



THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR QUALITY



## Azienda Agricola Aggazzotti • Modena

Azienda Agricola Aggazzotti is a family-run estate that has occupied the same farmlands in the tiny Modenese town of Colombaro di Formigine since 1714. In 1811, Francesco Aggazzotti was born here, and although he trained for the law, it was in farming where his talents truly lay. Both a traditionalist and a modernist, Francesco had a keen eye for the best of agricultural practices. His family always had made aceto balsamico (balsamic vinegar) and nocino (walnut liqueur), but he raised them up to the best in Modena. In fact, the P.D.O. regulation for Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale di Modena includes a letter he wrote in 1862 describing the proper way to make it. Francesco's way is now the law! Since Francesco's day, the Aggazzotti family has remained as a central figure in the pantheon of Modenese culinary heroes. Indeed, this is not only the land of aceto balsamico and nocino, but also prosciutto ham and parmigiano reggiano cheese...it is hallowed land.



Today, the Aggazzotti estate is in the able hands of Ettore and Elisabetta, and their two sons. They see themselves as caretakers of Modena's noble culinary traditions, which in turn owe so much to their own ancestors. Their focus has always been quality and tradition, so that they never have been tempted to expand their work beyond what they know so well: aceto balsamico and nocino, of course, but also the most classic wine of Modena, Lambrusco, and an extraordinary 25-year brandy made from it. And all of it, all the grapes and all the walnuts from which they make these wonders, come exclusively from the the farmlands that the family first came to in 1714. The line from the then to now is unbroken, and the house of Aggazzotti remains one of Italy's finest culinary treasures.

### **Aggazzotti 25-Year Venticinquanni Brandy**

In 1862 Francesco "defined" aceto balsamico, and his words have passed into Italian law as we know. A year later in 1863, he turned his attention to the study of that most typical of Modenese grapes: Lambrusco. After all, his family had been cultivating the grape in Formigine since 1714, making wine, brandy and balsamic vinegar from it. Explaining his fondness for the Lambrusco of Modena, Francesco described himself as an, "agrophile for many years by inclination and circumstances of past times and passionate about my country." Since the Napoleonic wars, the brandy of Aggazzotti had been esteemed in both Italy and France, but Francesco, driven by native pride and piercing intelligence, wanted his to rival the finest of Cognac. Enter Lambrusco.

To make any brandy of quality, acidic, neutral young wines are required. This is as true in Modena, as it is in Cognac. For this purpose, Francesco Aggazzotti cultivated Trebbiano on the hillsides around his estate. In Cognac the grape would be Ugni Blanc, in Armagnac Folle Blanche. What the scholar Francesco discovered, however, is that the addition of Lambrusco di Sorbara (the finest of Lambrusco varieties) to the base wine gave his finished brandy a beguiling spiciness unlike any other. From Francesco to Ettore, the brandy of Aggazzotti has featured Lambrusco to the most delightful effect. Thinking about it, it makes perfect sense: the acidity and low natural alcohol of the grape lends itself so easily to distillation. With Trebbiano contributing the "classic" brandy base, Lambrusco appears as the secret weapon to give Aggazzotti's brandy that certain "*je ne sais quoi*."

Of course, the base wines are only the starting point for any brandy; they must be distilled and aged with consummate skill, and in the right environment, to evolve into a world-class brandy. Following the method established by Francesco in the 19th century, Ettore now uses a continuous alembic still and ages in barrels of Slovenian oak. Long aging in oak barrels provides a framework of tannin and structure to his brandy, and allows for the delicate process of oxidation to build complexity. In Modena's continental climate, the resting brandy slowly loses alcohol over the years so that when ready to be bottled, only a small addition of water is necessary to bring it to 40°. The last step before bottling is blending. Ettore uses a mixed palette of barrel sizes, ranging from 225 to 400 liters, giving him several expressions of his brandy to draw upon. His result is unique in Italy: single-estate, 25-year, alembic-distilled and master-blended brandy. The watchwords here are both ethereal and intense. Aggazzotti's Venticinquanni Brandy is pure and delicate, while possessing the tantalizing spice of the Lambrusco. Descriptors like toasted hazelnut, fig, tobacco, allspice and vanilla easily come to mind. There is no finer spirit from Italy.