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"Il Blog sul vino che si sente"

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25/05/2017

Since I wore shorts . . .

"See? That's me. I must have been 14 . . ." and he points to a boy in the photo, almost with his back to the camera, with thick hair. This must be the reason why today, more than thirty years later—now that **Concezio Marulli** has less hair, which is very short—that I find it difficult to recognize him. But in those shots of the very first bottles of wine from the **Ciccio Zaccagnini** winery, one of Abruzzo's most important and famous producers, there is the beginning of a professional love story that is quite rare.



A young and long-haired Concezio Marulli dressed in blue at the bottling machine

Today the estate is in Concezio's hands, but he is also the company's enologist, with accomplishments realized in the field and through studies, publications in scientific journals, and even patents acquired for developing equipment following his own idea of quality. I had the good fortune of meeting him years ago, when I managed communications for **Nomacorc** (a leader in alternative bottle closures). Back then he was considering this alternative, and like any competent professional always seeking to deepen his understanding, he tried it. Through studying, testing, and following closely the scientific literature and practical use of these closures in the winery, he became an ardent fan. But this is just one example

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of his innovative bent, as I was able to perceive many others upon visiting the winery some months ago. Just a phone call, and an hour later I was in the winery. Of course luck played a part, because it wasn't a busy day, but his willingness also made the difference. First in the vineyard and then in the winery, moving from one work of art to the next. Getting to know a company such as Ciccio Zaccagnini from within is certainly a treat for any wine lover.

As we page through magazines with the first photos, at last I see **Joseph Beuys**, after hearing his name several times throughout my tour; a far-sighted genius and a fascinating artist who made the choice to wed art and wine at the estate. I see him in a photo dated May 13, 1984 when, in the early setup of the winery in **Bolognano**, he presented to the world his project titled "*Defense of nature*". A German of world fame and mystique who chose this land, near **Pescara**, and a nascent business to speak on ecology and beauty: themes that certainly were not in vogue back then.

"Bois is pronounced b-o-i-s! It took years for it to sink in, but we finally got it." **Marcello Zaccagnini** is speaking. On his way out he saw us perusing those old newspapers. Just a quick "hello". He knows I'm in good hands.

It's difficult to summarize all the information that Concezio communicated over a few hours, from the description of all the works of art in the vineyard and in the winery, to the technical specifications of the soil and equipment in the winery.

Let's begin with the idea of sustainability, with the aid of a forest—located on the estate—that compensates for the company's carbon dioxide emissions. **"You see. There are oak trees, a symbol of strength; there's rosemary, symbol of wisdom; and lavender; symbol of cleanliness"**.

And then a survey of the vineyard: **"It's always windy here, so we're fairly well protected from elements that can cause great damage, like hail and vine moth. But we also try to manage prevention effectively, so throughout the estate we've installed a monitoring system** (which I will then see in detail on the screens in the laboratory – editor's note) **that enables us to carry out supplemental irrigation, for instance, or to protect the vineyard by treating it only when absolutely necessary. Our sensors are inserted in the soil 10, 30, 50, and 80cm deep in order to give us accurate awareness of the situation"**.

And then in the winery: **"This is the vat for carbonic maceration** (Zaccagnini produces a wonderful *novello*, a true *novello*, Ikebana, which, in fact, has survived the *novello* crisis – editor's note). **I had it built in this way to obtain a perfect maceration of the entire mass and then be able to separate the must from the skins with ease. It's called Sistema Gioiello ('Jewel System') and it's patented. We're among the few who produce novello in our own winery"**.

But the best, for someone like me who grew up among pumps and vats, was yet to come. The new bottling line is incredible. A touch screen to manage the line with high precision that's customizable in every detail: **"See? Here I can make any setting I want, and when the work is done the system goes into self-clean mode. It's the latest technology, which allows us to work quickly and efficiently."** Concezio knows what he's talking about, as can be seen in the way he plays with the screen, which is just another of his many "creatures" in the winery.

Also worth mentioning is how the *tendone training system* can be excellent for growing **Montepulciano** grapes, or the mysterious story of the Cabernet Franc that ended up in the winery and is now the primary grape in **Capsico** wine. But perhaps I've gone on too long. What I really wanted to say is how a business can be started from the ground up as a group endeavor and stay cohesive until success is achieved, each with a different role—but equally important—supported through commitment, professional growth, and enthusiasm. I hope I was able to communicate all of this. And for anyone thinking of visiting the Ciccio Zaccagnini winery . . . I strongly urge you to make an appointment!

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