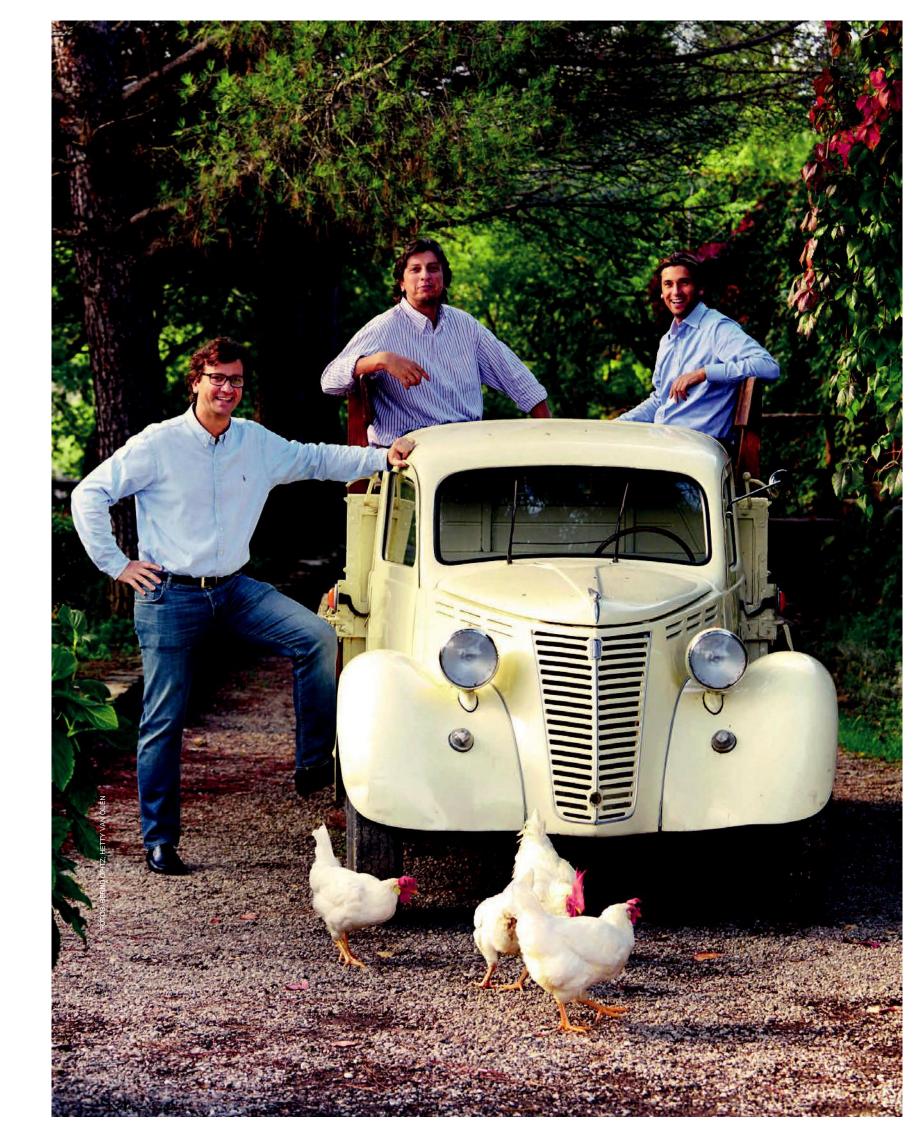
la vialla was already organic when there was no authority to certify such things.

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





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.

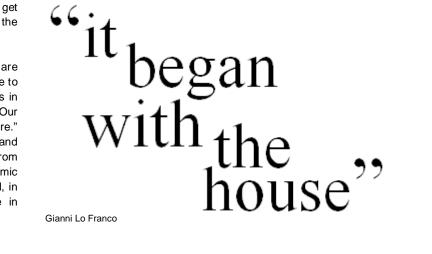
"It began with the house", says Gianni Lo Franco. "The house that our parents actually bought with the idea of becoming self-sufficient". As the years have passed however things have continued to evolve, the brothers recall. But focus was always on the organic way of thinking, and a healthy diet was 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.

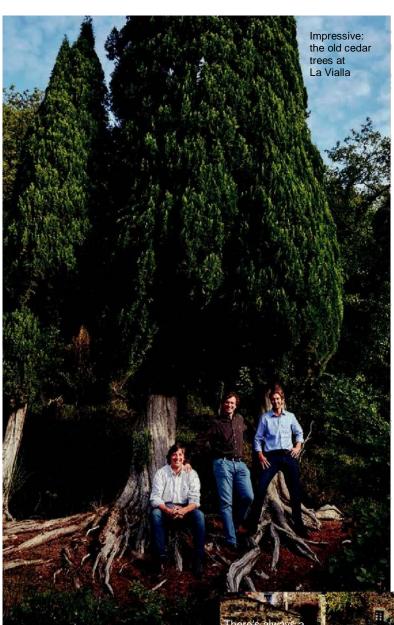
The farm covers over 1300 hectares of land, 500 hectares of which are Demeter certified and 200 hectares are planted with vines. We spoke to Donato, agronomist who has worked at La Vialla since 2004 and is in charge of biodynamic soil management since 2007, who says: "Our aim is to make the soil more 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 vinevards 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





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 aromatic and less aromatic varieties of grapes grow mixed together, and tell us what people

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.

