

The Castagnedi Family, TÉLOS: an avant-garde vision for the future of wine

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The TÉLOS line embodies an entrepreneurial vision centered on respect for the environment and people's well-being. It's the result of the Castagnedi Family's ability to combine sustainability, quality, and innovation: a pure and direct interpretation of the terroir.

TÉLOS's main challenge was to disrupt the concept of sustainable wine, demonstrating that it's possible to create exceptional wines without added sulfites that, at the same time, can ensure great longevity.

To delve deeper into the specifics and the vision behind this line of wines, we interviewed Armando Castagnedi, Owner and

Export Manager of the Castagnedi Family.

TÉLOS is one of the brands of the Castagnedi Family, composed of 4 references. What was the genesis of this line and what were the needs from which it originated?

The genesis of TÉLOS is evident from its name: a word in Greek that denotes the end, the purpose, a wine manifesto for the future that aims to combine sustainability, well-being, innovation, and quality. The idea emerged in the early 2000s when us Castagnedi brothers highlighted the need to create a product that would be a beacon of health for humans and have a low impact on the environment.

When these were still concepts not widely present in the Italian wine scene, we realized that the increasingly pronounced climate change compelled us to rethink our role in viticulture, accompanying nature in its development under changed conditions, while ensuring impeccable and enduring quality.

Thanks to the curiosity and technical and oenological knowledge we had acquired, after a long process of innovation in the vineyard and cellar, the TÉLOS line was born in 2011, a wine without added sulfites, organic and also vegan certified, representing the flagship of the company's innovation.

A product that directly expresses terroir: the Amarone and Valpolicella reds, native grapes like Garganega and international ones like Pinot Grigio and Chardonnay for whites, in an unprecedented and authentic interpretation.

Your company aimed to highlight that TÉLOS is not just a range of high-quality wines but represents a concrete example of entrepreneurial vision.

Could you elaborate on that?

Our entrepreneurial vision is clear: investing in research and innovation to guarantee qualitative excellence while respecting the well-being of people and the environment, elements we consider vital to ensure a future for the sector, taking on a socially indispensable responsibility today.

We strongly believe that TÉLOS is the forefront of this philosophy, as it represents the effort towards finding tools and production processes that respect each individual vineyard and the community in which it's placed: by returning the soul of the territory in the purest and most direct manner, we enhance the characteristics that make us unique, creating a virtuous circle that benefits everyone.

However, everyone must do their part: we can no longer bury our heads in the sand and wait for someone else to act on our behalf; we must all work towards growth, both in quality and awareness, challenging ourselves every day with new experiments and new ways of understanding wine.

We at the Castagnedi Family are in constant motion: in recent years, we have invested over 10% of our turnover to enhance technologies and logistics, rethought communication and marketing, but above all, we want to reiterate a concept that emerges strongly and clearly with TÉLOS: if we put in the effort – and only if we put in the effort – we can truly create excellence for the benefit of all.

You have described TÉLOS as a brand that “has disrupted the concept of sustainable wine.” What are the “disruptive” and unique elements?

TÉLOS represents a disruption, a surprise for all operators because it succeeds in the arduous task of combining rigorous environmentally friendly viticulture with longevity. This was the “technical” part of the challenge behind the birth of this line: to prove to the world that we could create a wine

without added sulfites capable of lasting over time. At the beginning, there was skepticism; in Japan, they even wanted to wait for years, testing the bottles in all possible conditions, but in the end, we were right: the wine was perfect, the orders came, and now it's one of our main markets for TÉLOS.

Another key element related to TÉLOS that you emphasize and bring to the forefront is linked to the term “purity.” A term that reminded me of the debate on Cameron Diaz’s “clean wines.” What does “purity” mean for the Castagnedi Family?

Purity for us holds a dual meaning. The technical interpretation: a style without flaws, without residues, to guarantee maximum healthiness and drinkability. The direct, sincere, and pure stylistic interpretation of the terroir, bringing out all the most identifying characteristics of our sulfuric and calcareous soils, our climatic peculiarities, and our extraordinary grape varieties. And these two aspects reinforce each other: the particular precautions in the production phase allow us both an unprecedented cleanliness in the wine and the ability to restore the most iconic characteristics of the territory.

Can you describe the specificities underlying the production process of the TÉLOS line?

To ensure the excellence we mentioned earlier, over the years, we've had to experiment, make changes, and adjustments, all towards paying attention to every single detail. The work in the vineyard is carried out following all the criteria of the organic regime, which has been recognized and obtained precisely from this year's harvest, 2023.

But since the beginning of the project, we've been working in this direction in all phases, using innovative and precision products, for example, through the use of plant-derived

products like orange peel acids, always with meticulous attention during cellar processes, down to the careful selection of corks, also for the new and recent vintages, certified as sustainable and recyclable, to ensure maximum strength, cleanliness, and minimal impact.

We are constantly engaged in an evolutionary path aimed at pushing production towards new frontiers of sustainability. We shape our wine by accompanying its natural evolution: a responsibility that entails enormous work, deep knowledge, and utmost attention at every moment. The result is unparalleled, the perfect synthesis between the maximum expression of nature and the territory and a product of total well-being for the person.

The issue related to sulfites captures attention and fuels a much-debated topic. You define TÉLOS as “The vegan wine without added sulfites.” What does this choice entail, and how does it relate to the attention towards well-being and health that your company wants to demonstrate?

We don't want to delve into the debate between wine and health because we see it as out of place. What we wanted to reaffirm with TÉLOS is instead the concept that a well-made wine can be a source of well-being for people because a healthy, genuine, and sincere product harmonizes with our bodies and doesn't present elements of disturbance.

The philosophy is the same that we apply to wine: by working with natural products and in line with the development of organisms – be they plants, wine, or people – we can accompany their development consistently and non-invasively: in this way, we don't provoke adverse reactions but gentle and sustainable assimilation.

This is why our concept of sustainability is holistic, aiming with TÉLOS to unite full respect for the environment with the

well-being of people.

Moreover, we see it as a necessary path: viticulture and oenology for us mean working in this way; there are no alternatives. Of course, this entails higher costs, difficulties in conveying the added value of the product, the skepticism we mentioned earlier, but it's our way of producing wine, and we could never go back.

Given the significant changes in consumer buying behaviors, do you believe that in some markets (especially the USA), it's necessary to rethink the export model? If so, how and with what objectives?

Let's start with a consideration: probably in the past, we forgot about consumers, or at least we thought we had listened to them, but in reality, we were blind to an ongoing change.

For years, the world of Italian wine thought it could focus solely on the product, in an uncompromising manner enclosed within its own walls. If we had approached the outside world with more humility, we would have realized that lifestyles change – for example, people drink less but look for higher quality; certain issues are increasingly sensitive – such as the demand for a guarantee of product healthiness.

Therefore, in response to the question, we must rethink the export model: until now, we were convinced that merely producing good wine was a guarantee of finding sales outlets. With the competition we face today – new oenological worlds emerging with valuable wines – our goal should be to place the consumer and their needs at the center, to be able to provide a comprehensive experience capable of guaranteeing excellence, values, and supporting services.

And I'm not talking about "following trends" at all; on the contrary, enveloping the customer in an embrace that makes

them feel safe, both in terms of quality and purchasing experience, aligned with storytelling increasingly aligned with values crucial for the development of our planet. With TÉLOS, we are heading straight in that direction.

Furthermore, the models of partner companies in various markets are evolving, and diversification of the sales channel is now commonplace. Being present in large distribution or international chains abroad is no longer a disadvantage but a winning choice if your target and strategy align with the market analyses of that segment.

How have you used the e-commerce channel to enhance and promote the TÉLOS brand?

Consistent with the above, our attention towards the consumer finds an extraordinary ally in the digital channel for the Italian market, a very valuable key to nurturing the direct-to-consumer relationship. The goal of our e-commerce strategy was to integrate the offline and online channels, both in terms of sales and storytelling.

The three main benefits we're deriving from online are primarily the ability to access an additional market segment compared to the offline channel; the ability to best retain customers, reaching them where they are and implementing "soft actions" to maintain engagement; the opportunity to segment our targets to the fullest, offering each suitable services and content tailored to their needs.

For our strategy on TÉLOS, e-commerce is essential considering the target audience we cater to – generally, individuals with excellent digital proficiency – and the content we want to convey: the values, peculiarities, and innovations of the project.

Therefore, we decided to adopt a dedicated communication strategy, introducing the role of a Marketing Manager in the company to coordinate work with various partners in the

digital and communication strategy, both with outbound and inbound content. It's crucial to listen to the needs of those on the other side; hence, we'll initiate surveys that will allow us to better understand the expectations of our consumers and partners and define specific B2C/B2B campaigns. Activities that we hope will further increase our ability to be close to the consumer, who already observes us with great interest today.

I'd like to delve into the dimension of the TÉLOS brand in export markets. What are the main ones, and how have you tackled the challenges related to the distribution system in these markets?

As it's evident, such a groundbreaking project has received great appreciation in Italy, where we generate a significant portion of our turnover, being a very mature market for us and immediately receptive to these types of wines.

Foreign markets are growing a lot, as the work of operators is expanding our project.

Germany (as of 2023) is a crucial outlet for us, with an increase of over 30% from last year. TÉLOS "Il Bianco" has grown significantly, followed closely by "Il Rosso" Valpolicella, which has tripled its sales, and "L'Amarone" sales doubled.

Another very interesting market is Japan (as of 2022), as mentioned earlier, which over the years has appreciated and evaluated the product and last year showed excellent performance, accounting for about 18% of foreign markets. Switzerland also accounted for about 35% of foreign sales last year.

Obviously, we face many challenges – intense market competition, international tensions leading to reduced spending by individuals – but we are very confident because

it's a well-structured and organized project, with significant values and above all based on trusted partners that ensure widespread presence in various territories.

This doesn't stop us but propels us towards the next phase; we are indeed ready to venture into overseas markets, especially the USA but not limited to that. We are actively researching to define potential partners who can support us.



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