

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

What's in a wine name?

In attempting to discover some new wines from Italy, you may have learned that they're not familiar names.

You fondle a bottle in a wine shop and muse, "should I" or "shouldn't I" take a chance?

Dilemma solved: Look on the back label for the name Marc de Grazia Selections. If you find it, then consider, do you like wines of elegance rather than clout? If you answer "elegance," buy the wine.

In 1980, the now 49-year-old, American-born Marco di Grazia, had earned a bachelor's degree in the classics, from the University of California Berkeley and returned to his home in Florence, Italy. His university years in the U.S. taught him that in the late 1970s, there were very few good Italian wines available in the states.

He recalled fondly that he made his first wine when he was 16 years old. There was only one career course. He began to work with, at that time relatively unknown, small wine estates in the Piedmont and Tuscany and to sell the wines in both Europe and the U.S. At the same time, di Grazia picked the brains of top Burgundy winemakers to learn more about making flavorful wines with finesse and elegance. He shared what he learned with the producers with whom he worked.

At first, di Grazia did not meet with a lot of success. He hung in there. In 1989, wine critics heralded the release of the 1985 Barolos from the Piedmont. About the same time, fine Italian cuisine began to be recognized globally. Americans began their love affair with pasta and other Italian dishes. Top Italian restaurants clamored for elegant wines to match menu selections. It came together for di Grazia and it has only accelerated.

Marco di Grazia conducted a world tour with many of his producers recently. One stop was the Kingsley Hotel in Bloomfield Hills where we were able to taste Marc de Grazia Selections. All wines are available and our top recommendations can be found in the Wine Picks box. If the wine shop you frequent does not have them, ask a salesperson to order them for you from the distributor Elite Brands.

Italy's Piedmont

This region is renowned for its robust and complex red wines. Listed in order of increasing body and richness, they include gattinara, barbaresco and barolo, made from the nebbiolo grape.

Barbera, particularly that grown near the city of Alba is a fun, all-purpose wine, meant to be enjoyed young. Its slight tang is particularly intriguing.

Although the most recent Piedmont releases of Elio Altare wines will not be available until later this year, they are worthy of notice. Altare, the first Barolo producer to work with Marco di Grazia, recently won an out-of-court settlement, rumored at \$500,000, in his suit against a cork producer he charged with ruining his prized wines with poor quality corks.

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Wine Picks

From Marc di Grazia Selection Italian wines, we highly recommend:

Barbera d'Alba: 1998 Cavallotto Bricco Boschis Cuculo \$19 and 1998 Paolo Scavino Carati \$37 (bigger and more intense).

Barbaresco: 1998 Moccagatta Bric Bolin \$62.

Barolo: 1997 Cavallotto Bricco Boschis \$44.

Chianti Classico: 1999 La Cinciole \$18 and 1998 Il Palazzino Grosso Sanese \$36 (big and powerful, yet finishing with finesse).

Carmignano: 1998 Ambra "Riserva la Vigna Alte" \$30.

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano: 1998 Del \$22 and 1998 Della Seta \$20.

Brunello di Montepulciano: 1996 Pertinelli \$53.

Super Tuscan: 1999 Ciccio Piccolomini Atco \$31.

100 percent sangiovese: 1998 San Giulio Percarlo \$50 is a gutsy mouthful.

an Italian kitchen

To Giuseppe and Nora with love



Comfort food: Michael Gentile (left) and Giovanni mix up a bowl of "Pasta al Vento," slightly sweet pasta pasties that make for a quick breakfast or snack.

BY RENEE SKOGLUND
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If ingredients were words, they would spell "amore" for the Gentile family of Livonia. Walk into the Gentiles' bright, sunny kitchen and you feel love bubbling from a pot of Ovo Rutto L'Agua, Italian for "egg soup," or emanating from a pan of Scacciatu, a Sicilian stuffed bread, baking in the oven.

While love of good food started with Giuseppe and Nora Piruzza, Francesca Gentile's parents, who immigrated to Canada from Sicily decades ago, it continues through Francesca's two sons, Giovanni, 29, and Michael, 27.

"I cook because I have to, but they do it because they love it, my husband, Fabio, and the boys," says Francesca.

Last year, Giovanni and Michael decided to create a cookbook of their grandmother's recipes. They remembered the summers of their childhood spent with their grandparents in the old Italian

neighborhood off Erie Street in Windsor, where their grandparents still live. They recalled the delicious soups, stews and sauces their grandmother made from the vegetables Giuseppe brought in from his garden.

They wanted to transform her "pinches" and "palmfuls" into recipes that would become a family legacy. And they wanted an excuse to spend more time with their aging grandparents.

Soon they were spending every Saturday morning in Windsor.

"We'd start at 9 a.m. with the prepping and be ready for lunch. We brought a camera and someone would describe what my grandma was doing. I even wore a chef's jacket. She'd show me what to do and I'd do the presentation," says Giovanni.

The result was *ricetta della casa d'amore, the recipes and traditions of Giuseppe & Nora Piruzza*. It is a delightfully written and colorful cookbook, full of family pictures and anecdotes, Giuseppe's tips on gardening and wine-making, and, of course, lots of Nora's beloved recipes.

Pasta competitions

While this reporter enjoys a glass of wine at the Gentiles' kitchen table, Giovanni adds vegetables to the Ovo Rutto L'Agua simmering on the stove, and Michael puts out the dough for his Scacciatu. Both recipes are surprisingly simple, and the aromas are wonderful.

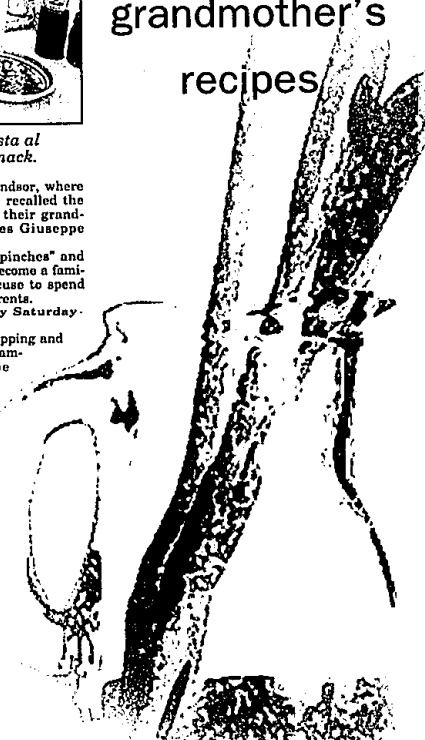
"Whatever we have in the fridge we invite into the pan," says Francesca from the sideline.

Please see GENTILE, B2



Team work: Giovanni Gentile (left) and his brother, Michael, spent a year of Saturday mornings cooking with their grandmother. The results: *ricetta della casa d'amore*, a testimony to love of family and cooking.

Grandsons
spend a
year creating
cookbook of
grandmother's
recipes



Nora Piruzza's recipes are simply 'delizioso'



Love on the stove top: A pot of Ovo Rutto L'Agua simmers away as Giovanni sautés a pan of pasta pasties. Drop an egg into the soup and you have a complete meal.

PASTA AL VENTO (QUICK PASTA PATTIES)

1/2 pound vermicelli
1 1/2 tablespoons salt
4 tablespoons oil
2 eggs
1 pound Ricotta cheese
3-4 tablespoons sugar

In a medium-sized pot bring 3-4 cups of water to a boil. Break vermicelli in half and add to boiling water with 1 tablespoon oil and 1 1/2 tablespoons salt. Cook until tender. In a separate bowl, beat 2 eggs for one minute. Drain pasta and add to the eggs. Next, add ricotta and sugar, making sure all ingredients are thoroughly mixed. Adjust seasoning to taste. Mixture should be slightly sweet. Shape the mixture into 3-inch round patties.

Heat 2-3 tablespoons oil in a medium-sized pan. Fry patties on both sides until golden brown. Recipe yields approximately 32 patties.

Recipe compliments of Nora Piruzza.