

LA RAMPA DI FUGNANO

The owners of RAMPA DI FUGNANO, a Swiss couple, started frequenting the lovely region of San Gimignano in 1982. So impressed, they decided to look for an apartment or small house to use for future holidays in the area. Instead, they ended up buying a winery in 1990.

The idea was still to go to San Gimignano two to three times a year for a holiday and to let a "fattore" or manager run the Azienda. As ardent wine-lovers, Gisela Traxler and Herbert Ehrenbold wanted to immediately start producing high quality wines on this estate, which had, since 1963, produced mainly for Italian wine traders (i.e. high quantity and little quality).

At a meeting with a well-known wine journalist, they were given the key to success: If you want to make a good wine, just come here and do it yourself. And, that's exactly what they did. Moving to Tuscany in 1991, they began an adventure that is still ongoing.

The year 1991 was also their first vintage and, in early 1992, they bottled their first Vernaccia di San Gimignano D.O.C.G, which at that time was called "BALLATA." Immediately, they were contacted by tasters and journalists who wanted to know more about the Azienda that produced this high quality wine. For both of them, this development was more than surprising, since at that point, they jokingly proclaimed they knew more about wine-drinking than about wine-making. Nevertheless, luck had been with them. Overall, 1991 had been a very little "millesime" (the autumn was depressingly cold and rainy). In addition to the BALLATA, they picked only a selection of Sangiovese grapes and made 5000 bottles of "BOMBERETO," a pure Sangiovese, barrel matured and a typical Tuscan red well-known in many countries of the globe. The remaining grapes of lower quality were sold to the "Cantina Sociale," where they probably had to perform an enological miracle to make something drinkable out of it. At least a good start had been made, honored by mentions in Wine Guides such as Gambero Rosso and Veronelli. Lots of exciting plans were made for the coming year.

Herbert decided to go to the best winemaking school in Switzerland to become better informed in how to operate a well-run vineyard and a decent vinification. After this, he would come back full of new projects and ideas to improve everything.

And there they were, busy from dusk til dawn, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year....

Gisela Traxler and Herbert Ehrenbold

