

# Tenuta Sant'Antonio, a success story built on competence and courage

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 30 Ottobre 2023



In the scope of our feature dedicated not only to successful businesses, but also to the reasons why some Italian wine companies became so competitive in time, a special place is held by **Tenuta Sant'Antonio** or, to be precise, the wine system that we could call today **Famiglia Castagnedi**.

I often wrote about the origin of the brand Tenuta Sant'Antonio, the company owned by the four brothers, **placed between Val di Mezzane and Val d'Illasi, the east patch of the Valpolicella denomination**. But, when we talk about vision and planning ability we go into a different direction and while already highlighting the Valpolicella area, it emerges one of the main reasons for Famiglia Castagnedi's success which was

being among the first realities, in a pioneering way, to make the world understand that what was at first pejoratively defined as “Valpolicella allargata” – “broadened Valpolicella” – (to distinguish it from the historical Valpolicella Classica), is actually an absolutely suitable area for the production of high quality wines that we can define today with the true and elegant epithet and geographical subarea of the “Valpolicella Orientale” – Eastern Valpolicella – denomination for its style and quality.

In 1989, the **Castagnedis** had the right intuition to acquire a **property in the Monti Garbi**. Fifty hectares in one of the most suitable areas for high quality viticulture. The very same area, in 2000, became the production and welcoming base of their first brand: Tenuta Sant’Antonio.

So, if there is a factor that can give strength and notoriety to a brand it is its capacity to become the leader and the driver of a production territory. **On this front, TSA (Tenuta Sant’Antonio, ed) has been involved since the mid-‘90s, when from cooperatives conferrer, Antonio Castagnedi decided to give hope to his four sons (Armando, Tiziano, Paolo and Massimo) and lead by himself the entire production chain.**

I was lucky enough to live this initial phase of TSA so I might say that I was a witness of **one of the most winning and engaging stories** of a wine-producing family company.

Another factor that made TSA’s path a winning one was determination. Since the beginning, the company pointed right towards a goal that might have appeared to be extremely ambitious at the time and some might say that it was almost impossible: **to become a leading company in the production of super high-quality wines**. We often see a lot of demagogies on the quality-wines topic giving the wrongful sensation that it is a goal that any producing reality can reach. There is nothing falser.

It is undeniable that the Castagnedi brothers were aware of having at their disposal a perfectly suitable and qualitative territory. **But back in the days, there were not that many examples that could obviously advocate that.** Surely, the most important example is the one about Romano Dal Forno, who was the first to demonstrate that in the southern-east hills of the Verona province, where Valpolicella overlaps Soave, great wines could be produced.

However, until then, **this was just an isolated example and might have seemed the classical exception that proves the rule.**

For this reason, **the Castagnedi's challenge was way more complex than what we can imagine** and if now it may seem simpler, it is because they were constantly involved in their project and they invested significantly, year after year.

Their dedication allowed them to produce wines such as the **Amarone della Valpolicella "Campo dei Gigli"**, the **Amarone della Valpolicella Riserva "Lilium Est"**, the **Valpolicella Superiore "La Bandina"**, for example.

These are wines that, every year, hoard **prestigious recognitions** from the Italian and international enological critique.

The **third strategic factor of Famiglia Castagnedi's success has been the constant diligence towards increasing the production competences.** Since the very beginning, the company availed of enologists and agronomists that were able to give a high value support to capitalize best the suitable characteristics of the Tenuta's vineyards.

The professional experiences forged **Castagnedi's competences as well as Paolo's ones.**

Paolo Castagnedi – the cellar and production manager – with great humility became one of the greatest interpreters in the

wine producing panorama in the province of Verona. Not only for its capacity to bring the grape's high quality in the bottle, but also because **he is able to condense the tendencies and the notions coming from the marketing and the consumers world**, transforming them in concrete without distorting the terroir's essence.

The fourth factor enters the complex **sustainability topic**. On this front, Famiglia Castagnedi has always been relevant and they affirmed themselves on the matter with the Télòs line in particular.

Télòs wines are produced without added sulfites and without the use of chemical or animal synthesis products (from this, it also comes the vegan certification). This is a line that might be defined as "revolutionary"; it is able to combine an absolute respect towards the environment, the human health and a product quality that I define – without exaggerating – extraordinary, characterized by cleanliness and verticality which are aspects that are often forgotten in this category because we tend to accept the flaw as a characterizing element. With this line, since 2011, **Famiglia Castagnedi testifies, year after year, how the absence of sulfites not only does not compromise the wine longevity, but it even exalts it.**

I put the fifth success factor under the name of **courage or initiative**. The courage that led Famiglia Castagnedi to carry out difficult choices, also allowed them to not only grow in marketing terms, but also towards brand image and economic-stability.

Among many examples of this initiative, I mention the birth of the **Scaia brand in 2004**. Scaia is dedicated to modern and contemporary interpretations of the territories' vineyards with the IGT denomination.

This is a brand that for the past 20 years has been

registering an extraordinary success, but that we **would be wrong to dismiss as a “simple” marketing intuition.**

Actually, the Scaia brand demonstrated how a family business, with the right competences on every other front (production, management, communication and marketing) is able to plan and invent a production line that is able to combine high quality and a great appeal among different consumers' typologies. This is a **rare project to identify**, also by observing greater and better organized industrial companies.

The last success factor of Famiglia Castagnedi that I want to underline is their ability, during their 30-years of business activity, to **never betray their origins.**

Undoubtedly, this is certainly an important factor not to take for granted because **it witnesses how it is possible to grow (and to grow a lot, as Castagnedi brothers case history demonstrates), while also remaining firm to their initial goals:** producing high-quality wines thanks to a constant engagement in the vineyards, in the cellars, in marketing and in the market, verticalizing but also diversifying.



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