

U.S. owned Banfi produces high-tech Italian wines

The corporate profile of Banfi is straightforward. Banfi entered the winemaking field in 1978 after achieving its mark as an importer.

Founded in 1919, the company introduced the American palate to many of Italy's classic wines and what now may be called the phenomenon of Brunello Lambrusco, which in its mid-1980s stride turned over more than 13 million cases annually.

While Brunello was capturing the palates of many as a young, fresh, fruity pour, Banfi's owners, Americans John and Harry Mariani, were making a huge investment in Tuscany's Montalcino region. They had a dual purpose to expand their wine line with Banfi-produced world-class Italian wine and to impact the movement to modernize the Italian wine industry.

traced to the Longobards, a people of Viking descent who occupied the area in the 8th century.

Winemaking is in the able hands of Dr. Ezio Rivella, one of Europe's most-respected winemakers. "The Mariani gave me only one job," contends Rivella. "Their stipulation was to produce the best wines in the world and prove that the Italians can match the finest that the world can offer." Rivella does admit to an occasional sleepless night.

BANFI'S MONTALCINO location puts it in the winemaking heart of Brunello di Montalcino, one of Italy's most prestigious red wines. Only 10 percent of the estate acreage is devoted to brunello. "There's no chance that we'll flood the market," Rivella maintains. Knowing that this wine retails with a \$38 ticket, you can better understand this statement.

Banfi owns another winemaking estate in Italy's Piedmont. Wine produced there carry the Banfi Celars label, while those produced in Montalcino are labeled Castello Banfi.

We recently tasted through the



focus on wine
Eleanor and Ray Heald

complete Banfi product line and found the following bottlings, especially interesting. Like all things Italian, whether it's shoes, leather or wine, the price tag is steep, but the quality is impeccable.

1986 BANFI Brut (\$22.50) is produced by the classic Champagne method from 55 percent pinot noir, 40 percent chardonnay and 5 percent pinot blanc. The latter grape variety adds grapey notes and seems to

hold the other two varieties together while contributing a charming bouquet with roundness and richness. It's fruity, dry and elegant.

Introduced to the U.S. in late 1991, Principessa Gavi Vigna Regale (\$20) comes packaged in a very dark bottle to protect the delicate nature of this white wine from damaging ultraviolet light. This Piedmont white is produced 100 percent from the cortese grape in the Regale vineyard within Banfi's Principessa estate.

WINE SELECTION OF THE WEEK
1989 Castello Banfi Centine Rosso di Montalcino (\$10) was the value-oriented wine of the recent Banfi wine tasting. Brunello is Italy's most legendary wine, but for many the taste of a young brunello is far too massive with overpowering woody elements. It's also very expensive.

A Rosso di Montalcino is produced from younger brunello vines. Banfi's sports intense berry fruit with chocolatey nuances. It's fruit intensive with just the right cedary oak complements. It's perfect served with steaks, roasts or any grilled meats. Declaring the wine a few years will reap handsome taste rewards.

With a slight spritz to heighten the lively fruit, the wine finishes crisp with a hint of oak.

The connoisseur wine, newly introduced by Castello Banfi, is the 1989 Colalizio (\$33.75). The interest in wines produced from 100 percent syrah has heightened worldwide.

Banfi's is the first Italian syrah to enter the fray in the competitive U.S. market. If you're familiar with the red wines of the northern Rhône made from 100 percent syrah, comparison with the intensely colored, deeply flavored, peppery, spicy Colalizio is in order.

TODAY, WITHIN the shadow of the medieval fortress town of Montalcino, the Mariani brothers are harvesting grapes from their 7,100-acre Tuscan estate. A broad spectrum of Banfi wines are produced in one of the most modern wineries in the world. It's not just high-tech, it's super technology from computerized crushers to the latest refrigeration units.

Kosher wines for Passover

Hagafen Cellars produces well-made kosher wines in California's Napa Valley. In time for Passover this year (April 17-25), Hagafen has released a dry Red Table Wine. Available at \$7.99 per bottle, it is flash pasteurized and designated mevushal.

Red Table Wine follows in the same tradition as the other Hagafen wines, which are designated "kosher."

The 1991 Hagafen Pinot Noir Blanc (\$6) is a flavorful, off-dry rose style wine, for those preferring a touch of sweetness.

All wines in the Hagafen portfolio (of which we only mentioned two) are certified kosher for Passover and the remainder of the year by Rabbi Dr. J.H. Rabbag of New York and bear the Triangle K symbol. They are available locally. If your wine shop does not currently carry Hagafen wines, they can be ordered by your wine merchant from the distributor Viviano Imports. Delivery can be made in a day or two.

Ground turkey dishes

Last week, a major retailer offered ground turkey at incredible savings. Since ground turkey is rather tasteless by itself, I used the following recipes to make it more appealing — and the Janis Gang loved it!

See Taste buds on Taste Front. HOMEMADE TURKEY SAUSAGE
1 pound ground turkey

- 1 TBS. 1/2 teaspoon ground sage
- 1/2 teaspoon rosemary, crushed
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon marjoram, crushed
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme, crushed
- dash salt

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Shape into patties if desired and cook.

Chef's secret for a spicy Italian Sausage: mix 1/4 teaspoon basil, 1/2 teaspoon oregano and 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes with a dash of salt and pepper.

APPLE SAUSAGE AND SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE

- 2 large sweet potatoes
 - 1/2 pound seasoned bulk turkey sausage (see recipe above)
 - 2 tablespoons brown sugar
 - 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
 - 1 (6 oz. 21 oz.) apple pie filling
 - 1/2 cup chopped nuts, optional
- In a lightly greased eight inch square baking dish, slice sweet potatoes arrange sausage over top. Sprinkle with brown sugar and dot with butter. Spread apple pie filling over all and sprinkle with nuts. If desired bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

CHILI CASSEROLE

- 3 cups cooked rice
 - 1 cup tomato sauce
 - 1 onion, chopped (fine)
 - dash salt and pepper
 - 2 teaspoons chili powder
 - 1/2 teaspoon ground turbin
 - 2 cups cooked ground turkey (regular or seasoned)
 - 1 cup meat broth or liquid bouillon
 - 1 can refrigerated biscuit or bread-stick dough
- Combine rice, sauce, seasonings, onion, meat and broth. Pour into a well greased casserole. Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes. Place biscuits or uncooked breadsticks on top of casserole. Return to the oven and bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes or until biscuits are done. Serves 6.

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