



Ferrari: World Class Italian Metodo Classico since 1902

Charles Scicolone (January 06, 2012)



Celebrating the New Year with Ferrari All Year Long

"This is not Prosecco!" exclaimed Mr. Marcello Lunelli, as he began a tasting of [Giulio Ferrari Riserva Del Fondatore](#). [2] A member of the family that owns the Ferrari winery, and the lead winemaker, he introduced a group of wine writers to the history of the company and its wines. We all laughed at his remark, knowing that Ferrari wines are Method Classico (Methode Champenois) at its best and the wine we were tasting has been a perennial winner of the coveted Gambero Rosso Tre Bicchieri Award.

Mr. Lunelli told us that Giulio Ferrari, the founder of the company, returned to Trentino after studying in France and was convinced that the local terroir was perfect for the Chardonnay grape. He felt that



by using the Metodo Classico (Méthode Champenois) he could make great sparkling wine there. He became the first person to plant Chardonnay in Trentino. In 1902 he began the company and it became very successful.

In 1952 Bruno Lunelli, the owner of Trento's best known wine bar took over Ferrari from Giulio, who continued the work at the winery until his death. Today the third generation of the Lunelli family runs the company. It has a 40% market share of all the Metodo Classico made in Italy.

With the exception of the Ferrari Rosé and the Ferrari Perlé Rosé all the wine are Blanc de Blancs, 100% Chardonnay. They use selected yeasts from their own cultures. Mr. Lunelli said that they were moving toward becoming organic, and after that biodynamic, but it would take a few years.

He said the temperature in Trento has risen 1 degree in the last 13 years. This does not seem like much but if you wanted to have the same conditions that you had in the past the vineyards would have to be 150 meters higher. They can do this in their part of Trento because of the mountains but other producers in other areas are not so lucky.

Today, there are 550 growers that supply them with Chardonnay grapes mostly for the non-vintage wine. The growers are paid according to the quality of the grapes.

Giulio Ferrari Riserva Del Fondatore is a single vineyard reserve aged wine. The grapes are picked at the end of September in the Maso Pianizza a vineyard owned by the Lunelli family. The vineyard is in the commune of Trento and is between 500 and 600 meters above sea level with a southwesterly exposure. The wine spends at least 10 years on the lees. They do not make this wine in every vintage. We did a vertical tasting of this wine with Mr. Lunelli and he said that the first vintage was 1972

2001 Mr. Lunelli said that this was a year with ideal climatic conditions. The temperature was perfect in July and August with cool nights and hot days. The grapes developed gradually allowing for complexity and ripeness and very good acidity. He called it a perfect vintage. It was fresh and elegant with a hint of yeast and toast and good acidity. Nice fruit in the finish and aftertaste.

2000 He said that it was a very cold July and an extremely hot August. In September there was much needed rain and temperature variations, adding to the final ripening of the grapes. Because of these unusual weather patterns the grapes were well constructed with thick skins and very aromatic. This was very early harvest that yielded healthy, balanced grapes. Mr. Lunelli said that in his opinion the 2000 would age better than the 2001. Very well balanced wine with a mineral earthy and steely character, it had a great finish and aftertaste.

1997 This vintage was characterized by exceptional weather conditions. There was drought at the end of winter and the beginning of spring with late frost in May. The summer was very rainy with above average temperatures. The yields were low 20% to 25% below average but the grapes were healthy and balanced. Harvest started early for the lower hills at the end of August and continued through the second half of September. Mr Lunelli said this was one of the best vintages. This wine was more developed with toasty and nutty aromas and good citrus flavors

1995 This vintage Mr. Lunelli proudly said produced perhaps the finest and most elegant wines of Ferrari's history. It was the scarcest vintage in the past 30 years but it produced wines of exceptional quality. A cold and rainy spring disrupted the vines' blooming and fruit set, causing a natural thinning. Bunches were smaller and loosely-packed which combined with the moderate summer, allowed the berries to reach perfect ripeness. The harvest started on September 28th and the grapes showed higher acid levels. This is a great wine and my favorite of the tasting.

1986 It was a fairly dry winter with heavy snow falls in late February, heavy rain and very high temperatures in May. All of this contributed to an early growth cycle. The early summer months were unseasonably mild and dry, resulting in loose grape clusters. Good weather during the final stages of growth imparted high acidity. Harvest began in the first week of September. This wine was the most mature of the ones that we tasted. It was toasty with a hint of sherry. This is for those of us that like their sparkling wine with some age.



After the tasting they served a light lunch with these two wines.

Ferrari Perlé 2004 Trento DOC Method Classico Vintage Blanc de Blancs 100% Chardonnay. The grapes are harvested by hand in the middle of September from a hillside owned by the Lunelli family around the Trento vineyards. The vineyards are 300 to 700 meters above sea level with a southeasterly or southwesterly exposure. The wine remains for about 5 years on the lees. It is a crisp dry wine with hints of apple, almonds and a touch of toast. \$35

Ferrari Perlé Rosé 2004 Trento DOC Method Classico Vintage 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay. This is a vintage Rosé from the Lunelli family estate vineyards, harvested by hand at the end of September on the hills surrounding Trento, between 1000 and 2000 feet above sea level with either southeastern or southwestern exposure. In 2004 there was mild weather and perfect ripening conditions. It is aged 5 years on selected yeasts. It is an elegant and complex Rosé with ripe red berry aromas and flavors with hints of raspberry and a touch of almond and a long finish and pleasing aftertaste. \$75

These next two wines were not part of the tasting but they have been a favorite of mine for a long time and my introduction to Ferrari.

I first became a fan of Ferrari when I started drinking the Ferrari Brut NV Trento DOC Methodo Classico 100% Chardonnay many years ago. The grapes are picked by hand at the beginning of September. They come from various communes in the Val d'Adige, Val di Cembra and Valle dei Laghi. The vineyards are between 300 and 700 meters above sea level, with southeast or southwest exposure. The wine is aged for at least 24 months on the lees. It is selected yeast from Ferrari's own cultures \$25

Then I was introduced to Ferrari Rosé NV Trento DOC Method Classico 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay. The grapes come from hillside vineyards around the town of Trento at 300 to 600 meters above sea level. The wine is aged for 25-30 months on the lees \$37.

Both of these wines are excellent value for the money.

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