature." The biodynamic method is principally based on safeguarding and enhancing the soil and whatever lives in it. The term itself comes from the Greek words bios, meaning life and dynamos, energy. Biodynamic preparations such as chamomile, silica, valerian or yarrow are used, in small doses, as organic "activators". Another typical procedure in biodynamics

biodynamics is that of filling cow horns with manure and burying them in the vineyards during winter. The earth contained in the horns at the end of winter, is rich in microbes that decompose the soil. It is then diluted with water and used on the ground. The objective is to protect the plants and make them resistant to environmental impact. Apropos, 1580 cow horns are used at La Vialla.

Later, in the red wine cellar, which was inaugurated in 2011, they tell us that most of the wines are fermented spontaneously. This means that no artificially cultivated yeast is added, the natural yeasts from the vineyard do everything on their own. The wine cellar was built following examples of traditional Tuscan architecture, using natural stone from the region. Marco Cervellera, the farm's oenologist, has found his vocation in biodynamic agriculture and has made the company's philosophy his own. In his wine cellar for some time now the motto has been: "The less it's filtered, the better it is". There are now six unfiltered wines in their portfolio. The customers love them, because this method makes it possible to use even less sulphites than biodynamic regulations allow. "At first some of them were surprised by the fact that our wines were cloudy" Cervellera tells us, but in particular the health-conscious fans of La Vialla wines like them. "Our pioneer – the Barriccato Bianco non filtrato – has already received various awards," says Gianni Lo Franco. "Amongst which, a platinum medal with an incredible 95 points as 'Best White Wine Tuscany' at the Decanter World Wine Awards 2016... by the way, the first unfiltered white wine ever to do so."

Great attention is also paid to "old vine varieties". In august 2013 the first grape harvest was carried out at the La Torre vineyard where, seven years before, 120 shoots from a historical vineyard had been planted – unknown and almost forgotten varieties, which were risking extinction. The Lo Franco brothers were so fascinated that, with their "Lo Franco Foundation", they launched a new project: in collaboration with the universities of Pisa and Florence, the descendants of the mother vines were analysed

“it began with the house”

Gianni Lo Franco

Impressive:
the old cedar
trees at
La Vialla

The Fattoria also produces many other things: flour, which is ground as in days gone by and used to make bread and biscuits, pasta, vegetables (aubergines, tomatoes...) and herbs, which are made into delicious sauces, as well as jam, appetizers and honey.

According to the season, between 150 and 250 people work at La Vialla and take care of the guests, the Lo Francos affectionately call them the "Viallini". "People from 20 different countries work with us," says Bandino Lo Franco. "And they all get along well," he adds. To the brothers it is important that everything is organised in a closed circle. Everything is recycled and hardly any waste is produced. There is even a photovoltaic plant that provides electricity. For their products, the Lo Franco family have received countless awards, the farm's carbon footprint is highly praised and the family's Foundation is also active in the field of research with various universities.

A tip: if you decide to take a holiday at La Vialla, you should pay a visit to the museum. It's situated in an old farmhouse dating back to 1750 and houses objects illustrating the everyday life of country folk, collected over 40 years by 75 year old Giancarlo Del Pasqua. You're lucky if you're able to meet him personally. He is full of life, has a wonderful sense of humour and knows how to tell just the right story about each exhibit. From the old instruments used in agriculture,

animal breeding, winemaking and smithery, which are on the ground floor, to the traditional kitchen, bedroom, sitting room and the various utensils on the first floor, life on a farm in olden days is recreated. Behind the house Doris, the donkey, loves to be fed carrots.

You should also try the house Vin Santo. It's best directly where it ages in small barrels – at Casa Conforto farmstead. This classic Vin Santo DOC made with Trebbiano and Malvasia smells of honey and cedar wood, orange peel and candied lemon, and on the palate tastes of raisins and candied orange

with pronounced acidity. The Occhio di Pernice Riserva, made with 90% Sangiovese and Malvasia, aged for four to five years in barrels, has ripe aromas of nougat and chocolate and fills the mouth with notes of berries, caramel and chocolate.

The Lo Franco brothers and their Viallini are hospitality personified and anyone who has come here, like me, always wants to return again. The wonderful wines and the pasta, as well as the sauces make you addicted.

|

and identified, and then planted to safeguard the historical heritage. "In the old vineyard we found more than a dozen vine varieties", Marco Cervellera tells us. So today, white, red, aromatic and less aromatic varieties of grapes grow mixed together, and tell us what people used to drink in the past.

As on farms of days gone by various different products are made at La Vialla: for example, right beside the wine cellar is the olive mill, where the olives are pressed like they were in olden days. The farm has 25,000 olive trees, 15 different varieties are transformed into a wonderful olive oil. And continuing with numbers: the farm also has 1,300 sheep which enjoy an almost free life. They produce milk approximately 220 days per year. This milk is used to make two incredibly delicious types of Pecorino cheese, a young one, aged for four months, and another aged for twelve months, in the farm's dairy.

There's always a
reason to
celebrate
at La Vialla

